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Interview of Dorothy Wetzstein by Jean Strader

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February 18, 2009

Interviewee
Dorothy Wetzstein
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Parsons, KS 67357

Interviewer
Jean Strader
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Parsons, KS 67357

Strader: This is Jean Strader. And today is Wednesday, February 18. And I'm here interviewing Dorothy. Dorothy, would you like to say your name and spell it?

Dorothy: I'm Dorothy Wetzstein. And it's (spelling out loud) D-o-r-o-t-h-y
W-e-t-z-s-t-e-i-n.

Strader: So where and when were you born?

Dorothy: I was born in 1927 in Radcliffe, Iowa.

Strader: OK. And who were your parents?

Dorothy: My parents were Gus and Alma Neubauer (spelling out loud) N-e-u-b-a-u-e-r.

Strader: OK. And had they lived in the area very long?

Dorothy: Oh, nearly all their life.

Strader: Their family had settled there?

Dorothy: Yes. Yes. They came from.... My dad's parents came from Germany. And my mother's parents came from England.

Strader: OK. And I guess you grew up on a farm there. You want to tell a little bit about the farm where you grew up?

Dorothy: Well, it was 160 acres. And my dad rented it. There were eight of us children. And, I'm trying to think what....

Strader: As far as age, where were you in relation to the other kids?

Dorothy: I was probably.... I'm probably about the fourth down. But, actually, it was kind of like two sets of children. And so, I mean, there was a space between. So I was kind of the oldest of the youngest group, the youngest four.

Strader: How many boys and girls?

Dorothy: Three girls and five boys.

Strader: So, did your family, did they live on that one farm all the time, or did they move around any?

Dorothy: As long as I remember, that's where they lived. Then we eventually moved to Kansas, in northeast Kansas near Atchison.

Strader: About what year was that?

Dorothy: I was about 13 years old.

Strader: Oh, OK.

Dorothy: I was sophomore in high school, so that would make me about... I graduated when I was 17, so I was about 15, 15 years old. But they had relatives down in Kansas, and thought maybe it was a better place. So that's when we moved to northeast Kansas.

Strader: And did you live on a farm there?

Dorothy: Yes. We lived on a farm there about the same size. My dad also owned that farm, bought that farm. Of course, some of the older children were already married and that by the time we moved to Kansas.

Strader: When you lived in Iowa, what part of Iowa was that?

Dorothy: Up near Ames.

Strader: Oh, OK.

Dorothy: In the northern part of Iowa.

Strader: OK. So you probably had some cold, hard winters.

Dorothy: Oh, my. Oh, my. Oh, yes. I remember that very vividly because we actually did walk a mile to school. People laugh about that, but we actually did walk a mile to school. And many times we... I was kind of light enough that I would get on top of the crusted snow and walk, but the little heavier children, they would sink down in that. And sometimes it was hard to get out of those big embankments as you walked along. Because you didn't have snowplows that much. And so it was basically, you know, what was there.

Strader: So you went to a little schoolhouse out in the country?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I went all eight grades in the country school. And I felt like I got a good education, too. There were all age groups in that, because many of the children like, especially boys, in the 7th and 8th grades would have to stay home and help during harvest and planting and that. So a lot of the 8th graders might be 15 or 16.

Because they simply were, you know, they had to catch up. And that was pretty well expected of you. If you was needed at home.... School was a privilege. It was a privilege. And I even felt that through high school. Because my dad hadn't had that kind of education. And if you didn't want to work at school and get good grades, you were always could be used at home. So it was a privilege. It was a privilege to get to go to school. And that sounds odd, I know. But it was a privilege.

Strader: So let's talk about the farming operation that your family did. Can you tell a little bit about the livestock that you had?

Dorothy: Well, we had cows, and of course we milked those. And then we had pigs and, of course, horses to do work with. And lots of pets. We always had pets. And, of course, we raised ducks and geese and all those kinds of things. Just part of everyday life.

Strader: Did you consume the livestock?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Strader: Did you do butchering?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And my grandpa on my father's side, he was... he knew how to make sausage. And so they would make the sausage, and then I... The thing that I can remember is that, like with meat, you know they cooked that meat and they canned it. And put it down in lard. And it kept. They canned meat. I mean, that wasn't unusual at all to can meat. Now it would have been... We might get tuna in a can, or something. But it wasn't unusual to can meat at all. And then you had places where you froze meat that you could use over the winter. And all this was supplemented with wildlife, you know. We had ducks that we'd get on our pond, and we'd eat those. We'd eat rabbits—all those kinds of things. And I still have a taste for it, because I... A lot of people don't like it. But I love it, because I grew up on it. That augmented, you know, whatever else we had.

Strader: Did you butcher both your cattle and your hogs?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And the chickens and all those things. We were pretty self-sufficient, as far as food was concerned. I mean, you made bread, and you know, it was pretty self-sufficient. You had canned vegetables from summer gardens. We were pretty self-sufficient as far as food was concerned.

Strader: So did the kids have to help with the gardening?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I hoed many a line. Oh, yes. That was just expected. It was really expected, and you just did it. But your parents did it, also.

Strader: Did you have to help out with the livestock any?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. We fed livestock, we milked cows, we slopped pigs, we... whatever there, you know, pitched hay, whatever there was to do for the animals.

Strader: What time did you milk the cows?

Dorothy: Well, we'd milk them about 4:00 in the afternoon and then in the morning, early in the morning, twice a day.

Strader: So you had to get up and do that before you went to school?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. My sister and I, we had twenty cows. And we were the oldest ones at home, so we each milked ten cows apiece. And actually walked a half mile to catch the bus to go to high school. And we didn't think anything about it. It was just expected, and we did it. And then the same routine was at night. You came home and changed from school clothes to chore clothes, and you started in feeding the animals and milking cows, or whatever there was to do. Just expected. But like I say, your parents were doing it, too.

Strader: Did your parents sell livestock to anyone...

Dorothy: Oh, yes.

Strader: ... for money?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. They sold any of the livestock. They'd sell cattle, they'd sell pigs, they'd sell ducks, they sold geese, they sold eggs, they sold cream and milk.

Strader: Did your dad take it to town himself, or did somebody come around to the farm?

Dorothy: My earliest recollection of that is that they had somebody come by and get the milk. It would be in great big five-gallon cans, and we had a cooling tank and we kept it in. And they'd come and pick it up. Now, I'm sure there were times when that wasn't going on, but my first recollections is that's what they did. But we did take the eggs to town, and you sold those and then you bought your groceries, whatever you'd need at the grocery store. That was your grocery money, you know. And I remember cleaning eggs because you wanted them to look nice. So we used kind of a solution of a little bit of vinegar and a little bit of water. And we washed every egg. And that wasn't a fun job. But, anyway, they'd need to be nice and look nice for people to buy when you took them to town. That's how we prepared them. All this takes time.

Strader: How about when you sold your chickens and your ducks? Did you slaughter them first, or did people buy them live?

Dorothy: I think that most of them that we sold were probably slaughtered first. And, now I do remember that on the ducks and the geese, that we'd do so many, and then they... Dad took them to town. And they went on trains, like back to the city in ice cars

or whatever they used at that time. Especially around holiday time there was a big call for that. And.... But.... Chickens, I think most of the time were slaughtered, but there might have been a few times they were sold. Although people did pay each other in chickens and that kind of thing in those days. If somebody'd come and wanting to sell you a magazine, they might take chickens and eggs and milk for the--kind of a barter-type thing. And it worked. People didn't have a lot of cash flow. Just wasn't a lot of cash flow. Although, I think I told you that before, but we had several things for cash flow. My dad had bees and we sold that honey. And, of course, we had to help prepare all that. And then we sold ice. We had a big ice house, and they'd get the ice from the gravel pits in the winter and then this was all underground. And then people would come to our house and buy ice. You couldn't use it like to put in a drink, but you could put it beside your drink to cool your drink. You know, I mean, you'd put, like say your tea or whatever it is you'd put in a glass jar, and then set it down in the ice. Or you could make ice cream with it with an ice cream freezer. But we sold that, too.

Strader: How did you keep the ice?

Dorothy: It was in a.... It was built.... You cut way down in the ground, way deep, and then they would put a lining in that. And it was... The things from where newspapers were. It wasn't newspapers, but they had a kind of a—oh, I want to try to think of what thickness that would be—like a heavy cardboard. And it would be what kind of what they use it to print the, print it with. I don't know that it was cardboard, but that's what I remember. And that lined and it insulated. And, of course, this is all underground. And it stayed frozen because Iowa's cold. And then it stayed through the summer. And we'd sell it through the summer. And my mother used to make root beer. And, kind of a special treat when we'd start to, like, water the chickens or something like that, we'd, of course, well water was cold, too. And she'd give us a jar of that to sit down in there. And by the time we got through, it was cool and we could have it to drink. It was kind of a special treat.

Strader: I bet that was good.

Dorothy: Yeah. It was very good.

Strader: Do you remember how she made root beer?

Dorothy: No, I don't. I don't remember that at all. See, my mother died when I was 11, and so there's a lot of things I don't know about that. But, I remember it as being very good. And then we did have people come, besides going into town, there was the Watkins man that used to come and sell all kinds of spices and that kind of thing, and things to make—they called it nectar. It was to make, like, a summer drink, or orange-flavored, or that type of thing. But they would come around. And then we'd buy that kind of thing from them. And vanilla, and that type of thing.

Strader: You mentioned that you had horses. So did your dad use the horses to do all of the farming?

Dorothy: Yes. Yes.

Strader: Did he ever have...?

Dorothy: He eventually got a tractor. Yes. He eventually got a tractor. But my growing up years we had horses. The horses done everything. And then in the winter sometimes, like we'd want to go visit somebody, why they had runners they put on the wagon. And we'd all bundle up and really go for a sleigh ride and go to our neighbors. That's how you went. You couldn't go out and... when the cars wouldn't even get through because they didn't have things to take care of the roads like they do now. You just couldn't go through. But it was fun. As I remember it was fun. It was cold, too.

Strader: How did you heat?

Dorothy: We just had a pot-bellied stove. And, of course, we used a lot of what we had around the farm in that. And then, although I was alive during the Depression, there's a lot of things I don't remember about it, other than I remember that corn was so cheap that instead of my dad selling it, we'd burn it, use it as fuel in the pot-bellied stove.

Strader: Really?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And the other things I kind of remember from that part of it was that I never was hungry. Many people were during that time, but I never was hungry. We lived on the farm. We'd eat lots of potato soup—and I still love it—and that kind of thing. And my mother even made pigeon pie—use pigeons from the barn. We'd call it squab pie, you know. And it was very good. It's like a pot pie. And, but we never were hungry. We always had plenty to eat. But, I remember Dad telling us to be careful with our shoes because it took a wagon load of corn to buy one kid's pair of shoes. And, so we went barefoot mostly in the summer. We started wearing shoes when we went to school, or went to church. We always went to church. So, we wore our shoes then. But, you know.... But everybody was the same. And my mother made us underwear, you know. And she used, instead of elastic they used rubber from inner tubes. Very, very.... You know, you had to really put on your thinking cap to keep everything going because there wasn't a lot of money. Just wasn't a lot of money. And, but, we didn't think nothing about it because everybody else was doing the same. Everybody else was doing just that way, too.

Strader: How often would you get to buy a new pair of shoes?

Dorothy: Well, we generally had a pair that we could wear around home, and then one to wear to church. Church ones you only wore to church. Probably not over once a year, for sure. Probably when your feet grew out of them. And we would send off for them, like Sears or Wards, or someplace like that. And they had a thing in their catalog--this brings back memories—and you would put your foot down on there, and you'd draw around it, and then you'd send that off, and then they'd send you the shoes that fit that particular

pattern. It wasn't unusual at all. That's the way it was done. They didn't have shoe stores. Maybe had cobblers, but not too many of them either.

Strader: How about the town of Radcliffe. Was that very big?

Dorothy: No, very small. Probably about like Altamont is down here. I mean it had.... It seemed kind of big to me at the time. It had a main street, basically, and then there was things.... Oh, there was a men's clothing store there. There was grocery stores and gasoline stations and, of course, the pool hall. And that was basically it.

Strader: Did you go to town very much?

Dorothy: Once a week. Went to town on Saturday. And my parents... my mother would visit with other ladies and my dad would.... They'd get their groceries and stuff ready, and then they'd all visit. And we kids would run up and down the streets playing. And Dad would give us each a nickel, which bought a popsicle. And we'd have that popsicle. That was our big treat. And, of course, we didn't like the kids in town. They didn't like us, either.

Strader: Why?

Dorothy: Oh, just simply one was from town, one was from country. I don't think we hated each other. We just didn't... we didn't understand each other because they lived differently than we did, you know. But we never fought as I recall, but we just kind of shied away from them.

Strader: You mentioned that your dad grew corn. Did he grow anything else, like wheat or any other crops?

Dorothy: Well, he did in Kansas. In Iowa he grew corn and, oh, soy beans and that kind of thing. And in Kansas, of course, he grew wheat. And, let's see what else. Of course, we always grew our own popcorn. That was another thing that we grew. And it, you know.... That all had to be shelled, generally by hand. But, corn and wheat, soy beans, hay.

Strader: So did he do the harvesting himself, or did the threshing crews come along and do it?

Dorothy: Well, he did some of the harvesting, but, yes, there was a threshing crew. We had one person in our neighborhood who owned a threshing machine. And that was quite an event when the threshers came because they needed much help, and they tried to do it all in each place, you know, in a day, maybe. And my mother'd always.... All the relatives would come in and help cook 'cause they fed all these guys. And they liked to eat well. And it was quite an event. It was exciting to me, you know, when they came because it was quite a hooplah because it was a whole day affair. And then at the end of the season, this fellow would have us all for an ice cream social. Kind of a give-me-back

because, you know, you had me do your threshing. It was quite an event. We enjoyed it a lot. And I liked to watch the wagons go around. And we'd ride them sometimes if they'd let us. And, you know, it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun.

Strader: Well, I suppose I'd better start asking you about some questions that have to do more with the New Deal program because that's the focus of our project. As you know that there were a lot of different kinds of programs that FDR started during his administration, and they called it the New Deal. And, I've got a list of different programs that we'll go through, and I'll just ask you if you know anything about any of these. And some of them you might not, and that's fine. OK. The first one is the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. And this was the agency that paid farmers subsidies to either not produce or to underproduce to prevent oversupply and kind of control the price. So do you...?

Dorothy: Yes, I do remember that. And I remember the farmers really thought it was great. It was kind of foreign to them not to plant. That was foreign to them. But many of them took advantage of that by, you know, that land then was in a better shape for the next crop that came along. So, it was.... And I'm sure that the cash that came with it was good. Because they all needed, would all need that for buying seed and that kind of thing. Although my dad always used his own corn for seed. He tested it and made sure it was going to be very good, and....

Strader: Oh, really. How did he test it?

Dorothy: Well, that was kind of interesting. He would take an ear of corn and take the corn off. And he'd use a damp cloth. And he'd lay those kernels on there. And he'd roll that up. And he'd put it behind our cook stove where it was nice and warm. And then it would germinate, and he could see whether it had good germination or not. And if it did, then he would use it. So that's kind of how he tested it. It's kind of an interesting thing because, see them little roots start on that corn, you know. But I know that most all the farmers welcomed this change because they were having a hard time with.... Well, they still had, you know, rent to pay, or whatever, with it, or property tax, or whatever, to pay, so they needed.... You had to have some money to do that, and it's probably helped that.

TELEPHONE CALL

Strader: So do you remember which crops that they did that for?

Dorothy: I'm sure they did it for corn. I don't know about the wheat. I don't know about the wheat. Now whether they did it for that or not, but I do know they did it for the corn. And I do know that everybody received it well. I mean, they liked the idea.

Strader: OK. How about this Federal Insurance Deposit Corporation, otherwise known as FDIC? And this came about as the result of all of the bank failures. And it was set up to guarantee, when you put money into the bank, guarantee that that, you know, money would still be there. So do you remember when that was first started?

Dorothy: I don't remember when it first started, but I know that people were very glad about that, too, because so many had lost lots of money in the banks. And banks and the farmer were pretty good friends because they needed the money for seed. They'd need money for, you know, just whatever they needed on the farm. And the banks were willing to do that until generally it was paid back at harvest time. And so having that, any money they had guaranteed, just as we are today, we like that. It was a very good program. In fact, I was thinking about that the other day. And I thought, we could probably use some of those programs now.

Strader: Do you remember your parents talking about bank failures? Did they have any money in a bank that failed, or did they know anyone that lost a lot of money in a bank?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. I remember them talking about that. It was very devastating, especially to farmers because they didn't generally have that much money in the bank anyway. And so if they lost what they had, it was very, very difficult. Oh, yes. It was tragic. It was tragic.

Strader: OK. The Public Works Administration. This is often known as PWA. And this was the agency that built a lot of the big construction projects around, public construction projects around.

Dorothy: That was very welcomed because they took a lot of young men and they paid them. And they fed them. And there weren't jobs to be had. And most people were proud to do it because there weren't jobs. And especially for the younger men--it mostly was men--their families were pleased that they could do this, and pleased that they would get paid for it. And most of them, I think, would say that it was a good thing for them, a good thing for them. And it did put money in pockets. And it also helped... good for our country.

Strader: And along with that, the Works Progress Administration, the WPA, and the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps. They were agencies that...

Dorothy: Did much of the same.

Strader: Yeah. ... did the same thing. Did any of your family, your brothers or anyone...?

Dorothy: No, none of my brothers, but I think I had cousins that did this, cousins who did this. And people were very pleased with it, as far as I recall. They thought that it was good for our nation, and it was good.... Just the fact that people were able to work, it was uplifting. It's uplifting that they could earn some money and all. So, you know, good for our country.

Strader: Do you know if your cousins, when they were paid, did they get the money themselves, or did they send the money back home to the farm, or...?

Dorothy: I think it was done both ways. I think it was kind of like when some people are in military and they'll specify somebody to get part of their pay. You know, people do that, have through the years, and I think it was done both ways, depending on what they had for family. Most everybody would help their family. It was just.... I don't know why they would ever say no, not in that day. They wouldn't say no to their family.

Strader: OK. The Farm Security Administration, also called later the Resettlement Administration. And this agency offered low cost loans to help farmers purchase equipment, like tractors.

Dorothy: I'm sure.... I know I don't recall too much about that. But I'm sure that if that was available that my family took, you know, was in on it, because, like I say, there wasn't.... If you had any money in the bank and you'd lost it, and, you know, you just.... People were kind of like we are right now, couldn't buy things. So it was helpful.

Strader: But you don't remember specifically if your family had any loans or anything?

Dorothy: Oh, I'm sure they did. Oh, I'm sure they did. Oh, I'm sure they did.

Strader: Did anyone ever come out, a government worker, ever come out to your house and advise your parents, either one of them, on anything to do with farming, or your mom on anything to do with maintaining the household?

Dorothy: I don't recall anybody coming to the farm, but that was certainly available in your community in some way. I mean, we had, it was generally monthly meetings at the schoolhouse, and a lot of these things were discussed there as a community. And so, probably somebody would come out and suggest things or work with people on things during that time.

Strader: OK. Rural Electrification Administration.

Dorothy: Oh, I remember that when we first got electricity. That was wonderful. I was about 11 years old, and my mother died shortly after that. We got electricity, and the first thing she wanted was an electric iron. And we just ironed everything we could put our hands on, it was so much fun. Because we'd had to heat the irons on the stove and iron that way, you know. Oh, we just thought it was wonderful. It was wonderful. It was really, it was really a highlight.

Strader: How about washing machines?

Dorothy: Well, we had one that had a motor, just a motor on it, had.... We finally got an electric washing machine. But it was.... I don't think we got it right away. But we was so enthralled with being able to turn on lights. It was just like, you know, Christmas or something when that came along because it was wonderful.

Strader: Did it change what you did in the evening?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. It was.... We were a family who liked to read a lot—you'll appreciate that. But, oh how much nicer it was to read by electric light than it was by a lamp. We liked that. Anything that went with it, we just, everybody thought it was wonderful. So I think it was a good thing.

Strader: Did the REA, did it affect your farming operations any at all?

Dorothy: Yes, we got electric milking machine. I remember that. Didn't have to milk them cows by hand anymore. I recall that very vividly. So, yes, it affected it in that way. And then there were things that—I'm trying to think what else we used especially that was electric. Oh, I'm sure there's many things, like saws and all that kind of thing, you know, that would make life easier because you had electricity. And lights to see outside, you know, or in the barn, or all those kinds of... just many, many things it affected. And it was all good.

Strader: How long did it take you to milk those ten cows by hand, and then how long did it take you to do it by the machine?

Dorothy: I'm trying to think. Milking the ten cows would take probably a couple of hours, at least. And then probably by the milk machine, probably about half that. But, along with that, also then you had to clean all that equipment with the milking machine. And previous to that you would've been sure that the cows' udders was clean by washing, or whatever, but, you know, this had to be.... And then of course this milk was sold, so it had to be as sanitary as possible. And so that was kind of a different thing we had to do.

Strader: When you made your butter did you have a... did you do it with a dash, or did you have a crank churn?

Dorothy: My recollection is a churn.

Strader: That one that you turned the handle?

Dorothy: Uh huh. I don't remember making it with anything else, but I'm sure that my mother probably did, but I don't recall that. I just remember a churn.

Strader: How often did she bake bread?

Dorothy: Probably at least every other day.

Strader: How about butter? How often?

Dorothy: Well, I think we probably wouldn't make that over once a week maybe, for our family. Of course, like I said, some had grown up, and it'd depend on how many was there at the time.

Strader: I didn't ask you, what about your water source?

Dorothy: Oh, we had a well. And that was another thing when electricity came that that helped that a lot, too, because we could hook it up, so that would pump by electricity rather than using the wind. But that was our water source.

Strader: So did you have to haul water from the well to the house?

Dorothy: Yes, but, they weren't too far away. In Iowa we had some natural artesian wells which we took advantage of. And in... But none of our wells was very far away. Yes, we carried it to the house. And a lot of people had cistern pumps on their counter in their kitchen, and then they pumped from the cistern for, like, just washing your hands and that kind of thing.

Strader: So you had to carry water to the livestock, I suppose?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Big five-gallon buckets full.

Strader: OK. How about when the social security started? Do you remember that?

Dorothy: What year did that start?

Strader: Well, they didn't start paying out any benefits until about 1940. But I think the administration and the program itself was started earlier in the '30s.

Dorothy: Well, I know farmers were surprised about it. They were surprised it was available, because I think they thought at the very beginning it would just be for salaried workers, that was their input on it. And I know my dad was very surprised when he reached the age that he could get that. He couldn't believe it. He really couldn't believe it. But I'm sure it was, you know, everybody was glad for it.

Strader: So overall, how do you feel about the programs of the New Deal?

Dorothy: I think they were good. And even as I look back on my computer, I think they were good, that they were good. I think they had some good thoughts behind them, and it did bring a change that was good.

Strader: For the people who accepted assistance from the government, either in the form of loans or work on WPA crews or whatever, what were the attitudes towards people who accepted assistance from the government?

Dorothy: I don't recall it being any bad things about it. I don't recall that. I don't recall my parents ever talking about it being a bad thing. They, you know... Most farmers are proud people, and they didn't believe in taking any more than they needed. They wouldn't have been greedy about it at all. But I think that they, as far as I can recall, they

was well accepted. Now I.... There are some government programs I think, you know, still people look down on. You know, I think that many people on welfare, people don't understand that sometimes that's necessary, and not through no fault of the person. There've been illnesses or.... I think they still kind of look down on people and that, but we shouldn't, but we do. And I think maybe in that day it was the same way.

Strader: So do you think that the New Deal was the right course for the nation at that time?

Dorothy: Yes. Yes. I think it was better thought through than some programs I've seen.

Strader: When you moved from Iowa to Kansas, do you think that the farming was better in Kansas? Why did your dad decide to move to Kansas?

Dorothy: Well, my mother died when I was 11. And my dad married a lady, and she was from Kansas. And she wanted to be near her people. So that was the basic reason. I thought I was going to die when we moved to Kansas because I'd lived in the same house ever since I was born, you know. Mid-semester, sophomore in high school, and I'd gone to a small high school. And then I went to Atchison County High School, which is kind of like Labette County, and I felt like a little fish in a big pond. I mean, I didn't, I hadn't grown up with these children. I finally, you know, I made some friends, but not as many as I'd had. And then, there again, it was still a privilege to get to go to school. I mean, we knew that. We knew it was a privilege to get to go to school. So, we were expected to do most of our schoolwork at school because there was work to be done when you got home. And it was a privilege to get to go. I always loved school, but it was a privilege to get to go. And it was never said like that, but we knew it. We knew it was a privilege.

Strader: After you graduated from high school, then what did you do?

Dorothy: Well, I taught school.

Strader: Oh, you did?

Dorothy: I taught in a one-room schoolhouse. And I had two years of training, which was... they called it normal training in those days. And it was for.... You got a certificate with that.

Strader: Now where did you go for that training?

Dorothy: It was at the school, but it was a separate program. It was—I don't know what you'd say—like an accelerated thing that you took on top of your other things. And so I taught in a one-room schoolhouse. And then....

Strader: Where was that at?

Dorothy: It was in Atchison County, Kansas.

Strader: And this was before you were married?

Dorothy: Yes. Uh huh. Yes, it was. And I boarded at someone's house. That was kind of a different experience because everybody's so different, you know. But, I had some different experiences. It was OK. And then I would generally go home.... I didn't have a car, so then my family'd come get me and I'd go home on the weekends. So, it was interesting—what I always wanted to be, so I got to be it. And then when World War II came along, why, if you went and took a certain test and you passed this test, you got another two-year certificate because they were so short of teachers. And, so, I got that. And then I started having a family and decided that's what I needed to do.

Strader: And when you first got married, did you live on a farm then?

Dorothy: No. No, my husband worked in a Firestone store, actually, in Horton, Kansas, which is northeast Kansas. But I went out to the farm a lot, of course. My folks were still on the farm. I went out there a lot, but.... I know every aspect of it, I think, of farming. But, you know, as I was growing up, I think it's the most wonderful place to grow up in the world because your parents were always there. Always. They might be in the field, or in the garden, but if you wanted to ask them a question, they was always there. And we were being tutored all the time. Taught all the time. Not only about work and work ethics, but what families were, you know. And I think it's a wonderful place to grow up. You know, my kids.... I didn't work til they was in a little older years, but it was just wonderful to always have your parents there. Because you could always ask them a question, advice whatever. I think it's a wonderful place to grow up, very wonderful. And the family worked together for the common good. So everybody worked together. You didn't fuss and fight about it because it was just there to be done, and you did it. Your parents did it, too. So it wasn't like you were being singled out or anything. I think it's a wonderful place to grow up.

Strader: And in later years, did you...? What kind of work did you do?

Dorothy: Well, I've been.... I've done several things. I.... Of course, I taught school, like I said then. And then I worked in a photography shop as a receptionist. And then after my first husband died, I started taking care of.... I didn't know what I was going to do. He was 53 years old, and he died of a heart attack after he talked to me like I am you, in three minutes he was dead. And I hadn't worked for about ten years. And, so, I went down to the employment office, you know. I knew I was going to have to work. I was 51. And they said, "Oh, we can get you this job down here at the sandwich shop for \$3 an hour." Well, yeah. What was that going to do, you know? And so, anyway, I'm a Christian, so the Lord took care of me. I've always liked to sew. And, kind of a neat thing started. A lady came to me, and her daughter was up for queen at Pittsburg State. And she said, "Where will we go to get some clothes for the different things she needs. There's going to be.... Somebody's apt to have some just like it." So she wanted to know if I'd make her five outfits 'cause I'd made for my girl. And that's kind of how it started in, in word of mouth. And I kept busy. I done cheerleaders. I done weddings. I done all kinds

of things. And then I also took care of older people in their homes for about eight years. I had about seven of them. And, it was very interesting, too, because, first of all, they wouldn't have afforded me if they didn't have money. They weren't poor. And so I got in some very interesting, very interesting households. And most.... So, one lady was, had worked in a bank. And another lady, her husband had been a dentist here in town. But they all were really different. And one lady had been an accountant. Basically what we'd do when I'd go there, she liked to put things in boxes and label them, just what an accountant-type person would do. So, anyway, so I did that. So I done lots of different things.

Strader: Are there any other memories of your life on the farm that you'd like to share?

Dorothy: Well, just like what I said. It was a wonderful place to grow up.

Strader: What were your favorite things to do as a kid?

Dorothy: Oh, of course I liked to play games, that kind of thing. My family always did that.

Strader: What kind of games?

Dorothy: Oh, we played checkers and Chinese checkers and dominoes and all that, you know, kind of thing. And my family always liked to play cards. We played cards a lot. And I liked to roller skate. We had some cement sidewalks that we roller skated on. And of course all the little girl things like dolls and all that kind of thing. I always liked that. And I always liked doing anything crafty. Make something. Put it together. Create it. I always loved doing that. Part of my nature. I didn't realize it, but it is. It is. I found it out kind of by accident.

Strader: Well, anything else you'd like to share?

Dorothy: Well, I don't know what kind of things to share.

Strader: Were there any other special dishes that your mom cooked? You said she cooked pigeon pie. Who caught the pigeons?

Dorothy: I'm sure my brothers did. I didn't. I'm sure I didn't do that. Well, there again, there's a lot of things that, you know, that I don't recall because I was only 11 when she died. But I think we had mostly kind of wholesome meals—meat, potatoes, gravy, you know, that kind of thing. And, you know, desserts and pies and things like that. And then I know on Sundays, we'd generally, after we'd gone to church, generally some different family members that lived in the area, we'd get together for ice cream and cake and that kind of thing. That was kind of a Sunday evening thing to do. My mother was a good cook. But, like I said, there's a lot of things that I don't remember.

Strader: Were your grandparents living close around there?

Dorothy: My grandpa was. My grandmother was dead. But, he.... In fact, when my mother died, he came over and took care of us. He knew how to cook and do all that. And dad done the field work. And then, of course, my dad met somebody and he married that lady.

Strader: Was that your mom's dad or your dad's dad?

Dorothy: My dad's dad.

Strader: Do you remember ever hearing him speak any German?

Dorothy: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact he would.... I asked my dad one time, "Why didn't you teach us German?" in later years. And he said, "Well, this"—and it's so different than what we have now. He said, "My parents, they spoke it at home." But, he said, "My parents said we are in the new country. We will learn the new language." And they sent their children to school to learn the new language. Basically, and sometimes they only sent them third or fourth grade. So they would learn math and the English language and reading, and that kind of thing. And my dad was an avid reader, so he learned a lot of English by that type of thing, too. But that's what they said, "We are in a new land. We will learn the new language." And I just think that's so different than what we hear. I was trying to think if there was anything else. My grandfather by trade was a blacksmith.

Strader: Really?

Dorothy: Uh huh. And I'm sure.... And he did that.... When I recall him he was older, you know. But, that's what he did when he came to America. He was a blacksmith. And he could handle hottest things. He'd use the hottest dish water. And we'd.... Because he could stand it, you know, using them, being around that heat all those years. He could just take it. And it always marveled us. And my grandpa liked to play the accordion. There was always dances--barn dances and wedding dances--and he always played his accordion for that. That was fun. I don't know what to add.

Strader: It sounds like a good life.

Dorothy: Yeah, it has been. It has been.