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Interviewee

Alfred Manners
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Interviewer

Charles Spellman
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Part 1

Spellman: What's your name, and, if you're married, what's your spouse's name?

Alfred: My name's Alfred Manners, and my wife's name is Nancy.

Spellman: Where were you born?

Alfred: East of Parsons. Six miles east and one mile south.

Spellman: Who were your parents?

Alfred: Alfred Estle and Abby Manners.

Spellman: And how many people were in your family?

Alfred: There was three girls and two boys.

Spellman: How did you and your family come to live in this area?

Alfred: My great grandfather homesteaded an 80 here.

Spellman: Was that the same address as you was talking about before?

Alfred: Yes.

Spellman: Okay. Have you always lived on a farm?

Alfred: Yes.

Spellman: And have you ever done any outside work in addition to farming?

Alfred: Very little.

Spellman: Okay. And how long have you lived on your land?

Alfred: For 87 years.

Spellman: Okay. So what would you like to tell us...?

Alfred: I'm sorry. It was 78 years. I got that turned around.

Spellman: I do that all the time.

Alfred: 78 years.

Spellman: I understand. So what would you like your kids, your grandkids, or other people to know what life was like in your days. Today kids don't know about what it's like to not have TV, etc., etc. So let us know what it was like.

Alfred: Well, it was different. But back then we didn't have any of that, so we didn't miss it. It's kind of like if you see it somewhere, then you want it. It's like when I was farming when I was young, and I was plowing on 100 acres with a little old two-bottom Ford tractor and just took forever to get anywhere. And a neighbor come down the road with this big tractor. And I couldn't believe he had a great big old disc. And he come down that road, and it took up the whole road. And he pulled into the field across the road from me and unfolded that disc. And I thought it'd never get unfolded, it was so big. And in three or four hours he had that 80 acres disked and folded back up and left. Well, after that, I wasn't a bit comfortable on my little tractor. I saw they was something better. So I thought I had to have something better than this 'cause I would plow all winter up there on that 100 acres that we rented. So I think as we see things, we see things better, and that's what we want, to have something better. But there's a lot of good memories. And we had some pretty hard times.

Spellman: Do you remember the very first time you saw a TV set?

Alfred: Yes, I do. That was when I first got married and we built a house just across the road from her parents. And they got a TV. And we would go over there once a week or so to watch TV. And it was a black and white, but, boy, that was something because when I was a kid, my dad.... We had a radio and we never seemed like we could afford to buy a battery to run it. So my dad would bring the battery off the tractor up at night once in a while, and we'd listen to the radio. And especially if Joe Lewis, the fighter, was on that night, why, he'd sure bring that battery up so we could listen to the radio. And we'd all just sit around that radio and listen to it. So TV was really pretty special. Even electricity. We didn't have any electricity when I was... for a long time.

Spellman: How old were you when you first had electricity? Or what year?

Alfred: I would say we got electricity out here on the farm in about 1940. Oh, I believe it was even later than that because we studied by a little old kerosene light it seems like when we was up getting pretty old. I would say it was '40 to '45, in that time.

Spellman: Well, what else do you want to share with us about the olden times? Take your time.

Alfred: We had a dairy. Practically all my life we run a dairy. And my granddad.... We lived real close to my granddad, and he would come up and wake us up every morning—quarter till five every morning—and he'd go round the cows up and bring them in. And we would go down to the barn. Sometimes the cows wasn't there yet. So my brother and I would lay in the manger where the horses was right there next to us in the hay and sleep till the cows got there. And we milked them by hand. And one day my brother, he grabbed this chicken by the tail while he was milking, and he ended up on the other side of the cow he was milking because she started kicking 'cause that chicken was a-raising cane, you know. Scared the cows. We used to feed a lot of cats. When they was back behind there, we'd squirt milk in their face. They was standing there waiting for us to feed them.

Spellman: How old do you think you were when you first went to work milking?

Alfred: Oh, I was probably five or six. I'm sure I wasn't any older than that. But we had a lot of fun. We'd get done milking, and then we'd have to—especially when I was in....

END OF FIRST RECORDING