

Community Recollections of the 1965 Flood in Offerle, Kansas

Recorded on March 29, 2014, 2-4 p.m.

Zion Lutheran Church, 13307 Jewell Road, Offerle, Kansas 67563

Conducted by the Kinsley Library, 208 E. 8th St., Kinsley, Kansas 67547

Recorded by Sagebrush Video Productions,

2304 County Road 370, PO Box 211, Otis, Kansas 67565

As part of the Kansas Humanities Council, Turning Points: Stories of Change

Interviewer: Joan K. Weaver, Kinsley Public Library Director

Film Production: Rachel Harmon

Transcriber: Cara Vanderree

IN ATTENDANCE:

Joan Weaver, Director of the Kinsley Public Library

Galen Boehme, Project Coordinator

Rachel Lightcap Harmon, Sagebrush Video Productions

Marilyn Kersting

Becky Birzer Hornung

Wilma Lancaster

Bob Hattrup

Jay Schaller

Kermit Froetschner

Ray Wetzel (*joins after the recording has started*)

Jerome Froetschner (*joins during the second half of recording*)

NOTE: During these interviews the Army Corp of Engineers is referred to when it should probably be another entity. The following comes from the June 24, 1965 Kinsley Mercury:

"The local civil defense unit received assistance before and during the flood from the National Guard, the Highway Patrol, the Civil Air Patrol, the American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army.

Two National Guard units, one from Hutchinson and the other from Dodge City, were in Kinsley by 6 p.m., Sunday, with five 1/4-ton trucks, one 2 1/2-ton truck, one 5-ton truck, one L19 airplane, one helicopter, a generator, a bull horn, radios and communication equipment. Five Highway Patrolmen arrived Sunday evening with a plane and a helicopter, to assist during the flood."

Joan: The title of their production is Turning Point: Stories of Change. I applied for the grant to do the 1965 flood in Kinsley and how it has changed and shaped Kinsley, being on a flood plain. Dr. Boehme came in the library and said, "Well, we really ought to get the stories of these people that live south of Offerle." And I said, "Oh, I've already got ten hours of interviews and we're going to make a five minute movie." It is going to be put with three other entities around the state and be put together so the whole thing will be about a half hour long. We're planning a big premier for the Kansas Humanities Council movie, but anyway, I thought we can't add it to that, and that was a different production company, too, out of Topeka. So, I thought well, I've done several other interviews of oral histories on audio with short videos, but I was worried that if we tried to do a group thing, that I wouldn't have good enough equipment. So that's when I thought about talking to Rachel, who knows all of you. And she had the equipment so we'd have good mics so we could catch things. Going back a little further, how many years ago did you interview at Trousdale?

Rachel: 2010.

Joan: 2010, and I did attend it. I live out south of Lewis, and just being interested and because we were doing these oral histories, I went out to their event and she had a group and they got together and they just reminisced and talked and that sort of thing. That's the way she did that. Then, she went back in that community and did separate interviews, just like we did with you. She went to people's homes and talked to them and then she put together two documentaries, actually, called, "South of the Parallel" and we do have them at the Kinsley Library if you would like to check them out. We hope to show you some of one of those today because she's very interested in getting your stories recorded on video and maybe doing a project for this area that would record the area.

Rachel: Because that's what I do!

Joan: So anyway, Dr. Boehme sort of got me going and we thought, well, I've got summer reading coming up and if you follow the newspaper, you know I have no time and no life once that starts. So I said I would have enough time to do one little thing this afternoon. So we'll talk about the flood, and depending on our time, maybe we'll also get into issues of farming and irrigation and when that started and your concerns about water in the future. We might even take a little time to do that, by the time we're done. I did run this off, if you'd like to take one of these, just to show you. I ran this off quickly right before I left the library today. It shows you the dates, so if you want to know when the flood hit, the date is there. I think it came through here on a Sunday. And then Kinsley on Monday. So I didn't know if that would help. We do have releases here that will give Rachel permission to use this film in a public setting that you're not going to come back and say you want a million dollars for being in it! Because we don't have a million dollars.

Becky: A thousand?

Rachel: We wish! A lot of what I do is on the spec. So I'm taking quite a risk going out and putting in the time and the money to come out and do this, and then getting enough that's good so people will want to buy it. So a lot of people think I get paid to do this kind of stuff, I don't. It's spec, which is quite a risk, so it's got to be good.

Joan: She promises that she won't embarrass you if you are in the film. She'll make you look good.

Becky: Air brushing?

Joan: If you'll fill the forms out, I hope these pens work, I just grabbed them out of the library before I left. So we'll have that taken care of. I think, we'll see how this works. I thought the best way to do this would be to just have you start and talk about when they told you there was going to be a flood, what was your reaction? We'll talk about that for a little bit, and then when you actually knew the water was coming, what were your preparations? In our interviews in Kinsley people told us about the way you harvested together and moved the combines together. And they also told us stories about how they think that straw left in the fields protected Kinsley. That it would have been worse if that straw hadn't spread the water out more. So we're going to do that, and then any stories you have and then maybe the aftermath, you know, when the National Guard was here with their helicopters and all that sort of thing. We'll just sit and reminisce. We won't pay any attention to Rachel; she'll just do her thing.

Marilyn: Actually, he's my brother and he needs the microphone.

Rachel: He's got one.

Marilyn: Well, she's just explaining, but she's got us all hooked up, and I thought, well.

Joan: We just need to be close to a mic, and they're every other person. So I think we're okay.

Rachel: This is basically is giving me permission to record your interview here, and to use it if I need to.

Kermit: What if my girlfriend sees it?

Bob: Well, keep it clean.

Rachel: Well, I'd make a lot of money off that!

Joan: You could use this to put out there on those dating sites, I guess. So, we're just going to just sort of reminisce. We're not going to pay any attention to Rachel. She's just going to do her thing, and then what our final project for this is probably going to be a trailer, I guess. Anyway, for this film that the Kansas Humanities Council is putting together, we're going to have a big premier in Kinsley and the three other communities around the state that are doing this. There will be a big premier and lots of publicity we'll be showing that film, and we thought we could come up with a nice little trailer with you people, with your reminisces of that flood coming through and getting to Kinsley, that that would be a nice addition to the day. Then there is also going to be a panel discussion that deals more with water issues. You know, currently and that sort of thing. It should be a fun Sunday afternoon I'm planning in June. I'm hoping we'll get it done by then.

Rachel: If you have any photographs or documents that you'd be willing to let me borrow? I don't keep them, I take real good care of them and then I get them back to you, so I can have something to put with what you tell me.

Joan: Then you can bring those to the library. We just scan things and give them back.

Rachel: If you'll just hand me your releases, I'll get those out of your way.

Joan: Hopefully, like you said, you'll get to show a little bit south of the parallel, and if you have a fun time today and enjoy doing this, Rachel would like to come back and do longer interviews with you and other people in the community. She'd go to your homes and get your stories on video. I hate to say this, but all of us are getting older and we're aren't going to be here forever. She'd like to preserve the story of this area. So keep that in the back of your mind when you see how this project goes and that maybe you'd like to do it, like the Trousdale/Centerview area.

Marilyn: I might say that Joan came out and interviewed Jack and I, and our children are very happy that took place because now he's no longer here.

Joan: We hear that a lot from people who've come back.

Rachel: Since we did the project over there (*Trousdale*), eight or nine of them have passed away. We would have lost all of that history. We just timed it right, it's very important. Like my kids, they have no idea of the things that your generation has gone through, WWII and the Depression, they have no idea. They think WWII is just a bunch of old people going to Washington D.C., you know, the Honor Flight. They have no idea, and my three were really involved in it. They went with me everywhere and Thomas helped run the camera and interviews. They were just so interested in going to all these places and meeting all these people. Then when Thomas started finding out that these people were passed away, he was just really upset. Because they were such nice people! So you know, it's very important that we record.

Joan: Her documentaries do end up being used in the school. She has one on the Dust Bowl, one on Dr. Carbody. They are disseminated. She sells them, it is a business. They are disseminated and people do watch them. She has won awards. So I think we're going to start. Do you want us to go around the table and everyone say their name or before they talk the first time?

I'm Joan Weaver, Director of the Kinsley Public Library.

Marilynn Kersting, five miles south of Offerle.

Becky Birzer Hornung, south of Offerle.

Wilma Lancaster, I live south of Offerle.

Galen Boehme of Offerle.

Bob Hattrup, south of Offerle

Jay Schaller, south of Kinsley

Kermit Froetschner, my dad lived south of Offerle

Joan: We're going to start with when you first heard. Who told you? Was it the Army Corp of Engineers? Who alerted you that there was a flood? I know there are stories about people not believing this. Just reminisce about that for a while.

Jay: I don't remember. Do you?

Kermit: There was a big flood out there at Lamar at Coolidge. They had like 15 inches of rain on that Monday, I believe it was, maybe Tuesday. Anyway, it got washed away. Dad knew it was going to flood, but I said, "That's going to be all scattered out before it gets here." I was wrong.

Rachel: Who was your dad?

Kermit: Harry Froetschner, south of Offerle. He called on that Friday morning and said, "Have you got your combine ready?" And I said I did. I don't know why, because our wheat was still a week away. Then Jack Kersting brought his combine down and Dad had one and I had one. Harry W. Wetzel, he came home with a brand new "C" Gleaner, brand new, and he helped us. So there were four combines going on that ground right south of town. Everybody just kind of helped everybody else. Over to the Co-op, they took wheat wet that Friday and Saturday and Sunday, helping everybody else. The Army Corp of Engineers chased everybody out with a helicopter, I remember that. Yes, it was a lot of water.

Joan: Do any of the rest of you have any memories leading up to hearing that the flood was coming?

Becky: I think probably radio, and my Dad talking about it. You know, he initially thought the river would get out of its banks on the lowland and such. We went to Mass Sunday morning, and it was on the news media on the radio that the flood waters had gone over the Coronado Bridge. I remember when we was coming home, Dad says, "This is going to be more than I initially thought it would be." It was like it was coming so far, how could it just keep coming with that much water and that much force? But when he heard that, he knew it was going to be a bigger deal than he initially had thought. I was just thinking, I know that the Saturday evening before, somebody had come down with their combine, because Dad was just thinking of getting the lowlands cut out. But then the next day, on Sunday, anybody that wanted to come with a machine! You know, I can just remember lots of machines, but we were short on trucks. By mid-afternoon, I know the combines were cutting out south of the place. There was one high spot on the whole farm, and they rode the combines up there and just dumped on the ground so they could keep cutting. That wheat was piled there and it stayed dry. I had just turned 15, so the whole idea of a flood, I really couldn't comprehend that. When I thought of a flood, I thought, okay, the river will rise and it will spread out. I had no idea of this massive wall of water that came.

Joan: Had there been floods before?

Kermit: Yes, in '49, there was a pretty big flood. I remember Albert Birzer and Dad and several others had Turk Lawson come down there with a D7 Cat. He pushed up a dike.

Jay: Was that '49?

Marilyn: I thought it was '51.

Kermit: Well, there was one in '49 too.

Jay: I was thinking '43 or somewhere in there, there was a bad one when we lived over where Bill Burr lives.

Kermit: Oh, you're too old!

Jay: Don't I know it.

Kermit: Well, '49 was when Turk Lawson came down and built that. I don't know who all paid for it, but everybody shared. We stayed down there that night in '49. It got to the top and then gopher holes; there was stuff in there we had to keep patching up. Then in '51 there was one just as bad. But that dike held.

Jay: Was that the same time they built the one from the South River Bridge going west on the north side of the river?

Kermit: I don't know.

Jay: I thought I was in high school, maybe, and they were sandbagging that one night. But I don't know for sure when they built it. I tried to get old Kenny Dupre, he'd know.

Joan: We had a big one in '51, but I don't have a '49 one. But they keep cropping up! I keep adding to this notebook. There's lots of different times it's flooded.

Jay: After the flood, I remember we went over. Your dad's cows were in the corral. We waded in about waist deep and they would not leave the corral. We'd get them out and they'd go right back in. We had to walk, and I don't even remember for sure where we even stopped, but we finally got them run out of there.

Becky: We brought them up from the pasture and corralled them, thinking they'd be okay. I think the Army Corps of Engineers, remember Dad said they kind of hollered down to get those cattle out, to get them in. Of course, the water was there then and I think it was hard to get the gates open and such. They finally got them out and it was just about dark when they finally got them drove over to put them into Russell Erickson's pasture, which was just north of us.

Joan: How close were you to the river? How far had the water come when it was up to the cattle?

Becky: I don't know, how far was it?

Jay: It was three quarters of a mile, almost, probably to the river from Dad's place.

Becky: Probably, because I think the homestead sat right in the middle of that particular section. Because I know that out there, by the corral, there was a post. Dad always said that was the center of the section, on the section line. Probably three quarters of a mile.

Marilyn: I think I remember a radio broadcast that said there were, I think, helicopters. Does anyone remember helicopters up above?

Others: Yes.

Marilyn: They were communicating with the radio station, and the radio station said to get those people off that bridge. I'm not sure if it was Bucklin or Ford. People just wanted to see the wall of water come in and the Corps of Engineers or the helicopter people were thinking, "Maybe that bridge is not going to hold." Or maybe the water came up over it.

Jay: There was a helicopter lit. Mom and I had already left and there was a helicopter lit in the yard and told Dad, "You'd better get in here, we'd better get you out of here." He said, "Well, there's a two story

house here. You'd better get everybody out of Kinsley if I'm going to get wet." It didn't even get within three or four hundred yards of the whole yard out there at the farm. But I know we were cutting wheat north of there up there at the creek, and when we come around that curve, oh, I'd say it was about as high as this table, just rolling. A wall of river almost half a mile wide, just trash and stuff. That was really a weird scene.

Kermit: Maybe you'll remember this. I know Dad was supposed to be in town getting the cattle out by the airport where he had 20 acres. He was supposed to be in there getting those out by Sunday afternoon. He was down watching the river. But he said that whenever it came in, it wasn't rising very fast, but then all at once, there came the trees and the logs and the dead cattle. It just made a wall, it was just a dam moving slow. I think Marilyn, you told me it was breaking out into the fields a half a mile back. The river wasn't full yet there, it was holding back. I bet we were cutting Toots (*C. Everett*) Mathes there that evening. I'm going to say it was about dark. That dike I was telling you about that Turk Lawson built, you could just see a wall that looked like three foot, it was about a half mile away, but it just looked like a wall of water. It didn't raise up or go like this, it just kind of poured over, just kind of moving. There had been some summer fallow ground, and I told myself that well as soon as the water starts coming over the summer fallow, we'll get out of here. But here came the helicopters, and I think they had loudspeakers, didn't they?

Others: Yes

Kermit: They told us to get to moving, to get out of there. Anyway, we got out to the road and the road was a couple foot lower than the field, and we drove in water to get to Dad's place on the correction line part of the way, I don't know. The next morning it was up there pretty close. Do you remember it getting in the yard? I don't.

Marilyn: I'm not sure about that, but I remember all the combines coming up the road from the south and the water was just coming behind them.

Kermit: But as far as getting stuck, it was sandy ground. I don't remember that much rain the week before. Does anybody else?

Marilyn: No.

Jay: I don't know that it really did rain here. We were cutting wheat here, so we were cutting. I don't believe it rained here, but I'm not sure.

Joan: I think the rain was in the mountains, and the dam at John Martin held that water, but then there was so much rain this side east of the dam and all the creeks feeding into the river, that's the water we got. It really wasn't the mountain water.

Kermit: I think John Martin had a hell of a rain.

Rachel: Was it called John Martin back then?

Joan: Yes, it was.

Kermit: Wasn't it the Cordoba Dam back then?

Joan: No, it was John Martin.

Kermit: Well, it used to be called something else.

Joan: At that time it was John Martin because I called up there and talked to a woman. Because some of the people in Kinsley thought there had been a breach in the dam, and she said, "No, actually the reservoir was nearly empty when that rain started in the mountains and it filled it in that short time. It helped, they had no problem. They may have had to let out some, but it would have been a lot worse if that dam hadn't been there.

Galen: I remember that particular weekend, I was coming from Salt Lake City to Offerle because I had moved my aunt out to Salt Lake City. I got on a bus in Denver and we were coming through Palmer, I think there's a city called Palmer Lake, and the rains just came down in torrents. We got into Lamar and La Junta that night and I took the last train out from La Junta that went through there for a couple weeks anyway. I think that was on a Sunday night, maybe a Saturday night. On Sunday night I had gone to Dodge City to visit my grandmother who was in the hospital. I drove down the Second Street Bridge. You could see people sandbagging the area. So then, as I said, it was the last train out of there for a couple weeks anyway. I was always under the impression that the water from Palmer Lake was what fed this area through here, but I do remember a lot of water in John Martin Dam when we went through that area that night. Then on that Monday, Dad and I moved the combines down to Leander Lightcap's place to cut wheat. I don't remember all who were there, and I don't remember hauling the wheat anywhere, but I'm sure we did. I do remember there were four sets of us down there cutting wheat. The last time we went the round, there were four combines making the rounds and the next time we went around the water was right there. Right there.

Kermit: Was that on a Monday? Or was that...

Galen: I don't remember what day it was.

Jay: Lyle, I talked to Lyle last night, and he said he remembered that cutting too, but evidently that would have had to have been...he said it got there about 2:00 or something.

Galen: It was in the afternoon.

Jay: It was two or three o'clock when it came in where they were cutting wheat there. But that would have had to been that Sunday.

Galen: It must have been a Sunday.

Jay: It must have moved fast, because at home, it wasn't, oh, I'd say 6:00 maybe when we saw that coming at the curve there on the farm. So that must have moved pretty fast to get there that quick. But like you say, Leander's is two miles to the river from there, isn't it?

Galen: I don't remember where we were cutting, except it was south of Leander's house.

Bob: If you know that creek that goes through the river bottom there, it broke out at the Bucklin Bridge and flowed through there, now that come later. That was just the second year that we had the Yoakum ground, which was ahead of you guys by a number of miles. It was coming in there by about twelve or one o'clock in the afternoon on Sunday. I had gone custom cutting with (...) and Habiger the year before, and we moved all Yoakum's furniture. They wasn't living there at that time, but it was a decent house, and we moved the furniture the night before. You was asking where it come from, where we got

the news, I still remember KGNO. Paul Shane, I think, or Paul McShane (*McShane is correct*), said, “This is Paul McShane on the Second Street Bridge” and, you know, going on late that Sunday. But back to the Habigers, I cut with them the year before, and anyhow, we called them and they came down there and Hornungs brought two machines, so we had five machines down there at Yoakum’s to cut that out before. We also cut Fred (...) had 80 acres down there. They cut that out also. But another thing I remember of it was the people coming to look, and the people coming to help too. There was lots of people there and then the following day after it had gone through, there was nothing except water.

Becky: I know on Sunday morning, it was mid-morning I guess, people came, and they wanted to move the furniture and stuff out of the house. My mom, or course if you knew my mom you’d have to appreciate this, but, “Oh no, it’s going to be alright, it’s going to be alright.” She was just insistent. “It’ll be okay!” And pretty soon, they just didn’t pay any attention to her. Stuff got loaded up and stuff went upstairs, I mean the whole bottom of the house was cleaned out. The freezers were loaded up and taken into Offerle. There was a house in Offerle, it’s not there now, it has been torn down because it was an older house. The people that had rented it had moved just real recently, and I don’t know who owned it, but anyhow they offered it to us to stay there. So we actually lived in Offerle for eight days, because we were underwater.

Kermit: How much got in the house?

Becky: Well, you know, it was the darndest thing. We didn’t get any in the house, but the Army Engineers said that by their calculations it should have been up to the windowsills. What prevented it was my dad had corrals on the east and south and on the west, and it had that woven wire sheep fence. That just all packed in with the wheat straw. It just made a wall to separate the waters around the house. I remember it must have been probably a couple days afterward, it was the first that Dad thought he could get back in there. There was a shelterbelt west of the place, and he waded down through that and he walked along the tree belt so he could hang on to trees, because, you know, he had a walking stick. I think it was just Providence intervention, because Dad did not know how to swim. The tree belt came down and then there was another tree belt that went around the place, so there was just a drive in between where you went from one field to another. Where those waters had split, it washed I’ll bet it was a 20 foot hole. It was down to the gravel and Dad flood irrigated then and stuff, and boy did that foul up the field big time. It was just a miracle that Dad didn’t just walk into... I guess he must have been on the south side of those trees. Because he could have just stepped off into... It was just a miracle, because it was just a straight drop-off. It was the weirdest thing the way that hole had washed out, that he didn’t just fall into that.

Jay: It is funny how those... that did come away from the river in certain places, where it would wash a hole 30 or forty feet wide and a couple hundred feet long. But why just in certain spots? I don’t know why, but maybe it was just where the current was going.

Becky: So we were very fortunate on that part, but, oh, the mess afterwards. All the outbuildings and the shop and the shed.... That was such a mess. And then when everything was drying up, it had that thick old crust of silt and it stank! Then the water... we had to put Clorox in the water because you couldn’t drink the water. And you know it was hot, and working, and you had to drink Clorox water! It was just terrible. You know, you were dying of thirst, but you didn’t want to drink the water!

Joan: Did you get typhoid shots?

Becky: Oh yes, the health department had... I guess it was typhoid, but there was vaccinations that everybody was supposed to get.

Kermit: Kathy Pickard (*Kathleen Wetzel Pickard*) she lived in Salina, but she got married that Sunday, here, on that Sunday the 13th, before it started.

Wilma: Her wedding is in this paper, you might want to look at it.

Kermit: I'll talk to her! She told me Monday that they took off on their honeymoon and got to Colorado Springs. I don't know if they drove in rain, but she said she'd never seen it rain so much. Then, I guess it was Tuesday morning, but they had to cross a bridge and the bridge was under water. She said they had a Thunderbird car, I think, and water was in the floorboards crossing it, but they made it across. After they'd crossed they looked down, and there was a car down there way below the water. So they came home. I don't know what they called "home". They had a place rented in Dodge, I think, but he worked for *High Plains Journal*, and that's where Blevins Tire is now, I think. So he got called back to sandbag. So I don't if anything came of that or not, but she said Dodge was a mess. I think it ruined the house they had rented and she had quite a story. Yes, she got married the following Sunday. Her dad called me Friday and said that's not going to flood, that's going to scatter out. It was out at Cimarron then, you know, three miles wide. But that was all going to scatter out and fizzle out. But there was still a wall of water coming!

Rachel: Can you introduce yourself?

Ray: I'm Ray Wetzel. The folks lived just on the corner down here on the county line. We were two miles from the river each way. I was eleven years old when that came in. We do have a short segment of eight millimeter film of when it came in and the helicopter that landed out in the pasture there telling us to get out. There were a lot of people around, of course, watching, seeing what was going on. Dad and Albert Wetzel thought they could dam up the road ditch further down the way, like they did in 1941. It stopped the water from coming clear on down there. Well, it went around that. There was more water this time. As a kid, I thought it was neat, you know, the road ditch here, the water was coming down through the ditch, but all at once it started spreading out more and more and it lacked eight inches of going in the folks' house that time. I remember too the airplane that flew across real low as the water was coming in. That was another warning; you were supposed to get out. Because they had broadcast that on the news and stuff; they flew over us. But we all did leave, other than my granddad. He stayed there. He never left. He kept trying to shovel dirt in front of the basement windows so the water wouldn't go down the basement. They still ended up with a little bit in there, and the smell of that old mud and stuff! I remember that. Oh, it was sticky and nasty smelling. Every time it rained, you still had that smell for about two or three years later, at least. It was just that bad. The folks finally had some sand hauled in there to get rid of the smell because every time it rained, it was nasty.

Rachel: Now, who was your grandfather?

Ray: Edward Wetzel.

Rachel: Bear with me, it's been a long time, and I don't remember a lot of people.

Ray: My dad was Raymond, Raymond and Ruth lived there on the corner, about two miles from the river. Again, they didn't think the water would ever get there because they were talking about '41 and then I think in the 50's there was another flood. It never got there, and they thought, "Oh, this one won't

do any different.” But it got...well, the next day we came into the place with a little Massey Harris Tractor, and it was over the top of the front tires. That’s how deep it was in the yard. For days afterwards down there, we were a couple miles from the river, but you could hear that water rushing down there. You could hear the noise, the water running down there all the time two miles away. It took awhile for it to finally get down and then to clean the mess up everywhere. We didn’t really have anything that washed out. We just had the mud come in there. Right west of the place was kind of an old hill, and the vehicles and stuff we parked ‘em up there, so no water ever got to them. It’s real high there, but right through the place, you know, it had plenty of water come through there at that time.

Jay: What’s your story, Wilma?

Wilma: It’s bad.

Joan: We’ve been waiting for it.

Wilma: The water went through our house, so we never did go back. So we had to rejuvenate another house. But anyway, my three girls were at home with me and Brent was only five, so he was just a nuisance. But they took all the furniture upstairs. Of course, we couldn’t move the deep freeze, so it went through the flood. But it’s still running! It’s down in Brent’s basement. So Coronado made a good deep freeze; I could do an advertisement for them. The only thing we didn’t take upstairs was, and it belonged to my mother, was a china closet. I’ve never refinished it because you could tell how far the water was. It shows, so I’ve never refinished it. Cindy could probably tell you more; she got mad because I didn’t want to leave. I finally, when Brent was born, that was in ‘60, got a bathroom in that house. I’d never had one, so I just didn’t want to leave!

Joan: So what shape was the house in when you came back?

Wilma: Not livable.

Joan: Is it still there?

Wilma: Yes, it’s still standing. It’s a really old house. I heard at one time that M.W. Oliphant was born there. But anyway, it had the wide boards and they just came up like that. And then that mud and stuff, I know when they went back there...what was so bad was the gnats. It was hot, you know, and those gnats just ate them up. It was quite a while before we ever got back in there. It wasn’t good. And the helicopter did land in our yard and told us to get out! We weren’t wanting to go. And also, they drove Duane’s cattle up to Harry Froetschner’s.

Kermit: I don’t...

Wilma: You don’t remember that?

Kermit: No. We were right there cutting wheat, but I know Dad was supposed to be in Kinsley moving them, but he didn’t do that. They finally had to go in there, I’m going to say, two days later. Mrs. Harvey (...), they lived right there by the airport, she called up and said, “Your cattle are on the front porch!” But I don’t think they moved them for a couple days because that was deep in Kinsley.

Wilma: Duane was out cutting wheat, too. But he’d already cut his, I guess, so he and his dad... I know I remember him mentioning going down to Ed Ley and then they just helped coming on towards

our place. But I think he already had ours cut. So they were already out helping others.

Jay: I think Doug Schaller's wife was there at Billie and Gerald's (*Herrmann*) when that hit. They were probably just gabbing or whatever. She tried to come north to my place there, and she got a little over half a mile, and the water was so deep that the car flooded out, but it got clear up over the motor and ruined the car. But I don't even remember where Billie and Cheryl went, or Billy did. Did she stay there?

Wilma: She could have, I know it didn't get in their house.

Jay: Well, I'll bet. Billie said she was staying there, She said she was going to stay there.

Joan: Did anyone besides yourself lose their house?

Wilma: I don't think so.

Joan: So you were the lucky ones.

Wilma: I guess. It wasn't a very good house, but it was home. Our propane tank floated away, and I asked Kenny Ackerman if he remembered. You know, he was the propane man; he delivered propane. I don't remember how far it went, two or three miles down the...

Jay: I don't remember finding it north of there.

Galen: Would they have moved the cattle on a Sunday?

Wilma: I have no idea, but Sunday just doesn't ring a bell. I don't know why because we were always in church on Sunday, and I didn't remember it was a Sunday.

Kermit: Well, Sunday night was probably when it finally got there and started coming across the field.

Bob: The house down at Yoacum's, although nobody was living there at the time, it was still a very good house. It didn't get in the house, but it got under the floor joists. They all warped then and it did a number on that.

Jay: I think it got underneath Gerald's house too, I remember after the flood a few years, we jacked it up and put it on some blocks for a foundation, to raise it up more. But the water was probably 12" or 18" deep in Gerald's round top there.

Wilma: Yes, that's about how deep it was in our house.

Kermit: That section south of Dad's house, it used to have a sand ridge there that blew all the time, right east of Toots' (*C. Everet Mathes*) place. That next morning there was about 10 acres of that 800 acres there that wasn't under water. There was just a little bit on that... we thought it was a big hill, but it just about covered it all. I'm sure Toots got water in his basement, or around his house.

Jay: I don't remember. It sits up a ways.

Becky: You definitely would have had it up in the yard.

Jay: Yes, I'm sure.

Becky: I remember that when we got done cutting wheat and it was evening and the combines had moved out. I don't know how but you know how it is, you always have lunch in the field during harvest. There was a bunch of us congregated over at Mathes' and ate. You know, out of the tailgate of the pickup. We had sandwiches and stuff and I guess from there, everybody evacuated then. I do remember when Dad walked down that shelterbelt, I remember when he was talking about it later. It was kind of like encouragement, because when he was walking in, he heard a couple of the roosters crowing. He knew the chickens were okay! They had to sit on those roosts for days because of the water, but they survived!

Joan: Did you lose animals?

Kermit: I think all the cattle floating down the river came probably came from Coolidge or Syracuse or Holly, Colorado. Those were the ones that really got hit hard because it was just there. This area had four or five days to prepare for it. And the wheat was still a little bit green, so everybody from the uplands came down to help the people. The Offerle Co-op did a good job and I think the Kinsley Co-op did too. We didn't go there, but they were taking wet wheat. Of course, a week later the people were cutting all around here. So they had dry wheat to mix with it. And I think a big blessing for down there along the river after it was all over with, yes, it stunk and they had six inches of silt in the stubble, but at least the stubble held it. It was better ground for several years. We didn't have to work the field until September that year, if I remember right.

Jay: You got all that topsoil from Colorado? All that good stuff?

Kermit: Well, I'll bet it was four to six inches deep in the stubble.

Joan: What about plowing the fields with the debris?

Jay: I don't really recall a problem with it. Of course, we didn't have that much that flooded.

Kermit: Trees limbs and stuff.

Joan: Fences?

Jay: Oh, they were all gone.

Ray: Yes, it got the fences.

Becky: Ours were pretty gone, and down the river they were. But I remember when the cleanup started, I think the second day, Dad ran over something and there went a big tractor tire. It ruined it. I think he ruined a couple of tractor tires, just in cleaning up crap that had washed in and stuff and he couldn't see it. It was buried and everything. It was expensive that way.

Rachel: Did anybody die? Or was anybody swept away?

Galen: Not that I know of.

Kermit: Maybe back in the Syracuse area or something like that, they probably didn't hurry, I suppose. Everybody else had time, but we were very lucky around here to get the wheat cut before it came. In Garden City and Syracuse, I don't know if they had any wheat. I really can't remember how good the wheat was. Do you remember?

Jay: It wasn't too awful bad. Of course, that far back there, we didn't raise that 80 bushel stuff. You know, 30 bushel was a good big crop.

Kermit: And with a small combine.

Bob: But if I remember right, Everett said they took in over 100 thousand bushel and virtually all of it was high moisture, 15 or so.

Rachel: Now who did you say?

Bob: Everett Bradfeldt. He was the manager of the Offerle Co-op at that time.

Becky: Well, it was the quickest harvest we ever had, and actually had wheat to cut. We'd had some quick harvests, but didn't have the combine go out either. But, yes, they started in on Saturday evening and I think probably by 4 or 5 o'clock everything was cut out.

Ray: Yes, the water had come in.

Joan: Are there any comments about the community and how it came together? There have been a few, and we want to add to that.

Galen: There was no question, people just jumped in and helped.

Kermit: The wheat north of Offerle and Spearville, it was still green. It was a week away, so a lot of people just came down to help. We helped them back after it got done.

Jay: Well, the sand, you know, down here, is generally always a good week or so early, from a lot of them way up north. So that helped too, a little bit.

Galen: What I remember about Pauline Lightcap was she served a delicious meal that day, around her table.

Ray: Yes, the water was coming in that time, down there by the corner there. The water was kind of backing up in our yard, so Albert Wetzel (a great uncle there) he had a TD 14 International Crawler. He brought it down there to the corner and he plowed through the road and busted that all out so the water would go on out. Well then afterwards, people would drive in there and the water was still going through there and they would get stuck in there. We had to take a tractor out there and pull them out!

Rachel: Dr. Boehme mentioned the meal. Do you remember what was served?

Galen: I think it was a chicken dinner.

Rachel: It was probably fresh chicken, too.

Galen: I think so.

Bob: I think Bill Leith said that there was people come in and helped him move furniture, and he said he never did get their names.

Kermit: Probably Billy Wetzel was down in there too; wasn't he at that time?

General: Yes, he was.

Kermit: Well, it sure got into Bill Leith didn't it?

Ray: Yes, it got into Bill Leith's. I remember it. His folks' it lacked eight inches, a 2 x 8, that's all it lacked of going in the house. The whole foundation underneath there; there was all water underneath there. As I came in that evening, as a kid I had little baby chicks out there and I forgot about them. Then all at once it dawned on me, "Oh, my chicks are right out there." So we had an old washing machine wash tub and I floated it out there and put them in it and floated them to the barn and got them out of there. Of course, as kids, we had a couple cousins there at the same time and that wash tub the next day, it worked pretty good. You'd get up there at the one end and hop in it and you could float on down through the yard. We were doing that off and on.

Wilma: I talked to Larry Leith up town, just the other day. I asked him, you know, about this and if he wanted to come. He said, "Well, I wouldn't be any help, I was in the service. I was in the Dominican Republic!"

Bob: Yes, he was gone in the service at that time.

Galen: Does anyone know how it affected the Molitor's?

Bob: Well, they didn't have any cattle that year. You know, it ruined a lot of cattle. But that particular year, they didn't have any cattle. Yoakum, we didn't have that grass yet, we were renting the farm ground, but we didn't have the grass. All that was in there was two horses. I remember the highway patrolman came in there and wanted me to get off the combine to get the horses out of there. I said, "Oh, they've been through a flood before, they'll be all right." I think that upset him. Mom was there, and she said, "I'll give you permission to get them out." They went over there to get them out, but they never did. They found a high spot. But as far as the effect from it, Ed, I don't know what he had as far as people coming and cutting it or whatever. I remember he pulled the machinery up on the very corner of that section where it raises up out of the river bottom.

Kermit: I think I remember the combines. You said your dad pulled them up on the section for the evening. Somebody had combines parked at Greyson's well there east of your house, or west of your house, along that road. I don't think the water got right to them, but it was all around them.

Becky: I think it was about two days later, when the backwaters came through.

Bob: That creek come out through later. I said it broke out of the river, but it just gets high enough that's where the drainage starts north of the Bucklin Bridge. That flows in right by...

Becky: I just remember them talking about backwaters, and then it flooded across the... you know, like north of Mervin's. That is kind of like a second hit of a flood.

Bob: Yes, that's where that comes from, and it's a lot slower.

Kermit: It ran a lot longer. That came in from up north of the Bucklin Bridge. That's where that starts, and when it gets out there, that's where it comes across.

Bob: I understand that in the '30's, the river broke out there and water was flowing through that creek. Then they diked that up down there to the west of the Bucklin Bridge.

Rachel: When you say "the creek", which creek are you talking about.

Bob: Well, I wish that creek had a name, but I call it the "River Bottom Creek". I think it dumps into Coon Creek right there by your feedlot.

Ray: I think it comes up through past Ed Leith and Fritz (*Fred*) Ley, over in there. They had water up in that area too, on the one side. Now their places were up high enough it didn't bother anything. Just like Albert Wetzel and all them. Their places are up high enough that it didn't bother anything over in there. But that all runs back through the other way there.

Rachel: Now which one of the Lies had the watermelon patch?

Galen: Fritz. That was my great uncle.

Rachel: I remember going and getting watermelon, but that's all I remember.

Joan: Uh-oh. At night?

Rachel: No!

Ray: He had a shotgun out there for that!

Jay: Well, it wouldn't have gotten in Fritz's yard there; that's pretty high isn't it?

Ray: Yes, that's pretty high right in there.

Jay: Yes, but it surely got into the pastures and stuff.

Ray: It was really kind of around him there is what it was.

Joan: This is probably a question you can't answer, but do you have any idea how much acreage it flooded? Whether it was wheat or whatever?

Jay: What's that a picture of? Is it Dodge City?

Wilma: I'm not sure where that picture was taken. Do you know?

Marilyn: No.

Rachel: Do you all have any pictures?

Ray: We have a short segment of 8 millimeter, and I wish we could copy it off on something else. We got it where the helicopter landed out there in the pasture and took off. And some of the water as it came in the next day, the water and stuff. Yes, we do have pictures of that, but that's all we have.

Rachel: I can take it off of that.

Ray: You can take it off that old millimeter? Wow, we got a whole bunch of them I'd like to take off.

Joan: You have to hire her to do that.

Ray: That would be all right!

Joan: But the flood ones...

Ray: We would like you to take it off. Because my son was watching it the other night watching the helicopter take off. He was in the service over in Iraq and stuff, and he flew in a lot of choppers. A chopper from 1965 was a little different from what he flew in.

Rachel: Was it a Huey that they came in? Or was it...

Ray: It was some little small chopper that he... It landed up there in the evening.

Jay: I think there was two of them.

Ray: It landed out there in the evening. Herbert Wetzel and all them, they were all over there looking and watching as it was it was just coming in. He landed there.

Kermit: They had loudspeakers, too.

Ray: Yes, they did.

Wilma: I looked in the inside (*of the picture*). It's near Dodge City.

Joan: Becky was telling me a good story over here.

Rachel: And what was frightening?

Becky: Just the whole thing of the flood. I was scared, because I didn't know what to think. I think probably the one thing that really worried me, because my dad was a strong man, and it was the first time I had ever seen him shed tears. After we had evacuated, because we did not know... you know, it was thought that the house would not go under water. Where we lived at the time, you know, it was over 1,000 acres and there was probably only 20 or 25 acres that didn't go under, this hilltop where they dumped the wheat. So everything was underwater, and you know, the cattle were here and everywhere. It was scary for me, as a kid, because I didn't...

Kermit: You know, I've never thought about that before, but the water wells all got filled up with silt too, didn't they.

Others: Yes.

Becky: You know, it is interesting, our house well, the water well, was in our cellar. It had a concrete floor and such. It was a place we went when there was a tornado watch going on or something. But, you know, you didn't go down, I mean as kids, because Mother would drag us to the cellar when the storms came in, and it was, "Oh man!" It wasn't a nice place to be because it was an old cellar. But anyhow, that's where the water pump was. When you talk about your freezer still working, I mean, our water pump worked after this. It was the darnedest thing. But they did... it sat down on the floor down in there. But after that they put it on an extension and put the pump up to the ceiling so if we... and after that we did have... I know one year we did have underflow and it all filled up with water. But that was clear water; it wasn't flood waters. That was pretty astonishing that the water pump still worked after being in water. It just shows that they made things pretty good back in those days.

Wilma: I don't know if ours worked or not because we never went back!

Becky: But the freezer did!

Ray: Well, as the water came in, the folks had the well pit right outside the house there, and it started filling in. Dad got in there and got it out just before the water got in there and flooded the pump and everything. Then he went and tried to pump the well after everything was gone. It still had a smell, an odor, to it. It just wouldn't pump out. We had to abandon the well. It was just that bad. Every time you would pump, it was a nasty smell would come out of the casing, and we abandoned it.

Rachel: Pause, I have to change a tape.

Joan: When she talks about being afraid, were any of you guys when you were out, afraid of being stuck or....

Jay: I don't remember.

Wilma: We didn't have time to be scared.

Jay: We were busy! Moving stuff, I think.

Kermit: I just remember we were standing on Toots Mathes' (*C. Everett Mathes*) ground that night as the helicopters were buzzing the combines. We were just about done, so anyway, when we pulled out, the road was lower than the field, so we drove them for probably a half mile in water, just getting them out. They were doing what they were supposed to do, but we didn't pay any attention. Some places, the water didn't come as fast as the others. I know west of there, it probably came up faster there than where we were cutting.

Jay: I don't know either, why, you know, through Joe's pasture, why there was just that wall. That was like you say, close to half a mile from the river. That far out, that was just rolling. I don't know why either. Of course, I think it hit that quick there at Gerald's because Helen got caught before she could get out of it.

Bob: I did go up with Ed Molitor the following day and fly over it to see. We took off from Everett's (*C. Everett Mathes*) over here and flew above it, so I got to see it. It seemed like water was coming down out of the sand hills, you know, the main deal had gone on by. That's where a guy needed a film

of that too.

Rachel: Can you see any damage today? Or can you tell where it was today? Other than on your freezer or your cabinet.

Wilma: Well, the old house! It's still standing.

Jay: Just the holes where it cut a new channel and washed big old holes. You'll see these trees out in the middle of a quarter or something, that's where it washed a hole.

Rachel: So you could point it out? You could say, "Right here." and show it to me and I could see it?

Jay: Oh yes. There's a lot of it.

Joan: You could take pictures of the house; that would be great.

Rachel: Would you like to introduce yourself?

Jerome: I'm Jerome Froetschner. They're my brother and sister (*referring to Kermit Froetschner and Marilyn Kersting*).

Rachel: It's been a long time so bare with me. There's a release there that gives me permission to record your interview with us.

Joan: I think I told you in the beginning, Kinsley folks thought that you having the stubble and straw left in the field helped save Kinsley because it did spread the water out. Do you have any recollections of thinking that at the time?

Bob: Well, I think the river bottom widens out starting at the Bucklin Bridge considerably after that. I think that would be a big factor.

Jay: Yes, now it would be; there would just be a new river channel cut.

Bob: I would think so.

Jerome: I remember that night. We had bought an old Willy's Jeep and my brother J.D. took that old Willy's Jeep down south of Mom's and Dad's house just about a quarter mile. That's where the water was, but it was a big mess of real slow moving straw. It looked like it was all solid out there, and just real slow moving across the field. That afternoon, my Dad and my Mom and me went down to the river. I was 12 years old, and everybody else was cutting wheat, cutting it green to get it out of the field. We went down to the river in Mom's and Dad's car. Remember what that was? A '62 Galaxy, I think.

Kermit.: I don't remember.

Jerome: We sat and watched the river coming up. I think we got there, oh about 5:00, maybe, 4:00, I can't remember for sure. But it seemed like the water was coming up about an inch a minute. Then pretty soon some trash started coming down the river. I remember a Mallard duck decoy and an oxygen cylinder went floating by. Then pretty soon, here come a dead steer rolling down the river. A few minutes after that, a helicopter flew over and the loudspeaker came on and said, "Get the heck out

because the crest is just up the river up there a little bit!” A three or four foot crest, I guess. We got out, and Kermit (*Froetschner*) and my Mom’s brother was cutting, I don’t know, was J.D. driving a combine then too? (*His mother was Clara Wetzel Froetschner; her brother was Harry Wetzel.*)

Kermit.: I remember Dad was off goofing off . I guess somebody must have been driving the combine.

Jerome: You went over there and helped Toots finish up.

Kermit.: Before that, he was supposed to have been moving cattle, but he missed.

Joan: You may after some more stories, but afterwards did you do anything because you thought there might be the 1966 flood? You said you put the pump up in the basement... Did you do anything else? Did anybody build levees?

Kermit: In Dodge City, they had the flood control. They put in all that iron to keep it from flooding in Dodge. I guess it worked; they haven’t had any water in there!

Wilma: It’s been dry ever since!

Kermit That was one job that they did in Dodge City that somebody made a lot of money on because they were supposed to dike up the river so they could get in there to work and clean it out and put all that rick rack up along the side. They dug a dam up by.... I’m going to say Howell... or someplace west. It just filled up and it went under in the underflow. So they never did have to worry about... they got in there and they could work ten times faster than if there’d been any water to mess with.

Jay: Didn’t they say that made an underground river? At Wilroads you know, it runs there quite a bit.

Kermit: Yes, it always went down. So they got that flood control without having to work in water.

Ray: Dad, when he put the new well pit in, he made it a lot higher so water could never get in it again. It’s probably about two feet taller than the ground around there, just in case it would ever happen again. He put the new one in, and it’s all concrete. Instead of like the old one, it wouldn’t fill full of water.

Jerome: There’s a guy in Kinsley built a dike around his house, old Dewey Blank. And of course you know that over there in Larned, they built a dike around the city and put a gate there across the highway.

Jay: They’ve never used that since, either.

Jerome: I don’t think it ever flows.

Jay: There’s balls in there and gates. I don’t think they’ve ever used it.

Joan: They moved them out of the flood plain. Do you have any other.... They talked about hearing that the water was coming... are there any other stories that you want to add?

Jerome: I was just going to tell you about my boss. I live in Colorado Springs. I moved out to Colorado Springs in ’91, and he said before that they remember that flood of ’65 too because it flooded all the bridges out there. They remember that for about two weeks, it seemed like it rained every day about an inch. He remembers one Saturday he emptied a five gallon bucket set out in the middle of his

yard to check rain fall and to check the rain. That bucket ran over! And that might have been the same time that they got that rain out there; they also got it on this side of the John Martin Dam. They also got about ten inches, I think, out by Syracuse and eastern Colorado.

Ray: They had quite a rain out there below the John Martin Dam; we had some relation that was out there. They had to go in by boat to get them out. I don't remember if it was 11 inches in just a few hours they got, that it came down. For a while, they couldn't even get in to them with a boat. It was just that powerful coming in, and how it came down. Of course, of lot of his ground, it washed real bad when it first came in there. It was real sandy.

Jerome: They said that water only lasted a few hours and then it was gone, but all the bridges were pretty much all washed out, so nobody could get around town very well. I was thinking that Kathy and Don (*Kathleen Wetzel Pickard and Don Pickard*); were they married that same Saturday?

Kermit: I was just telling them about Kathy I wish she was here. They went out to Colorado Springs on that Monday; they must have got out there Monday night and had to leave Tuesday. They went across a bridge that the water was going across and into the car on the floorboards when they left to get out of wherever they was at. Colorado Springs or somewhere. Then they had to come back home and sandbag for the High Plains Journal (*Dodge City*); that's where Don worked at that time.

Joan: I had a question earlier about... I was sitting here thinking that today, if this happened, you'd be on your cell phone. In '65, did you have your CB's to communicate? You said you got together... Or were you just yelling across the field?

Rachel: You also had a telephone, a party line?

Men: We had a party line. And the radio.

Rachel: What radio station?

Woman: KGNO.

Rachel: Did they have a rain gauge report about it?

Ray: Well, they had it on the TV on the news, too, that they'd had a big rain out there at Lamar (*Colorado*). It was coming down, three or four days before, to kind of prepare you. We knew about it coming. I think the folks went down there to the Bucklin Bridge too, about that time too; it was starting to come up. You'd just follow back around and you could just see it coming in. Everybody knew it was coming.

Kermit.: I guess I just assumed that it was all going to scatter out Nothing like what it was. First time I've been wrong, Jay!

Bob: Was it the last time?

Jay: Do you want me to start talking?

Marilyn: Well, if it wouldn't have spread out in this area, probably Larned and Great Bend would have had it a lot tougher.

Kermit: For about half of Kinsley, it wasn't that bad, I don't think.

Jerome: Well, J.D. was saying he remembered that trash built up along the railroad bridge east of Kinsley, and they were thinking about dynamiting it. Did you recall anything like that? I think they did bring a crane in on the railroad tracks and pulled the trash up out of it so they didn't have to dynamite. That probably slowed it down somewhat so Larned didn't the full front of it. I think there were other places down the river that diked up too, so it was really spread out. It was probably two miles wide around here.

Kermit: We drove out that summer, I don't know, a couple months later. We went out to Colorado, Grenada and Coolidge, and through there and the Sand Hills to see where in some places it just washed a 20 foot sand hill away. Water trying to get away on that sandy ground. So they had it rough out there, because if they had anything in the way, they weren't going to get out of there, you know.

Joan: Did you find any treasures afterwards that washed in? Did you find that gold?

Kermit: We're not talking about that.

Jerome: You know after that flood, it took several weeks for the ground to dry out. We and my brother, J.D., went down the river and set bank lines and baited with frogs we caught along the bank. We'd put them out and bait them in the morning and check the lines at night. A lot of times, we didn't get them checked and they might have had a channel cat or a bull head on it that was ate up by turtles. Sometimes there was just a head left. That and ... I remember going down to the river and taking the wires off the posts and tying them down to the ground. The only thing good thing there was to take them wires off the posts and tie them down to the ground and let the trash go over the top. Otherwise, it would just wipe your fence out.

Joan: You did that before?

Jerome: Yes. We did that before the flood and then we'd go on back there and straighten them out. The gnats were so bad we'd put grease in our ears! Using the grease gun to keep the gnats out.

Marilyn: Somebody else was talking about the gnats.

Wilma: When they went back to get the furniture and stuff, the gnats were terrible.

Rachel: As a result of during the 30's, you know, all the dirt flying around, they'd put the dishes upside down. And in World War II, you know, everything was saved to use for the war effort. Was there anything that you did because of the flood that you still see yourself doing today?

Galen: Well, if it's anything, it's helping the neighbors out. Because of the situation, you just go. That's the trait of rural life, I think. Priorities are high.

Kermit: J.D. was telling the other day, he said that one comment that wasn't quite good, you know, everybody on the river bottom, Offerle (*Co-op*) was taking their wheat. I'm sure Kinsley was too, but Offerle was taking their wheat wet, and they was giving them a good deal. It was probably 25 they just marked it down as 17 or something. But then the people up on the high ground said, "By God, I'm going to start cutting. If I haul wet wheat, I can start cutting up on the high ground too." Well, I guess they said, "No."

Becky: I know myself, it gave me a respect for water, moving water. Because I think, you know, it is very powerful. When I see rushing water, I don't like it. I guess it is just a fearsome thing.

Jerome: After a few days, the river went down, and me and my brother J.D. went down to the river and we decided we were going swimming in the river. It was probably six or eight feet deep there and flowing pretty good. We tied a rope around our chests so we couldn't get washed away. They were probably 20 foot long; we just went out there a few feet. The water was moving pretty fast, so we just ended up getting washed against a bank. We got back out; it wasn't no big experience, you know. But we did walk down and J.D. reminded me of that. I'd forgot all about that we walked down towards Duane Lancaster's house; he lived down there. We got down there about where the old Santa Fe Trail Marker was in the ditch. I don't think we could tell where it was because the water was still too high, but we did have a post or a stick or something to check to see if there was a washout in front of us. And the water was still moving pretty fast across that road. I think we got up hip deep, and you know, on a 12 year old, that would be about two feet. Then we turned around and come back.

Joan: Did any of you children get yelled at by your parents?

Jerome: I don't remember them getting mad. I'm kind of surprised we got to do that!

Kermit: How long was it before you got back to your house?

Wilma: Gosh, I don't know. When we left, we went up to Duane's parents, and I know we lived there for quite a while. I just don't know, but it was quite a while before they got back in there. All I remember is him talking about the gnats being so terrible. And of course the smell and the slick stuff in the house. They couldn't hardly walk

Joan: How about snakes? Were they more plentiful?

Kermit: They must have drowned.....

Joan: Little critters, were they probably drowned too?

Jerome: There were lots of frogs. The frogs were plentiful.

Joan: Does anyone have anything else they'd like to add? If not, I'd like to just have you quickly tell, because we want time at the end to show you this South of the Parallel, but we're in a different situation with water today. Now, were you irrigating in '65? Had you started to irrigate?

All: Yes, a little bit.

Joan: I'd just like you to talk a little bit about your concerns for the future and the drought we've gone through. I guess we're sort of maybe coming out of it? What do you see as the future for water in this area?

Jay: Well, it's going to keep depleting.

Kermit: The top water is depleting, you know, and the guys out in western Kansas, you know, where they used to have a lot of water, now the sprinklers, you have to really look to see if they're sprinkling. I was out there last week, and some of these people have a section circular sprinkler, the big ones, and you have to really look to see if there is anything coming out. So, they're probably 25% of what they

were 30 years ago. In '65, there was just very little irrigation around here. There was flood irrigation, Wetzel said, they had to move sprinkler pipe. As far as the... flood, the sprinklers were just started in '64 or '65.

Jerome: I know that out in eastern Colorado, they used to irrigate a lot of onions out there. And truck farms, you know, cantaloupe and watermelon. I think they still raise them out there, but they're all dry land now. The onions are pretty much all gone. They did that around Grenada; of course, I think they grew a lot of sugar beets out there earlier.

Jay: Oh yes, there was a big processing plant out there at Los Animas, I think, and Grenada and in there.

Galen: You mentioned Dewey Blank a few minutes ago. One time he made the comment to me, that the future of our area depended on water and power. He didn't know which would go first, the water or the power. It would be so expensive to bring the water out of the ground.

Jay: That's not a small deal anymore.

Galen: That's not a small deal.

Joan: Have some of you gone back to dryland farming rather than...?

Kermit: You use the water a little bit better; don't plant corn or maybe plant some other crop that uses less water. You can do that. But irrigation water, say, if it does go down, it's going to be unfeasible to pump, you know. That's going to limit it. If you can't afford to pump, then you will shut down. And the state is getting a lot stricter too, on what you can plant.

Jay: Yes, they're getting real ticklish on the meters on them, now. Don't over pump!

Joan: So, do you see these regulations prolonging... that your descendants are still going to be farming here in 50 years?

Jay: Oh, they'll be farming.

Kermit: They'll shut you down.

Joan: But there'll still be water in that Ogallala, and the underflow of the river? We don't have too much of a river anymore.

Jay: They maybe just won't plant the big, heavy population. Instead of trying to push for 200, maybe push for 110 or 100 bushel corn instead of ... to where they'd cut down on half water or something. That's probably what they'll do first. Then shut them off. Is that what you'd do Kermit?

Kermit: I quit.

Joan: You're old enough to quit.

Jay: I done quit too, before you did.

Rachel: What message would you like to leave for future generations? What about this time period that we've been discussing today. Your grandkids, your great-great-grandkids, what would you like them to know about what you've experienced or be aware of, what they need to keep in mind. Because you know, this is how you got to where you are today.

Kermit: I think we're kind of glad we're at the place where we are. I don't know if I'd want to be a 20 year old now or somebody coming up and looking at the regulations they have. Some of them are good, some of them bad.

Jay: I hate to think what's facing these kids, my grandkids. Look down the line at the rules and the laws and stuff. I don't know, it scares me what they're going to dream up.

Becky: I think for the young...I just think of my granddaughter. I mean, it's just almost daily... your ... rights and things being taken away and government control. Our children and grandchildren, they're not going to know how it was. They're going to grow up that this is the way it is. The government does this and they do that. It's going to be the norm, and they're not going to know how it was. How much better it was, and what it being taken from us.

Joan: What are some examples of that?

Kermit: Well, one example. We like to cruise. We went to Belgium and met a couple from Belgium several years ago and we went back over there and spent the day with them... just a cruise stop for the day. We called or emailed and they met us at the ship and took us around. It's 26 ½% sales tax over there, it might be more than that now, and we got an email or a Christmas card and letter. They lived in Romania, and said there is nothing left. The government takes it all. That's what's going to happen here.

Jerome: You know, back in the '60's or when the flood was, you wouldn't have ever thought water would be so important now days. Back then, you didn't think about it. But you know, here you pay .80 or .90 or a dollar for a bottle of water. Who would have thought about paying a dollar for a bottle of water back then? Water was more plentiful back then.

Joan: Maybe another question sort of going along with this is: did you get any government help after the flood of '65?

Men: No.

Bob: There was government help for fencing.

Jay: I forgot about that.

Bob: Not that I got any.

Jay: You just wanted the help to come help do it; that's what you wanted.

Bob: The Molitors reopened some of that fence that was put in in '66, and there was government help.

Joan: So would you say then that you relied more on yourself?

Men: Yes.

Joan: Maybe somebody could speak to that and not just say, "Yes."

Galen: I think we looked to people for assistance, rather than to the government.

Wilma: There is always government control, if you expect government to do something.

Rachel: The more you take, the more you give up.

Jay: You have to say, "What do I have to do to get this?"

Rachel: The more you take, the more you give up.

Wilma: That's right.

Rachel: So, what would you tell them, this is where it's going.... What's your advice? You know, it's kind of like a Hitler. We don't want to go back to that; you've got to be aware of this so you know, with all the government regulation and stuff. We don't ever want the Holocaust to happen. I know, that's extreme and different, but that's an example. What would you tell them? Don't let such and such happen, or you've got to take care of yourself. What's your...

Kermit: Well, start raising sales tax and property tax, you know, they're taking away your rights to give to somebody else. They talk about the working people, the rich people... The rich people are probably still around, but the other people are going to suffer because they can't pay taxes and pay (...) tax and sales tax. I don't know. I'm just glad we're in the shape we're in right now. Fifty years from now, I'd hate to think what's going to happen.

Galen: We've got a group of people who feel entitled to rights rather than privileged to share.

Joan: I've got another difference between then and now. Did you have crop insurance? Did you have insurance that covered your house?

Kermit: We didn't have crop insurance.

Galen: No, not at all.

Bob: It was available, but most people didn't have it.

Kermit: It wasn't worth it. What they'd give you wouldn't help you out. Now, they've got pretty good crop insurance. Eastern Colorado, that's what they bank on, you know; they farm for crop insurance. Somebody's got to pay the bills.

Galen: There was a greater sense of faith. God will provide. He uses people to help provide, not the government.

Rachel: So how do you think we got away from that?

Galen: Secularization.

Wilma: Soon there won't be enough people working to support those that don't.

Kermit: If you can draw welfare and \$700 or \$800 bucks a month in food stamps, that kind of takes away the incentive to work. That's where it's headed. It's going to be... people say, "Well, I made \$400 this week. I can get that much off of welfare and food stamps and Medicare/Medicaid." So what's the incentive to work? So I don't know. I used to have a shop along the highway. A fellow came up and said, "Do you have anything for me to do?" And I said, "No, I don't." And he said, "Good. Sign here." So I had to write that he got turned down. The next time somebody came along, I hired him! I don't know, four days, maybe 20 some hours. I don't know what I did pay him, \$7 or \$8 bucks an hour. He said, "I can make more than that on welfare. I won't be back."

Galen: It's an entitlement.

Jay: And disability. And a lot of them, I don't think they're disabled, actually. You can follow them around and just see what they do. But why can't they hire somebody to... you could take half of them off of disability. Just watch them, they're in better shape than I am. But no, they get disability. Worse than... you're a drug addict, that's easy to get it. Alcoholic, they get it. That's not fair to the people who are working to have to pay for that.

Rachel: Are there any last thoughts on the flood?

Jay: Pray for rain, but don't pray too hard!

Kermit: What do you think is going to happen in the next 30, 40, 50 years?

Rachel: I don't think we're going to be able to do what we want to do or go where we want to go. I think they're going to... something is going to majorly change. My personal opinion is, I think they're cutting the wrong things. They keep cutting education. That's where you teach people how to get out and work and make a living. They keep giving it to people to sit around. I've just gotten ballsy enough, I go in and see them sitting there in Wal-Mart, and I tell them to go get a job because I'm tired of paying for them. I have gotten tired of it. My kids have gotten tired of it. You go in Wal-Mart and see them sitting on those little benches in flip flops and no coat and shorts in February in a blizzard, and I'm like... I say to my kids, we're paying for that. That should, excuse the language, piss you off. Because that's taking away from things you could be doing. I've had several high-school students that I've had, and their first paycheck, I go in and I point out all these things they have to take out. I said, "Wouldn't it be nice to have all this, but it's going to so-and-so who has all the piercing and the tattoos and gets their cell phone and all that for free. That's what this money's going for. And it should piss you off! That gets their attention. But I've just gotten to where I don't care anymore because I'm tired of it and I'm not politically correct. I don't care. I'm tired of it.

Galen: That's good to hear.

Kermit: Let's see. What did you mean?

Rachel: That is right. The kids will think that this is the norm.

Galen: Yes, they will.

Joan: To think we're entitled.

Kermit: It's going to have to stop sometime. I would think, but they keep taxing the people do have

barely enough to get by to help those.

Joan: Let's hope the pendulum swings!

Rachel: My opinion is, I think they need to just cut them off. Yes, there's those few that really need it, but I think that the community where those people who know who really needs it, I think they would take care of them until we can get this thing all figured out. We've got to cut it off. And yes, it's going to hurt the ones that really need it, but they're not going to get off any other way. If we can cut all this crap off and give them... you know... it's just a stepping stone and when the people in those offices don't know how to take somebody off of it, there's a problem.

Kermit: I helped the homeless in Dodge for two or three years. There's probably... I'm going to say a third of them... really need it. The other two thirds have been coming there every day for ten years and, "By golly, I'm a diabetic, but give me a big piece of cake. I think I can handle it today." It just burns you up to see the people that don't work come there to eat and take a meal home for supper. Granted, I'm guessing a third, you've got to take the good along with the bad, but you don't want to.

Rachel: Or, you know, somebody, one of my friends, was helping out in church or something in Wichita or McPherson or somewhere. It was around the holiday. They'd drive through and they'd give them their little goody bag of groceries, and people were driving through in Escalades. If you can afford that vehicle, you sure as hell don't need food. There's a reason there's second hand stores. You find a way to do it. I'm just, I'm at my limit. There's people that really need it, but you're going to have to just cut them off and get a system. And it's got to get away from everybody, "Well, they deserve this." No, they don't. They've got to earn it. And I'm a hard-ass. Just ask my kids. I'm the meanest mom in the world, and I like that title.
Show them how to be a Republican.

Galen: Spoken like a true Republican.

Joan: And do you know what? If you talk outside of the Midwest, everybody wants to the Midwestern people and kids and stuff to be in the army and to hire them for jobs because we're better off than the rest of the country. And isn't that scary!

Kermit: Well, the Midwest still has a pretty good work ethic.

Joan: But we sit here and complain, and we're better off than...

Kermit: We're in a good area of the country.

Rachel: Because we can still go out and get hired, out of town.

Kermit: If you want a job, you can get a job here.

Rachel: It may not be your favorite job, but it'll get you by.

Joan: Rachel, do you want to try to set up your interviews? Did you enjoy this? Ladies, was it painful when I came and did your interviews? It was interesting and sort of fun to have. So now the idea is to just show you a little bit of this one that you did down by Trousdale. Maybe we'll break and get some coffee and come back here, and you can just see what you did and see if there'd be an interest in this

area for her to come and do this in this area. She really would like to, especially because she's from here.

Marilyn: We'd like to see her run for office!

Rachel: I tell you what, I'd get a lot of things changed. I wouldn't get elected, because I'd take from everybody, but... And I could balance the budget!

Wilma: They don't know what the word, "budget" means.

Jay: Just what office would you like to run for?

Rachel: The White House! We'll have everything taken care of.

(Random chatter...)

Jerome: Tom Warner was driving the Steffan's Truck back then when they got that flood, and he says, "It's coming into town from Minneola." I guess there's a hill coming in, you go over the top and he looks towards Dodge City, and it looks like it's all a lake.

Joan: These are old maps. That just sort of shows me where you guys all lived. And nobody lived up here? This is because of sand or?

Galen: This is the other side of the river.

Ray: This is the other side of the river, and that's sand hills over there.

Galen: Now, you correct me if I'm wrong. But is this the area which Hays has now? For water rights?

Jerome: Hays was after that, but I don't know if they got it.

Joan: They're after it again.

Jay: No, Hays has it. They just rent it. Well, I'm not too sure that Ebert and them didn't buy it back from somebody.

Kermit: I don't think so; they tried to get the well. They couldn't move the water... I think Hays still owns that.

Jay: That's what I'm a thinking too.

Galen: There was a story rather recently about starting that project up.

Jay: There's only one well on there that's suitable for drinking, and that's clear to the southeast corner. The rest of it is all high nitrates.

Man2: We ain't never going to run out of water; you've just got to get the salt out.

Jerome: When did that flood happen? June 24? That picture is dated June 24. That might have been when it rained out there. It took several days for that water to get here from....

(Random chatter.... Then looking at news articles and pictures)

Jerome: 21 foot flood stage or 10 feet there at Syracuse.

Galen: Is that because there's more of a deeper channel than here?

Jerome: I'm guessing that there might have been a bridge there that got all that trash in it and held the water back at Syracuse for a while. It got up to 21 feet, and why is why it is so much higher there than it is here.

"Edwards County, 15 homes badly damaged." I can't help thinking it was more than that. If they're going to count water damage. Maybe there wasn't that many that was washed off their foundation or anything like that. But I'm sure there was more than 15 homes.

Becky: This picture is south of Kinsley.

Jerome: Oh yes, south of highway 50. Even 8th Street was flooding in that paper, so that was the north side of Coon Creek. Nothing got washed off the foundation, I don't think. Well, like Dewey Blank put that dike around his house, and it probably saved it, because that creek flooded several times after that. That dike helped a bunch there. I think he was the only one to do anything major. That house was for sale last year; it was right when I was looking for a house. Kermit was aware of that; he told me the house was coming up for sale. I think it was owned by a Countryman. I think... I didn't buy it. It had a lot of outbuildings.

(Random chatter....)

Rachel: We've got to talk about how we got to the area. We can't just start, you kind of have to orient the area that you're going to be talking about. With educational part in mind, I had to set the stage-- the setting and the location. I got to this area so they would be oriented to what we were talking about.

Joan: You know, if you want to try to do this area, because we have such a community here!

Rachel: This community is unique; it is so different from that community. There's so much history that is the same, but it is different. It's just cool! Thank Mr. Miller (*Ron Miller, USD 347 history teacher*) for getting me hooked on Kansas history.

Woman: It's fascinating.

Joan: I wish we could hear it, but you can see what a beautiful job she does of editing.

Rachel: We rely a lot on folks to let me borrow personal family documents and pictures. At first, they were a little hesitant but once you can get them back and there was no damage, people loosened up and let me borrow them. I'm still getting those in the mail, as people find out that I do this, "Here! Take this and put this in the collection." Which is kind of cool. Some of the folks that have passed away, they contact me for pictures or video or something for the funeral. Or if I knew where such and such papers were because they needed them for the death certificate. So, that's kind of cool in a way. That I

can help them like that.

Jay: Who's the picture beside Butler? Was that his grandpa? (*Talking about Trousdale film*)

Rachel: Yes, his great-grandfather. The reason that I put them in the TV, that's the old Admiral TV that Wilbur Gibson sold and serviced. So there's a reason that I put them in there, to tie that together.

And I have this, and the girls had me edit a short piece of his witticisms and his humor, and we showed it at the Rosary. They had everyone stand up and tell Gene's story. And that kind of led into that.

Ray: Who's your dad?

Rachel: Dee (*Ligthcap*). Leander Lightcap (*Gandfather*). Thurmond (*Fisher, grandfather*) Wayne and Pat... M.D. Fisher was my great-granddad. Gene's dad and my great-granddad were brothers.

Kermit: Is Fisher still alive, your grandpa?

Rachel: No. He died in '74.

Kermit: Where's your mom at?

Rachel: Henderson, Nevada.

Woman: You don't know him, but John Dempster lives here.

Woman: ...talked about something about a tree claim.

Man: Where Dad was raised and grew up. I was born...the tree claim was north of the ten acres, or maybe even more.

Woman: In that pasture? I didn't realize that, but George *Closebrook*? would talk about a tree claim.

Joan: If you're interested in doing something like this in the community, it's already too late to start! Because you can already think of reasons why you should have done it when your fathers and mothers were alive and that sort of thing. Rachel would come, and quite often goes to homes, or a place of your choosing to do the interviews. They would be longer interviews like we did with the ladies. I don't know, yours are probably an hour to an hour and a half long, I imagine. Is that about what you want to do? And you'd share your own family's pictures and memorabilia. That's one reason it's nice to do it in your home, because the stuff is there that she can capture that about you. This area south of Offerle is just a natural thing to do. Then she would keep that and archive that and if there is interest, you would put together a film like this.

Rachel: As I was saying earlier, I do this all on spec, and then I rely on sales to recoup. I don't make it back immediately, it takes several years, but this is important. It's got to be recorded.

Joan: And this is something that children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will love.

Rachel: We worked all summer, we started in April. Actually, it was four years ago last weekend when we started the project over there. They kind of just wanted to do a session like today and be done, and I'm like, "First of all, nobody's going to watch that, because there's going to be all sorts of noise and

they can't see what you're talking about." I just completed a history of Club One Fitness over in Great Bend, their 40th anniversary of being in business as a family owned business. I told them, "I need you to trust me." And it's like I told Arnita (*Schultz*) and Becky, when they came up, "I need you to trust me, because I know what I'm doing and we've got to make this something that is interesting and people will want to watch and they can learn from it and record their heritage. It is a big leap of faith to trust me with your family stories and your heritage and pictures to put this together. But I've done so many of these. All these are the series, and I've incorporated it into my Kansas educational video series, which I also sell to schools.

Woman: How long is this one, Rachel?

Rachel: I don't know. 30 minutes.

Joan: What's the reason that you went back and did Volume Two?

Rachel: I had so much information. On the first one, I just did kind of a general overview of the general history. Then there was so much information that we just didn't get to, I did Volume Two. How I decided what to cover, is just kind of where the interviews went. That's how I got the name. Over there, everything revolves around that road, The Parallel, everything! The descriptions and everything ties back to that road, The Parallel. That's how we got the name, because the three towns are south of The Parallel, where the train went through.

So that's how we came up with the name, and I didn't have a name until I started getting the interviews together. I've got 50 or 60 hours of interviews, probably.

Woman: They all talked about The Parallel.

Rachel: Even today, everything is related to The Parallel.

Joan: There's a Parallel here, too.

Rachel: Yes, and you guys call it the Correction Line. So on my way down to the curve, I stopped and took a picture on my phone and I posted the Parallel on the other side of the county! So, Andy----- he's passed away, and he can remember every house in Trousdale and who lived in there from when to where and where that building is today. Think of all that information that would be gone.

Joan: We interviewed him first, in fact, they have been going to do this kind of a project in this community for quite a while. Then Rosetta and I went out and interviewed several people because we didn't know anything about this. I think that is what spurred them on to think, "We've got to get this done." They contacted Rachel.

Rachel: Because I had done Miss _____'s, and I do have a degree in television production. And we went on, and that year, their SCE Units, you know, they go on a trip or something every year. They did a mystery tour, and it was to all these old sites. I GPS'd them, where the trains crossed, and I have all those "way" points, too, that I'm going to do something with. I don't know what, but I to them and I got footage of it. I've got pictures, I took my kids, because they're in 4-H. They've got photography projects and award winning pictures.

Joan: I thought it was interesting today, who did the ___ of the Santa Fe Trail? Somebody did.

Random chatter.

Rachel: Donny, he drove a school bus. We wouldn't have that today! You have all these school bus stories. We haven't even touched the schools because some of those kids lived in the same house but went to three or four different schools just because of consolidation. My great-granddad bought the school there in Fellsburg and turned it into a home. Somebody still lives there today. Just little stories like that.

(Random chatter...)