

GEORGE AND PATRICIA LAUR

Amthor: This is a portion of the *Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri in the 1940s* program. The Nodaway County Historical Society Museum is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support of the National Endowment of the Humanities. Today is April 2, 2009, and we're in the home of George and Patricia Laur, in Westboro, Missouri, and the interviewer is Joni Amthor and assisting is Margaret Kelley. George was born on September 20, 1921, and Patty was born January 29, 1925.

Amthor: We're going to start with George; can you tell us a little bit about your family background? Can you tell us about what your parents' occupations were; where and when you were born, and if you had any brothers and sisters.

George: Okay. Well, I'll start with my grandfather, who came from Canada when he was a young man, and he came to Atchison County, Missouri, and decided that he liked that area because where he was from had a large family and not much land. So he became a farmer here and acquired some land and he raised a family of two – my Dad, Tom and my aunt, Lura. My Dad farmed on the family farm here after attending Tarkio College and was married and I was born on one of the family farms near here, and when I was two years old, my grandmother died, and my grandfather asked my parents to come here in the house which is large, and has lots of room, and come here and keep house and he would live here with them. So that's what they did, and my Dad, Tom, farmed here and where I grew up right here on the farm. I enjoyed the farm, and liked parts of the farm work, so I started operating equipment when I was in high school, then I went to Tarkio College. During the time that I was at the Tarkio College, was when World War II started. Up until that time, I had just helped out on the farm in the summers. I didn't have any brothers or sisters; I had a sister that died in infancy. So I'm a single person in the family.

Amthor: When was the first time you had a tractor?

George: First time I had a tractor? Well, we had a tractor here, an old four-wheeled tractor that my Dad had and I drove that tractor a little bit. I had instances when I was driving. He was getting off the tractor and getting back on it, pushing some on the plow. He slipped, and I wasn't very big, but I was big enough to put my foot on the clutch. That was my first experience. In 1936, we bought a John Deere row plow tractor and that's the first tractor that I was used to and grew up with. In fact, it was here when at that time and all through the war, and after the war it was still here running. That's my first tractor experience.

Amthor: Can you tell us anything about what life was like before 1940 before you went into war? Anything else in unique experiences on the farm? Did you have electricity, that type of thing?

George: Well, as I look back, life was pretty simple then. I think we weren't very sophisticated and so different from now. We had a good life; it was hard times, that was during the Depression, but we had plenty to eat. One of the things that the house as you've seen is large, and during those Depression years, why there were family members that didn't do so well so we

generally quite often had aunts or uncles or cousins came here and stayed for periods of time and were part of the family. So even though I was the only one in the family, the family that came and stayed with us at times had quite an influence I think on my life. I had an aunt that came, and she was very particular about how I should act, so I learned maybe something from that!

Amthor: Did you have a lot of livestock on the farm?

George: We did have. When we were farming after I came back from the war, we had cattle, and hogs, and sheep, and my Dad I did feeder lambs; we had a lot of feeder lambs that came into Westboro on a railroad car and then we would unload them and drive them out here. Then we'd fed them out; we had cows and calves; we fed the cattle. We always raised hogs, and of course we had chickens, and the various other things that go with chicken: ducks, and a goose or two; turkey occasionally. [and we had row crops]

Amthor: What did you do for entertainment?

George: Well, there used to be quite a lot of entertainment here because we had people here, sometimes there would be not my age, but a little older come and stay, and I can remember when it would be interesting; they'd roll up the rugs and have dancing with the victrola. We played games; the radio was pretty important then. We listened to the radio. I can remember the first radios that we had. It was pretty complicated, and we had antennas up in the attic and so anyhow, that's kind of it. When I was growing up in school- why, Patty and I were talking about it - we had church activities; which was important. We had a strong Epworth League at our church here and we had a children's choir, a young people's choir and so a lot of my friends were in the League and also in the choir. That's another thing that is really different. We liked to go to movies, and roller skating, and in the winter time we went on sleigh rides and all kinds of things like that. Of course we went to school - country school, right across the road.

Amthor: Now we noticed that when we drove in. What was the name of that school?

George: Morning Sun School.

Amthor: Morning Sun.

George: I went eight years there, then to Westboro to high school.

Amthor: Well, we'll go over to Patty. Can you tell us a little bit about your family now?

Patty: Well, I have one sister and we did live up in this area for a while, and then as I grew, why my parents moved to Tarkio but I wanted to finish school - I think it was my senior year - so I stayed with my Grandparents who lived up on a farm here and finished - graduated from Westboro High School. Then as I said, prior to 1940, I was in school and then you know, and then later I did teach a little country school for a while, down at Rupe's Grove, down south of Rock Port; well, really it isn't south of Rock Port - between Rock Port and Tarkio. As far as entertainment, as George said, we went to the movies - that was a big thing in Tarkio - we'd go to the movies, and there was a bowling alley. I was trying to think what else - you know, to do.

We didn't travel as far – I mean, if you went to Shenandoah, that was a pretty big thing, because of the fact that tire rationing, and gas, all of those things, we didn't venture too far. Then I was teaching, I had a Model A Ford to go through the mud and made it most of the time; I think one week, in the spring time when it thawed out, I did stay with the Tom Burke's; they lived right near the school house, and I was fortunate they would go build my fire, and kind of help me along a lot. That was kind of our life, you know, we just did those things.

Amthor: What year did you graduate from high school?

Patty: 1943.

Amthor: 1943. So did you go to a teaching college?

Patty: No, what college I had was through Maryville, and they came over and teachers were very hard to find, and I thought well, I could maybe do this, and they needed a teacher, so they hired me. Then I took some courses that helped with teaching the children something I hope!

Amthor: Do you have any experiences that stood out more than some of the others on a day to day basis when you were teaching?

Patty: Well, I had a really great group of children, and the parents were very supportive, you know. I was trying to think, the Deets family lived out there, and of course, Paul went to school to me, and his sisters; but all the families, they seem real happy that they had a teacher in their school, even if she wasn't that experienced. I had some older teacher's that were *really* great to me too, and that really helped.

Amthor: Did you have any scary experiences – being out there alone, being the young lady?

Patty: No.

Amthor: Well, that's good; we've had other teachers that had different experiences.

Patty: No, I didn't. The kids were great, and they always thought when we had our end of the year picnic, I would climb around with them on the hills, and they thought that was great.

Amthor: Now did your classes do anything in particular for the war effort?

Patty: Well, I can't remember that we did, really, too much. I suppose – I do know in high school, when we did not have an annual because of the paper shortage, and they told us – we felt like that was something we could do without, so we didn't have an annual the year I graduated.

Amthor: Did you ever go back and put one together after the war?

Patty: No, they didn't.

Amthor: Well, what was either one of you hearing about propaganda? What were they saying about the Japanese or Germans before we got into the war?

Patty: Well, of course, I did hear more of that because my first husband was German, and lived in what they called the German Settlement and there were people that you know, said kind of bad things about them, but that seemed to quiet down because I can remember them sending food and things to German families that were relatives that had so little over there. There was some, you know, people that wondered about the German people out there. Outside of that, and as I say, that kind of went away.

Amthor: Did you hear any news or propaganda before the war?

George: You know, as I think back about it, I didn't think about propaganda from our side. Now as you look back you realize that some of the stories that we heard about our country and our services and so on were glorified and the enemy, the Japanese and German were bad. I guess that was a sort of propaganda but that was part of the war effort, I think to get everybody involved in the war and they were. The definitely were. Now that's the thing I think a lot about is how everybody was working during World War II to win and end the war and that was the goal. If we slanted the news a little bit to favoring us, why it was helpful at the time, and I don't think we distorted things too bad. You asked one time about Tokyo Rose and Axis Sally, we heard that a little bit on the radio; in fact, we actually hear sometime in our missions, why you could hear that propaganda, because they did have that. That's we considered propaganda, and our news about us was news, you know, you see what I mean?

Amthor: Yes. What do you remember where you were and what you were doing during Pearl Harbor – when it was attacked?

George: I was here, it was Sunday, and it was Sunday afternoon when the news came on, that's what I remember. We were talking about it yesterday, what time it was here when the bombing started, but it was afternoon I think that day when we heard it on the radio.

Patty: Well, I had gone up town with some of my friends, as I said, we had the Candy Kitchen in Tarkio, and we girls lot of times on Sunday would go up and have a Coke, and my, that was – everyone was really worried; we knew we'd be in the war. Of course a lot of our boyfriends and our friends would be going, so it was very scary.

George: The next day, on Monday at that time I was going to school at Tarkio College and the next day everybody was talking about it, of course, and we had a kind of a really inflated idea of our Navy and armed forces and everything and "Japanese – they can't do much!" [Laugh] We found out – we found out that our services were not as powerful as we thought they were. That's one of the things that happened shortly after we began to realize that this is serious.

Amthor: Now, George, can you tell us a little bit about your early days in your boot camp? Can you tell us about your training?

George: In training?

Amthor: Did you enlist, or were you drafted?

George: I enlisted because I wanted to be in the Air Force. Tarkio College had had a series of programs down there where they had taught flying, and I had been through that, and I liked that a lot and I thought that was what I wanted to do, so I enlisted in the Air Force. At that time, early in the war, there was another place that we weren't prepared. It had a lot of people that enlisted, but the Air Force, at least, especially, didn't have any place for them right away. They had to set up training, and so on and so I went back to school that fall, and went part way through that semester that next semester before I was called. I went to Jefferson Barrack, at St. Louis, along with a whole lot of other guys. Everything was just built, and it was all new, and we had the mess halls were new, and we lived in little wooden barracks that were - I think about eight of us and we all got shots first things, and it was cold, and winter time. It was just February and they wanted us to be sure and not contaminate each other, so we had to sleep with the windows open in the little huts. So we all got colds, and were sick from shots; it was a pretty miserable time. It got better from there, at least, and I wasn't there very long - I just got our shots and got assigned and I went to O'Clare, Wisconsin, to a little college up there, a similar at that time to Maryville. All of us guys that were in this college training detachment lived in the gymnasium. We had triple deck bunks - I remember the top bunk was even with the place up above, where people watched ballgames. People were great up there; they were excited about having service people in there that they could entertain if we had a chance, so it was a cold experience; it was February, March in O'Clare, Wisconsin, which is *way* north. We had a tremendous blizzard while we were there. We took tests when we went there; I had pretty much finished college; I guess, and had a general education. Why I tested out in the first group to go out and they sent us down to Chicago and we got on a troop train, and went to Texas, which was quite a switch, because Texas was very warm at that time. I think two or three days we'd stop and wait for other trains, and the trains were very slow, and at least two days, two and a half days getting down there. We got there and got off and marching off to the barracks and all the guys were running around in khakis, and we were in long winter coats. They wondered where we came from. That was at San Antonio, Texas. That was kind of the start of my career in the service.

Amthor: Okay. So where did you go from there? Your actual combat?

George: Well, first I went to the various air fields. I went to air fields at Bollinger, Texas, and San Angelo, Texas, and Liberal, Texas - no, not Liberal - Liberal, Kansas. Another one in Texas was Lubbock, Texas and each step was a step increase in training. In Liberal, Kansas, we had B-24 training. This is really kind of like everything else - hurry up and wait. We waited around at Liberal, for instance, for - I don't know, two weeks or so for our class to start, and we studied things and we rode some with other guys that were training. Then they came out and said "We've got to have you guys done in ten days!" We did get done in about fifteen days, I think, that's about how long it took, but we flew two or three times a day during that period of time. That was an accelerated course because they were needing all of a sudden they needed more pilots for our class on up the line. We got our wings in Lubbock, Texas, and took B-24 training in Liberal, and when we finished there why they loaded us - about a dozen of us up and flew us up to Massachusetts to start crew training, and that was the last training we had on this

side. We got our crew there, had gunners and navigators, the whole crew and we flew together and learned how to work together.

Amthor: What was your actual position on that plane?

George: I was first pilot.

Amthor: First pilot?

George: Yes. It was kind of – I guess I was – one of us were supposed to be in charge of our group, and I don't know, my co-pilot was there; really nice guy, and we started in, I said, "Hey, we don't know what we're going to do, but I want you to be able to fly this plane." So I encouraged him while we were training to fly as much as he could so we did; we were able to train both of us that way. They trained the navigator and they trained the bombardier, we did all those training things there. That was the end of our training in the States.

Amthor: Then you were ready to go overseas?

George: We were ready to go overseas, yes.

Amthor: So where were you stationed?

George: Well, a little bit more about it – we went down to Virginia, and had a new B-24 there and the crew all went, so we were to fly that plane overseas, so we flew it up to Newfoundland, and then we flew across the Atlantic and landed in the middle Atlantic and refueled, and then flew on over to Africa and on to Italy. That's where I entered the Fifteenth Air Force. That stop in the middle of the ocean's bothering me. I know it had to be there! [Laugh] [Landed on the Azores]. Anyway, we took off – that was kind of interesting – we took off about midnight and the field there was – you couldn't see the other end of the runway, I can remember; I can remember we couldn't see it until we got a little ways, then there the lights were at the other end. We flew in and saw the sunrise and everything. We located a place out there in the middle of the Atlantic to land. We had a lot of good briefings and a lot of support to weatherize, and so on, it was uneventful, but it was still a lot of water.

Amthor: So did you spend most of your time in Africa?

George: No, we went right on – one stop in Africa, and then we went right on to Italy and we landed at a place in Italy which was sort of a gathering place for the people that were coming in. They took our new airplane and they took us on a truck and drove up to central Italy in a truck. Cherignola, Italy, which was where the base was; that's where we spent the rest of our time in service in the war.

Amthor: Can you tell us about your missions that you flew?

George: They were a lot of variations; some of them were long, and some of them were not so long. Usually, most of them were not more than six or six and a half hours and we would fly to

various places in Europe from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Germany and we even supported forces in Northern Italy one time – I think that was about one time; most of the time we were either in Austria or Germany and we were attacking air fields, munitions factories, oil refineries. I think probably one of the important things was the oil refineries because the Germans got very short on fuel towards the last, and that was part of it. I feel like we did help the war by sort of helping with the fuel supply there and disrupting rail – we did rail yards and so on. You know, you wonder how much good you're doing, because it was a lot of effort. I think about it at times out of Italy we flew the Fifteenth Air Force flew one thousand missions. In other words, there would be a thousand of us bombers out there and the same thing from England. It was a lot of – now it would look kind of funny, wouldn't it? It's silly.

Amthor: How many missions did you fly?

George: I flew thirty-five. That was what you were required for – originally when they started, you flew twenty-five and then as the missions got a little bit less dangerousness, less opposition, they went to thirty-five.

Amthor: Were any of those thirty missions really dangerous that you felt like that you might not make it back?

George: [Laugh]. Each one!

Amthor: Each one? Is there any one in particular that was a little more dangerous?

George: If something didn't go wrong with the airplane, it would be We had to worry about fighters, and we had to worry about anti-aircraft and during the period of time that I was there, most of the danger was anti-aircraft fire and we always knew because they did it in a series of attacks, one after another, different squadrons and we knew when we were getting close to the target because we could begin to see the black from the flak and anti-aircraft. They always put up a lot of that so that's [Laugh] tension time! But you know, we were always worrying about possibility of engine failure, or – like not having enough fuel, and so on, there was a lot of tension during the mission. They'd wake us up about three or four o'clock in the morning for briefing, and then by the time we got breakfast and briefed, and to the planes and ready to go, why it would be daylight. We had – it was a long day before we got back in the middle of the afternoon.

Amthor: Did you have a memorable experience with one of your missions? One that stands out more than any of the others?

George: Oh, I don't know – [Laugh] – as I have told you about missions at the target, one mission, we lost an engine and had to drop out of the formation which was dangerous, because the fighters picked on those planes that were by themselves especially. That was one of the few times that we got a few hits from flak in the plane but nothing very serious. About the scariest one when a piece of flak hit an oxygen bottle right behind my head and blew up right there. That was kind of exciting, all at once, but wasn't really important, either. One mission, our lead plane - I was flying second place, and the lead plane lost their oxygen and they had to get down right

now, so we had to take over that time and finish leading the mission; had it a couple of times to do that. Talk about the new airplane: when we went over there they guys that went there last got the oldest planes. They weren't that old, but they'd been on quite a few missions and they really weren't as dependable and as we stepped up in experience and missions why we got better airplanes. One thing that was special – I was always kind of a Ford – I grew up driving Fords, and the planes that we got later in the war were built by Ford. We really had some nice airplanes! They were still the same plane, but they were new, that was part of it, I guess, but they were a lot easier to fly, and so on.

Amthor: Did you form a lot of friendships when you were in the planes?

George: You know, in the service it was all alphabetical, so you kind of got with the same group of people, and you formed fairly close friends there, but as you went to different bases the same thing happened. Of course, overseas, we got really well acquainted with the people we flew with and I kept in contact with some but now I don't have many that I'm in contact with.

Amthor: How about communication home? Did you write a lot of letters back home?

George: I probably wrote a letter about every day, and we got letters in the mail quite often and it was all v-mail, the little – didn't take much room. But, that was important. Mail call was always important no matter where you were and as I said we did write a lot of letters, too.

Amthor: How about entertainment? Did you have USO or Red Cross visits your bases?

George: Oh, we had a couple of USO's we went to while we were overseas there that I remember – two or three, I think. Then in the little town there was a Red Cross center and USO was in there sometimes, and we'd see things in there. We didn't – the town shared all – that was a poor part of Italy, and it was an old town, and we had no communication with the people in town to speak of. Mostly the entertainment and so on that we had was just stuff that came to the base and that wasn't a whole lot.

Amthor: How long were you over there? Did you come back before the war was over or were you there after the war in Europe ended?

George: Yes, we flew over as I told you, and then while we were in – then I went back to come back on a ship and went to Naples and we were there a few days and then we got on a ship, but as-- while we were waiting to get on the ship, that was when World War II in Europe, V-E Day came. So I was there during that period of time and my crew – to go back just a little bit – I flew five missions with other crews, learning as co-pilot, and then came back and started flying with the crew, and so my crew was a little bit behind me and they didn't get finished quite as quick as I did. In fact, my co-pilot actually was there when the war ended, and he flew as pilot on a B-24 that they flew back to this country and they brought quite a few of them back, I guess – took them down there to Arizona and chopped them up. [Laugh]

Amthor: So you were coming home when the war had ended in Europe?

George: Yes, the war in Europe was over before we started out. They were still apprehensive about submarines and so on a little bit, but the war was actually over in Europe and we didn't really have any problems. I came back by ship, my co-pilot got back not too long after I did, because they flew back.

Amthor: So when did your service actually end?

George: Oh. . . . I think in September of 1945.

Amthor: So how did you get back home?

George: Well, after I got off the ship? Train – trains were the whole deal. We can't imagine how important the trains were during World War II now because everything probably was by train. The only time I came back finally ended up in St. Joseph, and came back from St. Joseph on the bus to Tarkio. There were busses – I don't mean that they weren't there, but all the main transportation was trains.

Amthor: Did you family give you a big celebration when you came home?

George: Yes, I think they did. It was quite exciting times; I remember we had a lot to look forward to, and were happy to be back.

Amthor: So how did you feel when President Truman dropped the bomb? Did you think that was necessary?

George: I was in training which could eventually have meant going to the Pacific Theatre but there were a lot of guys that didn't have to go to the Pacific Theatre. You know, I guess it opened up the whole atomic age and that's – I don't think there was any alternative; I think the Germans were working on the same thing, the Japanese, I think it ended the war, it saved a lot of lives, both Japanese and American lives and as far as I was concerned it was necessary. It was a hard decision, but I always applauded President Truman for saying that we have to do it.

Amthor: Now is there any other story or something that we've left out of your service that you would like to tell us about? That meant something to you that you would like to tell us?

George: I think I've probably given you the whole load. One little incident that I might have told you before was when we were in the mess hall in Italy, why, I was just getting acquainted, and I heard the guys razzing somebody about being from Hamburg, of course Hamburg was one of our targets, and he was from Hamburg, Iowa, and I got acquainted with him quite well. That was kind of fun – we kept in contact; in fact I haven't heard from him for a while, but his brother-in-law still lives up here on the road to Hamburg.

Amthor: That's the only person in from this area that you found that was in your area?

George: Yes, it really was. We weren't as it went along, when we first started at Jefferson Barracks why we were all from the area, and as you went on, most of us and we went to Texas,

not so many. Then I was fortunate enough, lucky enough to contact mumps in Texas, and that set me back a class, so then I got with a whole new group of people, and from then on I never was with anybody until this incident that I was telling you about. *Occasionally* at stopovers where people would sign up where they were from, I would see somebody that I recognized, but not so much.

Amthor: Now after the war, did you think there was a threat of communism?

George: Sure. Absolutely. We kind of – some of the fellows kind of thought maybe they should have tried to face Stalin down a little bit, or something after the war there, but that was always a concern of mine.

Amthor: Now if you could compare the war that you were in and the war today. . .

George: Hmmm

Amthor: . . . what would you say? I mean, there're some differences there.

George: I can't figure out any way to compare them! [Laugh] You know things have changed so much in the service, the – I don't know, it's hard to say. That was a war, this is nowadays is different; it's so few people involved, but when it comes down to it, you know we find out as we found out there in Iraq, when it gets down to it, it's the people on the ground that are having to do the work. That hasn't changed.

Amthor: Okay, Patty, can you tell us a little bit more about what you were doing during the war? More about the war effort, or the rationing, that type of thing? Can you tell us about that?

Patty: Well, of course we were all trying to be patriotic, and we tried to save on gas; my sister reminded me that shoes – I didn't particularly remember that there was a shortage of many things, and she had at school, she needed some athletic shoes for basketball, or something, and our Dad gave her his stamps so that she could get those shoes. She remembered that she didn't have – so we had to be very careful, and as I said, we didn't travel a lot; there was sugar rationing, I know that was really hard. We learned to make cookies by using honey, there was a man that had some bees, and we could buy some honey from him. So we have – I still have some of those recipes, and of course our stamps that we saved and were very careful with them when you went to the store to buy things, but everybody really wanted to, and I can remember pineapple for one was very short. Later, my – she was my mother-in-law, and she loved pineapple, so she was so happy after the war. She said, "I guess I can get pineapple!" So those things, but we all tried, you know. As George said, and they gathered metal, you know the metal and sold that for the war effort, and as George said, I think everyone really tried.

George: Yes.

Amthor: What about hosiery?

[George laughs]

Patty: Oh, we had no silk hose or nylons – we had no nylons! You even sewed them up if you wanted to wear them, you know, I think about that – oh, my goodness, you’ve got a run – it was just terrible, because you couldn’t get any more.

Amthor: Did you ever paint your legs?

Patty: Oh, yes! Yes, yes, we used the spray on in the summer a lot.

Amthor: Did you ever try to draw the line up the back of the leg.

Patty: No, I never tried that! [George laughs in the background]

Amthor: Now, did you ever have to get the feed sack?

Patty: Oh, yes! We saved those and made many things out of those. I sewed pajamas, and a little bathrobe for my child, you know, I had the one child, we had one youngster. I remember my sewing wasn’t too good, but I thought with feed sacks, maybe it was okay. But we had really – there were some quite pretty; you washed them and yes, I had forgotten about that.

Amthor: How about – you talked about cooking, how about gardening? Did you garden a lot?

Patty: Yes, everybody – most people had gardens then. We always had – we grew our vegetables.

Amthor: Now both of you have been married to other people.

George and Patty: Yes.

Amthor: Your first husband, was he in service?

Patty: No, he wasn’t.

Amthor: What did he do during the war?

Patty: Well, of course he was farming, and of course the farm equipment was very short and you know he had to struggle with that and as George said, when the war was over the new tractors were really great, you know, and refrigerator – when we were married, we couldn’t buy a refrigerator, but somebody – some friends of our said they had a stamp that they could get one and so we got a refrigerator – that’s how I got my first refrigerator.

George: Really?

Patty: Yes!

George: I never heard that one.

Patty: Oh, we couldn't buy a refrigerator. We had ice –

George: Yes.

Patty: You'd go get ice and we had an old one that you had the pan underneath and the water would run over half of the time.

George: Yes!

Patty: But we did get one – I know how happy I was – “Oh, an electric refrigerator!”

Amthor: How about washing clothes? What did you do?

Patty: Well, my Mom had an extra washing machine and she let us have that so I could use that.

Amthor: Was that the motorized one?

Patty: Yes, it was electric. So I used that and that's how we kind of got started; I had a cook stove, you know, a big old fashioned cook stove – I was so happy when that went out.

George: The wood and cobs?

Patty: Yes! Yes! Yes! Well, you know, you learned how to put so many cobs in my Mother would tell me when you're baking angel food. . . . [everybody laughs]

George: So many cob angel food,

Patty: So it wasn't getting too hot, or not hot enough. I kind of forget about some of those things.

Amthor: How difficult was it to cook like that?

Patty: Oh, I wasn't a great cook in the first place, you know, I hadn't had too much experience cooking.

George: She's a *good* cook.

Patty: I laughed – we had carpenters working on the house that we were going to live in and I said I learned to cook – I always told them, I learned to cook on them, you know, because we cooked for the men that worked then, you know, you had to give them lunch, or dinner. We cooked for thrashers – I'd never done that before; I didn't – you know I lived on a farm part of the time, but not that much, so all these things were kind of different for me.

Amthor: So did you have tractors from the start or did you have horses?

Patty: Well, he had horses, but he had tractors, too, as I say, they were wearing out. New farm equipment was pretty hard to find.

George: They were getting pretty old.

Amthor: Did either one of you have mules on the farm?

George: Yes, we had mules.

Amthor: How were they?

George: [Laugh] They were very durable, they were smart; the story was you couldn't over heat a mule because he would quit before he – but a horse you could and it killed them, you know, overheating, but yes, and the other things is don't get behind them.

Amthor: Why?

George: Because they'd kick!

Amthor: Did you have any – I heard that some of them got pretty smart and could open up gates and things like that.

George: Mules were smart – they really – as an example, that overheating business. We had horses and mules here on the farm when I was growing up and I didn't work a lot with them, because I was really glad when they got that first tractor. I hated that harnessing, and all that stuff; I was never into that horse business very much.

Amthor: Did you have any tricky mules? We heard a story about one boy was trying to harness the mule and he would always get up in the hay loft and try to throw it over on top of him and that mule would step to the side.

George: They would. They would crowd over and not give you room to get past them.

Amthor: So they sound pretty sneaky.

George: Yes, they were.

Amthor: I always heard that David Rankin had a lot of mules.

George: Yes.

Amthor: I wondered if there were quite a few mules in this area at that time.

George: There were.

Patty: We always had horses.

George: You did? Did you have mules?

Patty: I can't remember any mules, but then maybe, you know, maybe I don't remember them all.

George: There were always a lot of stories about the mules.

Patty: Yes.

Amthor: Now the mules – they are part horse and part donkey, right?

George: Yes

Amthor: And they were always born sterile, is that the thing then

George: Yes, they couldn't reproduce. That's right.

Amthor: That was always kind of. . . .

George: Interesting. Usually, the mule, the father, the jack, you know, was seemed like they were usually smaller, but the mules ended up they were as big as the horses.

Amthor: Well, that's why, because they would have to be – the mare would have to be a horse, right?

George: Yes.

Amthor: And the stallion was the donkey.

George: The female had to be a horse, and then the male had to be a jack to have a mule. That was the interesting part. Get to talking about nylons, I got to thinking about – we had they nylons as nylon parachutes.

Amthor: That's where they were!

George: That's where some of them went. I was real glad to have that because I had to use one, one time.

Amthor: Did you? Was that an experience?

George: Yes, it was. I was in advanced training down in Texas and another cadet and I were on a night cross country, and we were flying a little two engine bamboo bomber they called them; that's kind of what they were; and one engine quit and it wouldn't fly on one engine very long and it was about- oh, I think it was about two o'clock in the morning, something like that, and black, no lights or anywhere. We knew there was a little air field of a town that we were – Plainview, Texas, but there were no lights so we couldn't see it so we had to get out so both of us

bailed out and the plane went off and that – you know, in the middle of Texas at two o'clock in the morning – I think it was maybe even Sunday morning – anyhow, we wondered what we were going to do, but we got together. We were up a little ways apart, and started hollering and got together on each side of a road that was fortunate. We got on this road, and as luck would have it, here comes a family in a Model A Ford and so we were out there in our parachutes carrying them, an arm load of parachute and he took us into Plainview and we called the base. "Where are you guys?" Okay, we were late, we knew, so they sent a car after us.

Amthor: Sounds like you didn't fall in a tree!

George: That was – it was just a week or two before graduation. I thought, "Gosh, are they going to let me graduate? I lost an airplane!" But they did.

Amthor: Well is there anything else that either one of you can think of that you would like to share for this interview that you consider important?

George: Yes, I ought to come up with something good.

Patty: Oh, George! Listening to yours – it's so interesting.

George: I think the thing that is important to us right now is the fact that as we've told you, we grew up in the same area here and lived here, and raised families, and then we're left alone. We got together, and that's probably the best part of the interview. When she said she's not a good cook – Aaaaa – don't believe that! After you've lived alone for six years or so, why boy! She's a super cook. Everybody thought I kind of acted like I was a cook, but I really wasn't.

Patty: Now they tell me he remodeled his kitchen and then he did - some of the friends of his and they kept tell me about how George cooked, you know, and "Gee, I should check this neighbor out!" I'd been alone about ten years, I guess, so it's been very, very good.

George: My brother-in-law, Dean Hoshor, told me at one time, he says, "You don't need to cook a lot, just get two or three things that you know how to cook and cook them and people will think you're a cook." That was my cooking.

Amthor: Well, I have one final question.

George: Good.

Amthor: If you could give advice to people today, considering what's going on with the war and the economy, and living in a time where considering the thirties and the forties, the way they were, the way the economy was and the war that you had to live through, what could you give us that would be good advice to help others?

George: Well, you know, my thought and my concern is that at that time we were used to living cheaply, whatever, if you want to put it that way, and it was – we were tired of it, but we had a good time.

Patty: Yes.

George: I worry that as this economy continues or gets worse, or whatever, is we're used to living pretty well and how are our people that haven't had the experience that we had growing up – how long are they going to be able to cope with the situation as it is right now, especially? There is nothing like experience to having had the experience we did growing up in the times –

Patty: Right.

George: . . . to – I guess you can't duplicate that experience anyway, I hope that we can figure a way to get through this time, anyway. I didn't get off of my stump, I just. . . .

Amthor: So you've seen a lot of things the last few years from the point the forties up to today and you've seen a lot of changes in this world so it's interesting to get your perspective.

George: There have been a tremendous amount of change, and we've enjoyed it, and it's been good in a way, but what do you think?

Patty: Well, as you said, it's difficult for, you know, even like my son and his family and the grandkids, to kind of scale back let's say; it really is. Where we grew up when -like somebody said, we saved everything, you know, and re-used and that like, but they're really working at that now, to re-use things and to save the newspapers and plastic, and recycle and things. So maybe things will get going so that – but we need to save things, I know, like our landfills are full, and all that sort of thing.

Amthor: Yes.

George: Seems like there are a lot of problems; I was just reading an article about how many people in the United States are in prison and how compared to the rest of the world, we're way out of line there, and if we – just a lot of improvements we need to make and I hope that we're able to adjust. You know, we can't help but be concerned about our grandchildren; children and grandchildren.

Amthor: Now you rode a lot on the railroad, do you think it was a major mistake for them to take the railroad system out?

George: The railroads? I don't know; I don't see how – the railroads are doing a lot, hauling a lot of freight, but it's all bulk, main lines and so on, like we used to have the little railroad that came up here – it came up here through Tarkio and Westboro, and as I spoke about the – bringing the sheep in on a car, which is not that far back. Now that's all gone, and I don't see how that could be – as remote as we are out here, we have to have transportation other than railroads, but they certainly were important at that time and still are on our main area of transportation.

Amthor: Okay. I think you guys gave a great interview.

Patty: Thank you.

Amthor: Thank you very much.

George: I hope we have. I thank you.