

WARREN EVANS

Bohlken: This is a portion of *Oral Histories of Northwest Missouri of the 1940s* program. The Nodaway County Historical Society is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today is November 6, 2008, and this interview is being conducted at Nodaway County Historical Society Museum, located in Maryville, Missouri. The interviewer is Bob Bohlken, assisting him is Margaret Kelley. The interviewee is Warren Evans, who was born January 18, 1924. He lived during the 40s and this interview is his story of life during this period of time, including the World War II. His occupation has been for all of his life, well, not all, but

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Farming.

Evans: Farming.

Bohlken: Warren could you tell us a little a bit about your background before, like where you born, and your family, did you have brothers and sister, that type of thing.

Evans: I was born in Ravenwood, Missouri, and I have a brother and three sisters.

Bohlken: Then you came to this area in what year was that?

Evans: 1937, when we moved.

Bohlken: During the Depression?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: What can you tell us a little bit about that.

Evans: Well, it was pretty rough, I'll tell you.

Bohlken: That's a time that you moved?

Evans: Spring of 1937.

Bohlken: You moved from one farm to another?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: And the reason was?

Evans: We lost the eighty acres that we owned.

Bohlken: Alright; did you buy land here, or just a tenant?

Evans: Just rented.

Bohlken: Your family has always been rural? Always been farming, your grandparents?

Evans: Yes, practically every one of them.

Bohlken: You were married later, then, married in 1945, is that right?

Evans: I was married in 1945, on my birthday, when I was 21.

Bohlken: Alright. Did you have any one in your family participate in WW II

Evans: Oh, yes, my mother's brother, and then my aunt's - she lost a boy, he went down in a fighter plane in the ocean, and that about it, I guess.

Bohlken: You were deferred because of farming?

Evans: For a little while; then I had to go to Leavenworth, and they said I had an ulcer, and weak veins in the back of my legs.

Bohlken: Is that right!

Evans: So I didn't - I was rejected from the service.

Bohlken: So many were deferred because of farming, but those people had large farms, or owned them, I guess. During - after the Depression in 19 - well, I guess it wasn't over in 1940. How about that - how was things standing for you in 1940?

Evans: Oh, it started getting a little better in 1940, but still farmed with horses.

Bohlken: Now, at that time, you were still renting?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: You were with your parents, and you rented the farm?

Evans: Yes, then in 1948 I moved a mile south of Clearmont, after I was married, and I lived there 12 years and then I moved on east of there to the farm I own. I bought it in [19]52.

Bohlken: When the war was happening, or coming about; when there was a war in Europe, and a war in China, did you get any information about that?

Evans: No, just what we read in the papers. Didn't have any electricity.

Bohlken: Did you have a battery radio?

Evans: No

Bohlken: What paper was it?

Evans: The Maryville Daily Forum

Bohlken: Okay, the Daily Forum got to you; was that by mail?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: **Any other?** Did you take Grit?

Evans: No

Bohlken: Or what was that other one – *Capper's Weekly*?

Evans: Yes, I think we took that.

Bohlken: So most of the information about the outside world came from the newspaper?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Now, how did you find out about Pearl Harbor?

Evans: Oh, through the Maryville Paper

Bohlken: Was that a day late – not a dollar short

Evans: Yes, it was a day late.

Bohlken: Was there any reaction within your family about that?

Evans: Oh yes, that was quite a thing, then.

Bohlken: How old were you then?

Evans: Hmm, probably about - World War II?

Bohlken: Well, let's see – you must have been about 18 or 19?

Evans: Yes, when the war broke out.

Bohlken: What school were you attending at that time?

Evans: Clearmont High school

Bohlken: Now, was there much talk there about being drafted?

Evans: Oh, yes, there was a lot of them drafted out of the school. I had a brother-in-law that was drafted, he was a senior, and they had his cap the night of graduation, and he graduated.

Bohlken: Is that right? They were coming down that low – he must have been 18 at that time.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Did many from Clearmont volunteer, enlist?

Evans: Oh, yes, quite a few of them.

Bohlken: Do you think that was because they wanted to be a pilot?

Evans: Well, they knew they were going to get drafted anyway so; had several that joined the Marines.

Bohlken: Oh, is that right? Marines must been - well I guess it's always been – I know that others have said they'd join the Air Force rather than become an infantryman.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: When the war – when we were involved in the war, how did hear – the newspaper was the main way.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: On Pearl Harbor, did they play it at Clearmont High School?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: So at that particular time you felt that you had the information but you didn't really believe it until you read it in the newspaper?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Tell me about the alternative services – do you remember – was there much talk about going to the factories?

Evans: Yes, there were a lot of the women worked in the factories – the airplane factories, and different places.

Bohlken: Were you encouraged then to – I doubt you had any difficulty with rationing?

Evans: Yes, rice and sugar and gasoline, just allowed so many – had a card for gasoline

Bohlken: As a farmer did you not have some special allotment of the gas?

Evans: Well, for your farming you did.

Bohlken: Was that any different than– how about tires?

Evans: You ran on bald tires, everybody did. You couldn't get new ones.

Bohlken: Were you using a tractor at that time?

Evans: Yes, we bought a new tractor in 39, my dad did.

Bohlken: Rubber ties or steel wheels?

Evans: Steel wheels

Bohlken: You didn't have to worry about tires

Evans: Then, the next year he bought a Ford Ferguson. First one that came into Maryville when they first made them. Cost \$595.

Bohlken: Did you do most of your shopping in Maryville?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: At least the big stuff – the appliances and that type of thing.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Who else would you do you recall – did anyone got to the factories in Kansas City from Clearmont?

Evans: I don't know of any.

Bohlken: The main means of transportation there would be the train?

Evans: Yes, they had a train at that time.

Bohlken: As far as rationing we talked about sugar and tires, anything else that stands out?

Evans: I don't remember anything else.

Bohlken: I suppose salt, maybe, I don't know. You had all the meat, right?

Evans: Yes, we had our own meat, did our own butchering

Bohlken: Describe your farm – you had cattle and pigs?

Evans: We had cattle and hogs. We butchered about three or four hogs. Salted the hams and everything down and put them in wooden barrels.

Bohlken: You know they use that term pork barrel legislation?

Evans: Yes

Bohlken: That came from the idea of sticking aside for your own use material -- were the barrels , did you pickle the pork or was it salted?

Evans: It was salted. Smoked salt. When you'd bring those hams out in the spring, and they were turned all green. Cut all that green off the outside, boy they sure were good.

Bohlken: Where were the barrels – in the cellar?

Evans: In the smoke house.

Bohlken: Were you encouraged to raise your own fruits and vegetables?

Evans: Yes, we didn't buy much of anything only just sugar and had our wheat ground and the corn and everything.

Bohlken: Did you have chickens?

Evans: Oh, lot of chickens; Mother raised lots of chickens.

Bohlken: Did you sell the eggs in Maryville?

Evans: No, mostly in Burlington Junction.

Bohlken: Burlington must have been larger about that time.

Evans: Yes, it was a pretty big town at that time.

Bohlken: Did you – There were also price controls at that time.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Was that a big deal for you all?

Evans: No, didn't make any difference, didn't have any money anyway.

Bohlken: I doubt if there was black market.

Evans: I don't remember any.

Bohlken: How about cigarettes?

Evans: They were a dime a package

Bohlken: Is that right? Plenty?

Evans: Yes, and gas was a dime a gallon. I forget what cigars was, but anyway when I got married, I had to buy a lot of cigars, and I could only get so many, so when they chivareed me, later we went back to town, and Bill Humphrey, he ran the station, he let me have another box.

Bohlken: That's interesting. And that was later on, so at the beginning I'm sure there was more rationing. It was the idea that what was good for the soldier, then they would have first priority. During that period, during the 1940s when many of the men were gone, what kind of entertainment did you have?

Evans: Well, skating rink in Clarinda, that was the biggest one, and then the movie, and that was about it.

Bohlken: You drove to Clarinda?

Evans: Well, Bill Green had a stock truck, and he would take a whole load up for a dime a piece.

Bohlken: Is that right? But not the railroad.

Evans: No.

Bohlken: Anything else? What about dances?

Evans: Oh, they had a few square dances; I never could round dance. Never did try it either.

Bohlken: But you could square dance?

Evans: Yes, we could square dance.

Bohlken: Wouldn't that have been held in the barn?

Evans: When people got ready to move, they would be in their houses when they moved out.

Bohlken: Is that right? It wasn't a ceremony, it was just a natural place to go. Other people have told me there were a lot of dances in the homes. Five or six people, and what kind of music?

Evans: Oh, just a band. They had a big bandstand in the middle of the street in Clearmont, and the band would play there two or three times a week. Then we had free picture shows, and then the town was full of cars.

Bohlken: Are there any – did you participate in any sports at that time?

Evans: I played basketball.

Bohlken: Clearmont had basketball, what else?

Evans: They didn't have any football at that time, just basketball and baseball.

Bohlken: What else was there – of course you would have been in school at that time; what other type of activities did you have at that time – singing? Music?

Evans: Oh, yes, they had chorus.

Bohlken: In some communities, the news would come in, and they would post it in central place. Was that true of Clearmont?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: And so if you, if there were like the progress of the war, would be posted for people. Not everybody could afford the Forum, could they?

Evans: No, they would post it.

Bohlken: It was posted. Was that also a gathering place for the community?

Evans: Yes, they brought the mail in on the train, and then brought it up from the depot.

Bohlken: Do you remember the letters then from people like the ones who were in service; they were a little bit different, weren't they? I thought they had thin paper, and air mail was different, I know that.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Do you remember any of the music, any of the songs, of 1940s?

Evans: Oh, yes, there were several songs about when the boys come marching home; there was another or two, but I can't say, can't think just right now what there was; there was several others.

Bohlken: Then they had the big bands, but I don't if Clearmont had the big bands.

Evans: They had a band of their own there.

Bohlken: I think Hopkins was noted primarily, do you remember that? – Hopkins had the bugle corps?

Evans: Yes, I think so.

Bohlken: When the war was ending, how did you find out about let's say D-Day?

Evans: Well, at that time that was the first year I was married, and I worked for a guy, and I suppose he had a radio; his boy was in the Navy, and we all sat out in the yard all afternoon that day.

Bohlken: When they heard that, there was a lot a relief?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Well, you were married at that time; how did you meet your wife?

Evans: I hate to say it, but her sister lived just west of where I was when I lived at home. Her and another girl came down there to stay with them a day or two, and they would walk back and forth to town. She said the first time she met me, I was laying in the hog trough talking to my dad.

Bohlken: Well, that's better than the hogs!

Evans: It was empty.

Bohlken: Boy, that's a lasting impression. And I suppose you interrupted your conversation with your father to propose to her?

Evans: Talk to her, yes.

Bohlken: So then what was the dating procedure then? Did you go to the movies together?

Evans: Movies and skating.

Bohlken: Both of those.

Evans: We'd go to skating two or three times a week. I had a Model A Ford coupe. We used to go up to town and a bunch of us would get together, and a dime a piece, they'd put in gas for me, and we'd go skating; it was a quarter.

Bohlken: In those days, you rented the skates?

Evans: Yes,

Bohlken: And they were clip-on's?

Evans: They were shoe skates.

Bohlken: That was another shortage.

Evans: It was a big skating rink.

Bohlken: She didn't have to ride in the back in the truck with you guys?

Evans: No.

Bohlken: That was earlier? So you were married at that time and you had your own farm?

Evans: Well, I rented a farm. Mile south of Clearmont.

Bohlken: And was that a profitable situation?

Evans: Oh, things began to pick up about that time, and each year it'd get a little bit better. I had cattle, and farmed grain. Then I moved from there to where I live now, and have for 56 years.

Bohlken: Did your wife also raise chickens?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: Was she responsible for the chickens?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: And the eggs?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: How did that money go? Did that money go for her?

Evans: Oh, we didn't have too many to sell, we just had a bunch of hens, and but the eggs, she got the egg money.

Bohlken: That was what they always say, when they spent the egg money. What about - did you process - did you milk the cows?

Evans: Yes. Milked quite a few cows.

Bohlken: And the cream?

Evans: Took it into Burlington.

Bohlken: That was your money?

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: That wasn't her money.

Evans: Well, it went it for groceries. But in later years, instead of selling cream, we sold milk.

Bohlken: That was – you sold it to a company that pasteurized it.

Evans: Place out here at Maryville, place out here that bought it. Can't say the name. Ten gallon cans

Bohlken: On a daily basis?

Evans: Yes, they'd pick it up every day.

Bohlken: Okay, how do you feel the veterans were treated when they came back home?

Evans: Oh, they were treated alright; wasn't nothing like it is now, they didn't have as big a celebration or anything, but they were all treated fine.

Bohlken: Were they given an advantage in employment? But coming back to the farm there wouldn't be much advantage either way.

Evans: Most of them didn't farm when they came back. They'd go off to the bigger city and get a job, and kind of disappeared all of them.

Bohlken: Well, they also had the advantage of getting schooling and loans and that type of thing.

Evans: Yes. Some of them farmed, but most of them didn't.

Bohlken: At that time, after you were married, and living on the farm, did you have any threat or fear of the spread of communism.

Evans: No, not that I can think of.

Bohlken: You, know, the Soviet Union was going to come in, and then

Evans: Yes,

Bohlken: That led to the Korean War, and later the Vietnam War.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: When did you get a radio?

Evans: I got a battery radio about in 1985.

Bohlken: Is that right?

Evans: I still didn't have any electricity.

Bohlken: No kidding. What was the date?

Evans: 1985. (Corrected to 1955)

Bohlken: You still didn't have electricity.

Evans: The farm I rented was a real old lady and she wouldn't put in electricity, but after a couple of years she did, so then we got a television.

Bohlken: That date again? 1945?

Evans: No, that was when I was married, in 45; This was up in the 50s, I'd say about 1955.

Bohlken: 55. I misunderstood you. I thought you said 85. I was hoping you had electricity by 1985. Could you describe for us the most important things you remember about this time, the 1940s.

Evans: Oh, gosh, I don't know, lot of things went on, but..... I was busy then and didn't pay much attention to anything.

Bohlken: Okay.

Evans: Train went through town but then that was in the 40s, they took the railroad out afterwards. And, I don't know, just stayed there on the farm and worked, I guess.

Bohlken: Tell me about your family.

Evans: I've got – my first one was a boy, and he died when he was 3 weeks and 3 days old. Then we had four girls.

Bohlken: Is that right? Of course their grown now, right?

Evans: The oldest is 60 years old.

Bohlken: Is that right? Were they married to farmers?

Evans: Not a one of them. Two of them live in Clarinda, and two live in Glenwood, Iowa.

Bohlken: But they're close by. Then you lost your wife about a year and a half ago.

Evans: Yes. No, it's been longer than that; it will be three years on the 29th of July.

Bohlken: Well, this is your report about the 40s, now is there anything that you want to add to that?

Evans: Oh, outside of I bought the Model A Ford for 75 dollars, it had a rumble seat.

Bohlken: It did? Good! That was a selling point?

Evans: The streets of Clearmont was mud then, and I would cut ruts all through town. There were lots that went on, but I can't think of them.

Kelley: How many could you haul in the car with the rumble seat?

Evans: Two could ride in the rumble seat, and three could ride in the front seat.

Bohlken: Well, I think that does it unless Margaret has more questions.

Evans: I don't know anything else that happened in the forties, there was lot of things if I could think of them. I had a lot of fun anyway.

Kelley: What was the fun that you had? How many kids were in your class at school?

Evans: There were twelve, and there are just two left.

Kelley: You and who else?

Evans: Eugene Moore.

Kelley: Were all the classes about that size?

Evans: Well, there were some smaller, and some bigger, but a few just had four in a class.

Kelley: Did you have lunch at school there?

Evans: We took our dinner.

Kelley: Was the café uptown full for lunch then?

Evans: We had two cafes then, both filling stations had cafes in them.

Bohlken: They were patronized by the people, they had to rely a lot on people coming in.

Evans: Yes.

Bohlken: During my time, you didn't go to café for a meal.

Evans: You took sandwiches from home.

Kelley: Was highway 71 paved then?

Evans: 71 it was at first was 2 inch rock, and everywhere there is a curve, it was a square corner then. They built that whole grade with horses and mules, and I think the paving came through Clearmont in 34.

Kelley: Where did they get the horses and mules to do it?

Evans: Well, everybody was wanting work then, to earn some money. My mother's brother, he got a team of our big mules, and he worked on their slip scrapers. That grade is still a good grade. It was all built with horses.

Kelley: These were all the local horses and mules around? The locals owned the. . . .

Bohlken: Yes, you had an advantage, if you owned a horse or a mule, then you could get a job on the highway. The scraper was . . .

Evans: Yes.

Kelley: Did they pay for the mules, or did they pay for the man.

Evans: I don't know, they just paid them so much an hour . . .

Bohlken: But the man had to have the mules to . . . somebody had to know how to handle mules.

Evans: Joe Combs, there in Clearmont, was telling me one time, he worked on there, and they told him to go to the bathroom before he came, because he was to keep busy with that scraper.

Bohlken: Okay. Thank you very much, Warren, I appreciate it.

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