

Interview with Welton Parker
September 20, 2007
Conducted in the Parker home in Trousdale, Kansas
Interviewers: Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff.

Joan: Would you like to start out telling us about how your parents came here? Or how your family got to this area.

Welton: My grandfather on my dad's side came from Broomfield, Iowa. They brought their stock in one freight car, they had two freight cars, and the other freight car was divided into their furniture and where they stayed during the trip when they came to Caldwell, Kansas. There was five children at that time. The oldest one was Mrs. Abe Fisher, Lula Fisher; and Ora Fisher, Mrs. Clifford Fisher; and Ollie Newsom, Walter Newsom's wife at Centerview; Ira; and Eva Lauber, that was Charlie Lauber north of Kinsley's wife; and there was a boy born at Caldwell, Orville Parker.

Joan: What were you grandfather's name? And your grandmother?

Welton: William Francis and his wife's name was Sarah. She was a Lang, her maiden name. After they were in Caldwell for a year, they visited up at Iuka. They had family in Iuka, and they convinced them to stay there for a year.

Joan: About what year was this?

Welton: That was probably about 1884, I think, because they came here in 1885. They were headed, as I recall, they wanted to homestead some land on the Solomon River. They came to this place, and there was 20 acres of trees on the west end of this quarter. It was a tree claim, and they wanted to stay there all night in those trees and camp out. There was a family lived just a quarter mile south of the northwest corner, people name of Shannon. They went down there to ask permission to stay in those trees. Mr. Shannon wanted to know where he was going, and he told him. He said he thought they could buy this place here. "People by the name of McCarty owns it, and we need families like yours here." So next morning, he went up and I think his name was Silas McCarty, I'm not sure on that, but it was where Paul Ary lives. Monte Smith, has that place now. He bought this place, traded cows for it. And so then he...

Joan: How big was that?

Welton: It was in 1885.

Joan: How many acres?

Welton: It was 160 acres.

Joan: And he bought it with cows.

Welton: Yes. The first year or so, he did about anything to try to make a living. They planted some corn; he raised a little bit of corn. But he had horses, and he was using them to haul freight from Pratt to Larned. The story goes that they was three wagons of them from Pratt to Larned, and it rained on them all the way. It was cold. Grandpa had this family here and just had a little old shack with

footboards up and down. He knew he didn't have any fuel, much, so he was kind of wondering about the weather. So on the way, the only way he had of getting any weather was to go to the depot, where they had this telegraph. They was forecasting one of the awfulest blizzards they'd ever had. So he unloaded his freight and scooped on half a ton of coal on his wagon. He put his horses away and went to bed. He woke up early and got his horses around, and it was beginning to snow. So he headed out. He got a jug of whiskey. Back then, that was pretty important if you got caught out in a blizzard. So he started out, and it just kept getting worse and worse. The old road back then was a mile west of where the road is to Belpre now. There was an old trail through there. Right up by where Larry Adams lives now, there is a big depression, kind of a dry lake. And when he got there, that's where he got stuck with his horses. So he unhooked his horses, but he took a swig of whiskey, the first swig of whiskey. He unhooked his horses and drove his horses to break a track through the snow, went back, hooked up, and got through that place. Then, it was blowing so that he just kind of wrapped the lines up and tried to keep warm. He thought they was just a drifting, but went on and went on and finally he felt the wind calm all at once and kind of come to and the horses had found their way home. He had an old straw roof barn there, a roof barn, kind of for a little shelter. He didn't know what he'd find when he went to the house. He'd forgotten he snapped a half a wagon box full of corn before he went on his trip, and grandma had all the kids around a hot pot-bellied stove inside the shack. She was pushing that corn into that stove keeping them warm. She had blankets all around them and they were warm as toast. He probably wouldn't have made it if he hadn't had the drive of thinking he had to rescue the family. That was in 1886. That was the year my dad was born. April 23 was his birthday.

Joan: And his name was?

Welton: Russell Alphonso Parker.

Rosetta: Wasn't 1886 that terrible blizzard where you couldn't get through on the railroad and people lost their cattle.

Welton: It was supposed to have been about the worst blizzard there was for a long, long time. I don't know if they have any records now. They may have some that was just bad.

Rosetta: Well, many ranchers went broke because they lost their herds.

Joan: At this point he didn't have cattle? He was just growing crops?

Welton: Well, I think he...yeah, they had cattle. But as I recall, Granddad had work mules. Now the Fishers that lived just west here a mile, they had oxen. They broke this quarter north of my house with oxen. They told about the Fisher kids when they was breaking that the old oxen would get tired. They had those old buffalo wallows, and they'd just take off and want to go over there and stand in that water. They'd gather every rock they could find to throw at them trying to get them going again.

Joan: Just keep going, tell us your story. You're a good story teller.

Welton: I don't know; my grandparents had 13 children. There were 10 of them grew up to adulthood. Of course back then, you married neighbors, and two of the Parker boys married Kuykendall women, and two of the Fisher boys married Parker girls. So I had quite a few relatives around here. I don't have very many anymore. They've pretty well left the country, most of them.

Rosetta: Did they build a sod house? Or did they cut down some of the timber claim and build a...

Welton: No, they didn't, father's family lived in a little...they had some boards and stuff with boards, they said. They made a little shack out of it that they lived in. A one room place. Now my mother's family, the Kuykendall and Smiths, they came from Terra Haute, Indiana. They came to Hutchinson and stayed for just a short time, in south of Hutchinson. Then they moved 12 miles south of Kinsley, in the Wendell neighborhood. They proved up on, my Great-Grandpa Smith's, on one quarter, and my Grandpa Kuykendall on another quarter. They both made sod houses in the middle of each quarter. They lived like that for awhile, and then my Great-Grandpa Smith bought a place over here in Franklin Township, southeast of Fellsburg. It had a little frame building on it, kind of proved up. My Grandpa Kuykendall, there was five of them living in that little sod house. So he traded his part of the half-section to Grandpa Smith for the one he had over at Fellsburg. That's where my mother grew up, south of Fellsburg. Picture over there is one my mother drew up from memory from the place where she grew up.

Joan: It looks like she was quite an artist.

Welton: Yeah, she did pretty good. And I thought, "Oh Mom, that windmill!" But I saw a photograph of that here not too long ago, and that's the way it looked. Back then, I think they kind of made their windmills.

Joan: Anything that would blow in the wind. Well, if there were 13 children in the family, a lot of them were girls; if I remember, but how did the farm...did your father get this part?

Welton: Yes, my father inherited this. Each of the ten children that was alive got...well, they had fifteen quarters of land when he died in 1935. And each heir got three 80's of land. My dad got the home place. My cousin Lola Young, Bethine Bender's mother, inherited this one 80, just the northeast 80 of this half-section, and I later bought that from her.

Joan: At that time, there was a farmhouse here? And a barn? I assume there was a barn out there at one time.

Welton: Well, this old barn that the shed is built onto, that originated a half mile east. People by the name of White owned that quarter, and Grandpa bought that along about the turn of the century. They moved that barn with horses. How they did it I'll never know. I wish I would have quizzed a little more, but they got that barn up there and that's always been the barn. It's a hundred years old. But back then, there was a family on every quarter. That's the reason for the picture of the Trousdale School.

Joan: Then over the years, your grandfather then went to growing wheat? And your father?

Welton: He had it pretty rough, from the stories I've heard. It was awful rough back then. He one time had these threshing machines for threshing the wheat, and they had...newer threshing machines had conveyors that take the wheat into the cylinders. But back then the pitchers pitched it up on a platform and there was a man with pegs in each hand was right over that separator, or the cylinder. He'd grab a hold of that and drag it in and feed that cylinder. He had that job, and he like to have died of dust pneumonia, they said.

Joan: It sounds like he put a lot of what he had into buying more land.

Welton: Yes, that was back in '35, and that was still pretty much in the Depression.

Joan: How about the Depression and the dust storms and everything. Do you have any stories about that time period?

Welton: Well, I was young, but I can remember the clouds coming up, and the dust would be so thick you couldn't hardly see. Couldn't hardly breathe, but it was nothing like it was out west; I'm sure, at Syracuse and Ulysses and Johnson. It would get so bad that sometimes I think they just dismissed school because it was so bad they couldn't see to drive. I can remember back in the '30's too, we had so many jackrabbits we had jackrabbit drives and stuff. You'd take about six square sections and then scatter out and beat on pans or something to kind of scare them out until they got up closer. Then they had clubs and they'd try to get by you. The clubs got a little dangerous sometimes. You had to watch that somebody didn't get a little careless with a club.

Joan: Were there so many jackrabbits because the natural predators had been eliminated? The coyote and wolf or whatever? Or had there always been jackrabbits?

Welton: Well, I don't know. Back then there were just jackrabbits. I think in that one book, the Wichita Northwestern book, that tells about a fellow riding from Zook to Belpre, counted in the 90's some, just on one side of the track he was riding on. So there was...they destroyed an awful lot of stuff. Then it was dry back then, it wasn't growing too good, of course, they didn't have fertilizer or anything. The ground was newer then, it just needed water more than anything.

Joan: What do you remember about your childhood? Brothers and sisters and how they did your family?

Welton: I had three sisters that lived. I had one sister that died when I was only three years old.

Joan: Did she die as a baby?

Welton: No, she died when she was about 12 years old, I think. She died of heart trouble. But I was the youngest of the children. I had a sister, Cleone that was married to Don Michael at Hutchinson. Sister Darlene, she married James Tandy, who was originally from Coldwater. Goldie, the sister just older than I, she married Falcnor Gifford, they live in Yakama, Washington. Darlene's gone now, Darlene and Jim.

Joan: What was your childhood like? What did you do?

Welton: Worked.

Rosetta: You were the youngest and the only boy?

Welton: Yes,

Joan: So you went to work early, helping your dad, didn't you?

Welton: I was nine years old when I started working the field with horses. I don't remember being...my first time in the field was we had drove... Dad had a boy, a sophomore in high school, working for him. Of course, we farmed with horses back then. We'd get up in the morning and feed the horses and get them in and feed them then go in and eat breakfast and also milk cows. We always had a lot of cows to milk and feed hogs. But then, after breakfast we'd go hook the horses up and we would

usually have little babies along, colts. Each one of us had four head of horses, four to a team, and we came over what we call our 90 and 80, it's three miles from home. We had an old barrel in the back of the wagon that had water. We had a bucket so we could water the horses at noon. We had a little feed in there that we could feed them. Then we had the colts halter broke so we tied them up to the wagon while we was working during the day. During morning at noon, we had our dinner. But we'd turned the colts loose and let them nurse.

Joan: You took the dinner to the field?

Welton: Yes, then we'd work 'til...we was cultivating corn with a cultivator, a one row cultivator. It was kind of a long day. I don't imagine I was very good, because you had to use your feet to...

Joan: Nine years old and you were handling four horses?

Welton: Yes. And the fellow that was with me was only a sophomore in high school. So we had some responsibility back then.

Joan: Now the milk, was it only for family use? Or did it go to...

Welton: No, we always separated the milk and sold the cream. Of course, we always had hogs or bucket calves. I always had...oh, back then, most everybody had about 20 or 30 head of cows. That was a pretty good size herd back back then. We weaned calves off. A lot of times, those old cows had never been milked. We'd take them in and milk them as long as they'd give milk. Sometimes that was kind of fun. You got kicked across the barn a few times.

Joan: Then you had chickens too.

Welton: Oh yeah, chickens and ducks. We had some ducks. We never did have turkeys. The neighbors had turkeys.

Joan: Or sheep?

Welton: No sheep. Not 'til I had an FFA project in high school. I had a little bunch of sheep. I got sickened out on them and never did have them after that.

Rosetta: So you went to school at Trousdale?

Welton: Yes, all 12 years.

Joan: You are the first person we've talked to that was in Trousdale all 12 years. So you got to school how?

Welton: We had a bus route. And back then, they ran usually four or five buses. Usually it was the kids, high school kids, that drove buses. They kept them on the farm, and it was usually first out on the route and they'd just get up in the morning, start out, and pick them up as they came to school. I've got a little book there, well it's a little...I don't know...let's call it a book. It's after the old school house was torn down and in shambles, I come across it. I just picked it up out there, and it was all rain soaked and everything else. But it was all the teacher's salaries and the superintendent's salaries. I've got that over there. The bus drivers, I think they got ten dollars a month.

Joan: Well, that was quite a bit wasn't it?

Welton: The teachers...Margaret Corrie was my teacher back then. She was Mrs. Leo Arensman, Mrs. Strong's (*Mary Janice Strong*) mother. I think she got \$90 a month. She was the highest paid grade school teacher. The rest of them was either \$80 or \$75 a month, for nine months.

Joan: What year did you graduate?

Welton: '41.

Joan: Can you tell us a little bit about the school, what the activities were?

Welton: Well, in sports we always had football and basketball in the wintertime, and track. We never did have baseball much, only one or two years we had a little bit of baseball. We always had what they called the South '56 League. It was Belpre, Lewis, Macksville, Garfield, Trousdale.

Rosetta: And Centerview, did they have a school then?

Welton: Centerview and Fellsburg had schools, but they was a different league and they didn't have football. They usually played baseball in the spring and in the fall.

Joan: How many kids were in your graduating class?

Welton: 12 or 13. They kept track pretty well most always. One girl moved just as soon as school was out, moved to California. We kind of lost track of her, but I'm sure she is deceased by now too. Last time we knew, she had arthritis real bad and had to move in with her sister. She married a fellow that was in the Navy. Her name was Welling. She stayed with an uncle and aunt and helped take care of them while she was going to school.

Joan: Did you have proms or a senior trip or anything like that?

Welton: Well, we had a senior trip. We went to Carlsbad Caverns on the trip that we went. We had a little money left, so we was going to go to Pike's Peak. We got out there and a couple of boys decided they was going to act up, so that was it. We come home.

Joan: Did you go on the train?

Welton: No, we had two...J.R. Woods was our sponsor. He was with the school system for...oh, he come in 1924 or '25. He was still there in the '50's or close to it. He was one of that furnished a car, and my good friend Vern Thompson's mother went with us and she had a Ford car, a '37 or '38 model car. How we all got in there, I don't know.

Rosetta: Was that your first time out of Kansas?

Welton: I don't think so. I think I'd been out a time or two. I know for sure I'd been in Oklahoma, we had some land down in Oklahoma we went to see. And I think we'd been to Colorado once or twice.

Rosetta: I was reading that it said Trousdale was a consolidated school. Who did it consolidate with? When it was built, was it consolidated?

Welton: We had all these little country schools around, and then there was a lot of those little country schools come together. I suppose that's what they meant by consolidation.

Rosetta: So were there country schools close by there, or...

Welton: There was a country school....I don't know, weren't there 30 or so schools in the county back then?

Rosetta: We have Keith Chadd's map, have you ever seen that? It has these different schools and stuff.

Welton: I think they have that in the Lewis Centennial too.

Joan: Well, that might be a good question. Your father and his siblings, did they all go to school and graduate?

Welton: They walked to school. There was a school down west of here a mile and a quarter. (*The old Union School was 1 mile east and 1/2 mile south of Fellsburg.*) They walked to school. There was the Fishers and the Parkers and the Fells and Fatzers and...I don't know; there was quite a few of the old families.

Rosetta: I noticed in this picture that there's no town. I read something that the town kind of moved to join the school.

Welton: No, the (*Trousdale*) school was kind of on the very east side of town. There's one house just north of it, you've seen, people name of Cook lived there. He was a blacksmith. But all the rest of it was back to the west, the main town was.

Joan: What do you remember about the rest of Trousdale? What else was in the town?

Welton: Well, back when I was there, they had two grocery stores. They could have even had three. There was a fellow by the name of (*Tom*) Coie come in and built a frame building north of the old brick buildings. He put in a grocery store there. Of course they had a post office; they had a bank; they had a lumber yard. They had a hardware store. It sold International tractors and stuff. But back then, a lot of farmers sold machinery. Cudney sold Massey Harris and Fritz Schultz and Rodney Wilcox run the hardware and sold International. Newt Elledge down south had the cleat tractors. I'm sure there were some others around that...it wasn't unusual for farmers to sell machinery.

Joan: About how many houses would you say?

Welton: Oh, I don't know. Back before the Depression and before the railroad went, there was an awful lot of houses. But then, after the railroad went out, they moved an awful lot of them out.

Joan: Where would they have been moved to? Lewis or?

Welton: Well, the parsonage was in Lewis. Two houses north of the Methodist church now. I don't know who lives there, but that was the old...and one house, the Cudney house, it's north and west of Belpre. I can't remember who owned that. The land just sold here a year or so ago. I think George Miller bought that place. That was another one. They went to Kinsley and Greensburg. I think some of them, that's the way they started up. I think people bought houses moved in. There used to be an old

feller in Trousdale that moved houses. His name was Will Keane. He had an old house moving outfit that was on steel wheels. Dad had an old '30 Caterpillar that he farmed with. It was pretty big for back then. So he got in on helping move houses quite a bit because they'd get into situations where they couldn't pull it.

Joan: It must have been fun pulling them on the old roads.

Welton: Yes, I remember him telling about this house that Englishes up here on the hill, on the dead end. He helped move it down...it went east of Hopewell about two miles. It was pretty sandy, and he helped move that house in there for Curtises. Then Curtis built the new house and sold it to English. And English moved up there. He said they got into trouble and he had to go get help. He had all he wanted to do on that because it was pretty sandy and steel wheels just sunk in the sand. I think they had a lot of maneuvering to get it where they wanted it.

Rosetta: Did you ever ride the "Aunt Nancy" into Kinsley or....

Welton: I don't remember. They used to have a stockyards and stuff there at Trousdale. It was on the railroad, of course, on the east side of town. People would drive cattle up there and load them out. I remember Dad bought a carload of cattle. John Mayhew bought two carloads of cattle.

Joan: What year would that have been?

Welton: Oh, it was back in the '30's, I expect. It would have to be, because the line went out in '39. But Ron Schultz's granddad, George Schultz, he bought cattle. He drove all around the country and bought cattle and then bring them in there, ship them. There are some pictures of them loading cattle out of the stockyards somewhere, I've seen it.

Joan: How did the Depression affect your family?

Welton: We were all poor. We didn't know any different. We worked. Everybody worked. We was all kind of in the same boat. We all milked cows and separated the milk and sold the cream. We used skim milk to feed either hogs or bucket calves. I remember that we always had hogs, and we raised oats and barley and wheat and corn and would kind of mix it together and grind it. We always had a 15 gallon barrel, kind of a grease barrel. You'd cut the top out of it, and we'd always put it in there and put water in it and soak it. Then we'd use that to feed the hogs. But Mother would always take eggs and butter and stuff to town and trade it for groceries. I can remember the grocer would always, or several times anyway, come out to Dad's. Back then you would have your milking cows and almost all your cattle was mixed up and had Jersey or Guernsey or something and would give milk, you know. A lot of times you'd have an old cow that would give quite a little milk; she'd have a real fleshy calf. They'd come out and pick that calf out. They shoot it and butcher it right at the farm; they'd take it to town. They didn't have all them regulations they got now. But I remember doing that. Dad had that farm elevator on his place. I remember where they'd butcher in the driveway there in the elevator. I can remember back when they had truck gardens down on the Rattlesnake creek and they raised a lot of watermelons and stuff. Of course, at the end of the watermelon season, they'd need to get rid of the watermelons. Dad would go down and buy a truckload of watermelons. They put them up and they'd take them and feed them to the cows. They had stanchions with the trough in front. You'd take an old watermelon and smash it down. At times we woule eat the heart out of the melon. It would be pretty good.

Joan: Did that change the milk?

Welton: No, but the old cows sure did like them melons. They were sweet.

Rosetta: Did you go further than just high school? Or did you just graduate and continue working on the farm?

Welton: Oh, the folks thought I ought to go to college. I didn't want to go to college. I went for a little while, but I got homesick and I came home.

Joan: It seems like your grandparents and your parents thought education was important.

Welton: Yes, my dad didn't have much education. I look back, and I'm sure he had what they call this whatever it is that they have now. But, he had a lot trouble. I don't think he had much more than a second grade education. But he sure excelled otherwise. Mother, her family...her older sister went to high school in Kinsley, no Lewis, Lewis or Kinsley, and graduated. But mother never went past the eighth grade. Her uncle's wife died and left a little baby six weeks old. So my grandmother raised her. My mother stayed home and kind of helped raise her. That was May Spence. So she was about like an aunt to me because my grandmother raised her. She was raised with my mother. My mother had, her oldest sister was Mrs. Rollin Ogden, Bessie Ogden. Lived over where Kenney Unruh lives now. That was their place. Then Aunt Laura, that's uh...Uncle Earl married her. They lived here on this place. They had three kids. But then she died, she was, oh, it was right after the third child was born. Then there was Mother and a younger brother, Dean, that lived. Greg Wood farms the place over there. There used to be a barn on the...let's see...just on west of where Mull's headquarters is over here. There used to be a barn, but they've since buried it, last year, but that's the old Kuykendall's place that this picture's from. That's where Dean lived. Then that house that was there was moved. It's between the two branches of the Rattlesnake creek down here south on the Greensburg/Centerview Road, where Dick Rich lives. That's the house that was...

Joan: When you got married, you brought your bride back here then?

Welton: Yes.

Joan: Did you live in the same house with your parents? Or did you each have your own...

Welton: No, I lived in my grandparents' home. I have a picture of it in the book.

Joan: But they were no longer alive?

Welton: No. They died in '39. I wasn't married until '48. Several people lived in that house until then.

Joan: What else do you want to know about Trousdale?

Rosetta: Was the Methodist Church in Trousdale a landmark? Were there other denominations that had church?

Welton: No, the only church was at Trousdale.

Rosetta: And it was Methodist.

Welton: It was kind of non-denominational at the start, but then it went to Methodist after that.

Joan: Well, it seems like everybody was related. So you may have only needed one church.

Welton: But in the history of the church, they wanted a church bad enough...when the church first started out, they went to a settlement at Prattsburg over there. And then they kind of wanted a church over here, so they solicited money and they got the money to build the church free of debt when it was built. So they were wanting a church pretty bad. Now we're kind on in the same predicament. We're building a church again.

Joan: Well, before we quit, I want you to talk a little bit about the tornado. (*Known as the Greensburg Tornado of May 4, 2007.*) What was your experience and how has it affected the community?

Welton: Well, it was pretty rough. It came awful close to me, and it tore up the trees pretty bad. The west side of my house was plastered with strips of bark. I had two of my daylight windows broken and it kind of roughed up my roof. It loosened up the roof on my sheds. But just east of my trees, all the light poles from there pretty near to the Haviland Road was gone. And of course, you know what Prairie Oaks look like and what it looks like today. Have you been by there?

Rosetta: Not recently. I was this summer.

Welton: The corn about ready to harvest off of it...

Rosetta: And that's amazing, they got the fields cleaned out so they could plant. That took a tremendous amount of work.

Welton: They had to have big old D9 Cats in there. They just dug holes and buried it. They burnt the house and what they could, the barn and stuff. Just the tin and all the stuff that was there, you know, after what they could get out of the house and stuff they tried to save. Which Fred (*Burgess*) said that the furniture and stuff all got wet and the mirrors all peeled and stuff. It ruined the furniture.

Joan: They lost a lot of history I imagine too. Jim (*Mathes*) did. And how about the church?

Welton: We saved a lot of the church. We got all the cabinets and stuff down in the basement. The chairs, the tables and a lot of them took pews and stuff. They took things that they could salvage out of it. And then...so we'll have some of that to go back. They left one on the plans for the new church in there on the table. I didn't know they was going to leave it, but they left it. I don't know whether they meant to or not, but they're still here and it'll be here I suppose Sunday. But they're waiting on Rusty Strate for his estimate. He called Sunday and said that he wanted to meet with them. I don't know if he met with them yet or not.

Joan: Are you going to use a metal building or...

Welton: Well, they first thought that but now this estimate they got from Schaller isn't a metal building. I don't know just what Rusty Strait's will be.

Joan: My husband was an architect, and I know a lot of the things that Rusty does are metal.

Rosetta: The stained glass, was that from an old school?

Welton: That's from the old house. The one in the entry where you came in was ...

Joan: Was that a typical two story old Sears farmhouse?

Welton: No, I've got a picture of it in there. I've got two pictures of it. But yeah it was quite a big house back then, I guess. It had an outside door to every room, in fact. Of course, back then, you didn't have air conditioning or anything. You opened the door and what breeze broke through. Granddad was pretty stern; of course he had so many kids. We always had kind of joke, that when Grandpa said something they all had a door, they could get out quick.

Joan: When did you get electricity?

Welton: 1928.

Joan: Did it come down the Parallel here?

Welton: No, it come down from Belpre, a mile off of the oil road, a mile east of the oil road down through the hills. They'd come down to Cudney's and then come in a half a mile, see on the correction line, come to Trousdale and then come a half mile south and then come here to go to Fellsburg and Centerview. So it come right past here in 1928.

Joan: So you got it right away.

Welton: We lived just a half mile from that corner south of Trousdale. Dad had a light plant and stuff. He wanted electricity, so he bought the line and paid for them to lay a line. It was always said that if anybody ever connects to it, while you'll get part of that money back. But it was so many years after that that Dad was glad to see somebody else get it. Shultz, Roy Shultz and the Fritz Shultz built on to it at about the end of the line down there for that, for the Kansas Power and Light. The rest of it is REA.

Joan: But before that you used ice for the refrigeration?

Welton: I think so. I was only five years old, see...

Joan: I wonder if they ever got ice out of the rivers, you know, and stored it like they used to...

Welton: Well, they had ice men that come around and brought ice around. 100 pound piece of ice. Then they'd put it in your icebox. I don't know where they got the ice.

Joan: Well, back in Kinsley or Lewis, did they have an ice factory?

Rosetta: Not that I know of, but Kinsley did.

Welton: Albert Elmore who used to live down here catty corner across the section. He used to be the ice man, I know, out of Kinsley.

Joan: Okay, tell us about Mr. Elmore. What was his first name, do you know?

Welton: Albert. He had a big family. I didn't know him until after that time. He came here and truck gardened and then moved from here about the time of WWII. He moved to Cherryvale, but I remember

him telling about delivering ice.

Joan: This is how we got started on this project. Somebody had questions about the Elmore's. Can you tell us anything more about them that we can share with that family?

Welton: Well, one of the boys married a Monaghan girl, down here. They moved to Cherryvale with his folks. One of the boys (*Wayne Elmore*) was lost in the war. He's buried here at Fellsburg. He had a big family, and I never seen anybody that could work like he did. He could scoop what two or three men could scoop. And I don't know how he could do it, but that's the way he made his living, a lot of times unloading cars off the railroad-- scooping coal or grain or something.

Joan: So was he a big man? Or just strong?

Welton: Just average. He just didn't look that strong or anything, but he had determination. I don't know how he could do it, but he did. And when he lived down here, he gardened, down along Rattlesnake (*Creek*), a truck garden. And then after he moved to Cherryvale, he gardened down there. He'd come back through here and stop every once in a while.

Joan: Did you know where they lived?

Rosetta: I can't remember where...I know she said they moved.

Joan: Describe where they lived again.

Welton: They lived just catty-corned across here, on the Zella White place, just in the corner of this section.

Joan: Just right here.

Welton: Yes, the kids went to school at Trousdale.

Joan: That's how we got started on this whole project!

Rosetta: One of the girls, Olga, graduated from Kinsley High School. But the boys graduated from Trousdale.

Welton: Yes. I think they came from Kinsley down here. Then they left here for Cherryvale, I'm pretty sure. But last time I seen Albert, he'd had a cancer here. His jaw, a lot of it was missing. But he's been gone quite a while. I didn't know them all that well, but I sure admired the way he could work.

Joan: Well, that will be a nice thing to tell the family, for someone to remember you by how hard you worked.

Welton: Probably in some of those books there you'll see some of them more.

Rosetta: Yes.

Welton: Otto is the one that married the Monaghan girl. I remember that. But he's been gone quite a while. She remarried and lost her second husband, C. W. Tincknell. She lived down around the

neighborhood. It isn't Cherryvale, but it's Trayer or somewhere.

Joan: So your children. Where did they graduate from school?

Welton: Mocksville; and Russell was in special ed. He had some problems. When he was a little fellow, he was in the Institute of Logopedics for six years. Then when we brought him home, they didn't have any special ed. classes in Lewis or anywhere, so my wife drove to Larned and back twice a day for nine years. He just passed away here in August. The 12th.

Rosetta: So that was what your wife...that's all she got done. By the time she got home and worried about him, it was nearly time to go back...

Welton: We raised a lot of hogs. Back then, we had a thousand head of hogs here at one time. Back when that blizzard come and we still had leaves on the trees in October, you know. I had this 25 acres of sedan grass out here and I had it in five different pens and had them in different stages. I just had little sun shades. I lost a lot of them.

Joan: What year was that?

Welton: It was in the early '70's, I think. I don't remember just exactly what year, but what didn't die, a lot of them, I didn't realize the fat on their back would freeze. It would just crack open and stuff, and the hogs, I would feed and feed and feed them, but it didn't do them any good. It was a bigger loss than the ones I lost. Then the price of hogs was, I think, 15 cents a pound. We was glad to get out of them when we did.

Rosetta: That was the storm when it was 70 or 80 degrees one day and then...it just ruined the trees too.

Joan: I've only been here for around 18 years, that would have been the early 90's when we had one of those. Ed had planted an orchard, and we lost the orchard. It came in on Halloween. It had been seventy, but it killed a lot of those trees. I was so upset I cried. I like to see my trees. Did you have orchards or anything?

Welton: Oh, we planted a few trees out here, but peaches went out pretty quick. We had a few cherry trees, and had peaches and pears. We've still got a few pear trees. We had a couple apple trees.

Joan: This climate is hard on fruit trees.

Welton: Of course, I wasn't very good at spraying them.

Joan: Well, you have to water them too.

Welton: I watered pretty good, but that peach curl got into most of my peach trees.

Joan: Well, let's see. Are there any other good family stories you want to tell us?

Welton: I can't think of too much.

Joan: We've covered a lot of territory.

Rosetta: I'm amazed at your memory!

Joan: You have a really good memory.

Welton: Well, I'm blessed. My double cousins are both in the rest homes. One of them with Alzheimer's. I feel so sorry for him.

Joan: Yes, because you're still living here in this nice, beautiful home and have your mind and still do things. That's wonderful!

Welton: Yes, I've lived here for eleven years by myself.

Joan: It is a beautiful home.

Welton: Well, the wife and I waited a long time for it. Finally the old house got so bad, the termites... We had remodeled and put picture windows in the north and south of the dining room, it went north and south. I could tell the picture window was settling a little bit. All at once, one blistery cold, windy day from the north, it settled about that much and the curtains blew. The termites had eaten it away to where that heavy picture window come down. So we just about had to do something. We waited a long time. My second son had six girls, and they were in and out a lot. We wanted a place for them. Then they moved before my wife died, so I've got a pretty big house for just me. I enjoy having church here. People come in to...

Joan: No, it's not all bad, is it. They had to lose the old church, but it's not all bad. And then your daughter comes over and...

Welton: We could have just split and gone every direction. It's the only thing really that's keeping this community together. We've got a nice community, with a lot of nice people.

Joan: How many attend the church?

Welton: We've had... about 28 here the other day, but there's a lot of them gone to the fair. About thirty. Sometimes there'll be up to 35. And sometimes it'll drop down to 28.

Joan: Does your minister serve another...

Welton: Macksville. We have church at 8:30 in the morning, with social hour afterwards, of course. Here of late, since the tornado, that's the business part too. When we're all together, we can talk business.

Joan: Do you have potlucks? Do you stay around and eat together?

Welton: Yes, we have one person that's supposed to bring refreshments and stuff. We have a real nice little brunch.

Joan: You may miss it when you go back to having a church.

Welton: Well, we had that at church anyway.

Joan: I visited your church once for your turkey dinner in the fall.

Welton: I think they're going to have their bazaar and stuff at the Catholic Church at Belpre, at their building up there. They've offered it to us, and I think it's nice.

Joan: Can you think of anything else we need to know? You probably will after we leave, but... Looking back over your life, how do you feel about your life and living here?

Welton: I feel like I lived in an ideal time. I wouldn't trade my time in history for anything.

Rosetta: Your family had done well, just thinking of your ancestors, when they came here, and how they bought the land and how you stayed on the land. That's just great that you kept your place in history.

Welton: The land's been important to us. It has been good to us. We've tried to take care of it. We had some rough times, but usually if you'll stay with it, it comes out. Of course, this irrigation has been a plus.

Joan: I'm interested in rivers. What changes have you seen in the Rattlesnake (*Creek*) ?

Welton: The Rattlesnake just isn't anymore. Except when a flood comes through, I think we've had 12 floods this year, when it comes down through, it is dry.

Joan: When you were young, did you go fishing in it?

Welton: Oh yes.

Joan: What kind of fish were in it?

Welton: Oh carp, catfish, regular cat, cat and carp.

Joan: I find that a great loss in western Kansas, to see those rivers gone.

Welton: Yeah, I can remember in '35, I think it was, I was staying with Wayne Schultz down there where Flicks live now, Doris Schultz live. Anyway, it was the house before Fritz (*Schultz*) built the new one. It was built in '35, so I think that was about the same time. The Rattlesnake was about a mile wide. I remember horses, I seen horses out there trying to swim in it. One of them got tangled in a fence and went down in it. I thought he was a goner, but he finally come up and saved him. But I can still see that old grey horse struggling and going under in that water. Then I stayed all night with Wayne. We were sleeping upstairs. When we woke up, Mrs. Schultz come up and woke us up, and shoot, water was coming through the house. Fritz and Lois had been down working all night yanking things up and trying to get them up. When they seen it was going to be a losing battle, so they had a hired man that had an old Model T, and I don't know, the exhaust come up and come through the spare tire. He could come in quite a ways on that. Fritz had a pair of hip boots, and he carried us out there to that old Model T and got us out of there. I can remember that. But they used to have gardens down there. What they called the Grimes garden, that was on what is Oil Road now, where it crosses the Rattlesnake on the south side. That used to be Grimes garden. Schultz garden was down where Flicks live now, on the south side of the creek.

Joan: They were truck gardens? For both the family use and to sell?

Welton: Yes, it was mostly...it wasn't the people who owned the land, it was somebody else that did the work. There were several there on the Schultz garden. Cecil McQueen, finally had a truck garden at Kinsley. He was about the last one. A fellow by the name of Patton before him, there on the Schultz', Frank Lamb was the one of Grimes' garden. I remember people from Kinsley would always come down and get stuff from Grimes.

Joan: Did you use the river also for picnicking or things like that? Or was it...

Welton: Well, used groves mostly. This grove down here used to be called Crabtree Grove. It was on the next section south, over next to oil road. There were big cottonwood trees there and then used to be over the Gatterman's where Robbie Cross lives, used to go over there on church, I mean school, picnics and stuff. And then it was always a big deal in school to walk down the old railroad track and go down to what they called the railroad bridge, where the railroad crossed the Rattlesnake east of Trousdale about two or three miles.

Joan: Did you swim in the Rattlesnake?

Welton: Some of them did. We lost two boys. The Lane boy got drowned on the railroad bridge. Then the Welch boy drowned just south of Trousdale. I think he...

Joan: That was interesting, I'm glad we thought to ask that. Because I am personally interested in the rivers and what's happening to them, because the Arkansas is moving dry to the east, so...

Welton: When we drilled our water well, the water well guy said that back some time in history this area in here was the bed of the Arkansas (*River*), what's underneath us. That's the reason we get more of a charge whenever there's water in the Arkansas. A lot of irrigation wells come up. We get a lot better charge than the people around us. And that's what some of these drillers drilling these wells claim, that the structure underneath us gives us a little better water source than some north of us.

Joan: Do you still drill irrigation wells? Or did they put a stop...

Welton: They put a stop to that several years ago.

Joan: That's what I thought.

Welton: And there's too many, and they're trying to get you go back the other way.

Rosetta: Back to dry land.

Welton: But not too many want to try that, you know. Not unless you're old and want to give up or something.

Joan: And the farm, it will move on to your daughter? Or...

Welton: It will go to the daughter and the grandkids.

Joan: Do you have any farmers in the grandkids?

Welton: No. They're town kids.

Rosetta: It is harder to find farm kids anymore.

Welton: Yes, and boy, some of them are farm kids too. Take these Woods kids, even the girls, they want the farm.

Rosetta: We need farmers.

Welton: Yes, those girls even, they want the farm. And I think the Schultz, I think their kids are pretty farm oriented, Kevin Schultz' kids. They even run chickens and stuff, you see people running chickens to them.

Joan: We had a book talk Tuesday night about a book called *The Egg and I*, I don't know if you remember it, but it's about raising chickens. We had several people share about how you don't want to raise chickens.

Welton: Yes, I never liked to raise chickens. I always had to...it was my job when I was little to clean chicken houses and stuff. They always had a chicken house that was so low that you always had to bend over and I always bumped my head. I used to...every time you'd go in there they'd always fly. I didn't care for chickens. But we had chickens quite a long time after we was married. Laying hens and we always raised chickens to put in the locker (*frozen food storage business*). What really cooked us on chickens was they had a snow spell and we had little chickens. Had an electric brooder. No electricity, and we'd just gotten the little suckers. We brought them in the house and put them right on the kitchen floor. We put papers and everything down. Put things around. And it was alright for a little while but I think the electricity was off for a week to ten days. They got to flying, those little down feathers. And I remember a fella, a Wylie Jones use to work for the Co-op up at Lewis. We found out he had a propane brooder stove, and he'd sell it to me. But he said, "I don't know, you probably can't get to it." Well, I got to within a mile and a half of it. I walked over there, and it was up in the loft of his barn. And I got two poles and found some string and put it together and I put it on my back on those poles. I drug that a mile and a half.

Joan: Where there's a will, there's a way.

Welton: It had to be something to get those chickens out of the house. So we had propane after that. But that kind of sickened us out on chickens. We didn't have them too long after that. But Schultzes, they bring eggs to church on Sunday.

Joan: That's where you get your fresh eggs. That's great, if they want to do it. Well, this has really been interesting. Thank you very, very much for sharing with us.

Welton: Well, I don't know if I've done you any good or not.

Joan: You brought up the name, we hadn't even thought about asking. Have you gotten to that yet?

Rosetta: No, I hadn't thought of that.

Joan: That was actually how we got started, was Elmore, so you even helped us out there without knowing.

Welton: Well, this one Elmore that killed in the war. He was in the Air Force. I know right where his grave is, or pretty close to it. West drive on the east side, about midway. Not too far from...

Joan: We brought our picnic lunches, so we were going to go to the cemetery and take a few pictures and eat a picnic lunch. So it is on the where?

Welton: It's right along the drive on the right hand side when you go in the west drive. It's up pretty close to the evergreen tree.

Joan: A small flat...?

Welton: Yes, a flat stone.

Joan: Well, we might go take a picture for these people then.

Welton: Recently we haven't had it, but we always every couple years, Trousdale Days. We had people come in, and there was an Elmore girl came to one of the last ones they had. And a friend that we ran around with, Norene Monaghan, down here, I think went to school with one of them. She probably could tell you more about back then. But they lived on what was called the Zella White place back there. There's no place there anymore, but years ago, Zella White's folks was the Elliotts. It was Elliot's then. Marlin Butler's mother was an Elliot. It was Donovan over west, she was an Elliot, and Mrs. Lloyd Miller, her mother was an Elliot. Shannon. I was trying to think how the Millers was, because I knew that Elliot...

Joan: You would be a good genealogy librarian.

Rosetta: You certainly would.

Joan: Thank you very, very much. We've taken up two hours of your time. If you'll let us borrow some things, we'll take them...

Welton: You're welcome to any of it, I'd just like to have it back when you get through with it.