

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Mecca, Ohio

Personal Experience

O.H. 996

JOAN ROSE

Interviewed

by

Beth Hanuschak

on

May 1, 1979

## JOAN MARGARET SIMPSON ROSE

Mrs. Joan Rose was born in 1932 and raised in Mecca. She is the oldest of three children. Her parents, Laurence "Slim" and Gladys Johnston have lived in Mecca their entire life. Mrs. Simpson lived in a section of Mecca known as "Irishtown." This is where all the Irish immigrants settled. Mrs. Rose's parents have always been farmers. Her father worked for one-half day in a mill and never returned. Mrs. Rose considers herself a "farmer's daughter." She has never left Mecca.

Mrs. Rose entered Mecca Centralized School in 1937. All through her high school years she worked on the farm. After graduation, she was employed by Mecca Restaurant located in the heart of the town. In 1951 she was hired by Ohio Lamp Company where she worked until 1968. Since then she has been a housewife.

In 1955 she married Ralph Rose. She is the mother of a daughter, Sandra Jean. Mrs. Rose is a member of Mecca Community Church and is actively involved in the Maplewood Booster Club. Her hobbies include baking, ceramics and sewing.

-- Beth Hanuschak

H: This is an interview with Joan Rose for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Beth Hanuschak, on Mecca, Ohio, on May 1, 1979, at 6:10 p.m.

There were a lot of Roses here in Mecca. I know in 1811 the first Rose, a lady by the name of Rachel Rose, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Rose. Let us start with that. Is that any relation to you whatsoever? They were from Poland, Ohio.

R: No, not that I know of.

H: How far back do your relatives go? What was your maiden name?

R: It was Simpson, and my relatives were from Leavittsburg and Burton and places like that.

H: Were there any members of your husband's family that were the original settlers here in America?

R: No.

H: He is not related to any of them?

R: He is not related to any of them, no.

H: there was a Thomas Rose, he was a cheese manufacturer here in Mecca in 1841. He is not related to you?

R: No, that is a different Rose family.

H: I see. Okay, very good. Well then, let us start with you. Your maiden name is Simpson, you have been living here all your life, and you were born and raised in Mecca.

R: Yes.

H: Okay, let us go back to your childhood. What can you remember about your family? Tell me a little bit about your parents. What were their first names?

R: Well, my father's name was Lawrence. Everybody called him Slim, and still do.

H: Why?

R: That was just a nickname. Well, he is tall for one thing, but that is just a nickname he got, Slim Simpson. My mother's name was Gladys. They grew up and went to school together.

H: Here in Mecca?

R: Here in Mecca. My father just lived across the road from where he lives now when he was a boy. On 88.

H: Where is that?

R: Over and across there in that house before you get to the school. So he just moved across the road. That was as far as he ever got. My mother lived in Irishtown, what they called Irishtown. She was a Johnston, and they were one of the first. Some of the Johnstons were one of the first settlers up in that corner of the county.

H: What do you know about Irishtown? What did your mother tell you about that?

R: It was just a few people. I do not know even how it got its name. They were just some, I think, Irish from Ireland. People that lived up there mostly were Irish and Scotch. They just called it Irishtown.

H: That is interesting.

R: There were not too many. I mean houses were far, far apart. The house that my mother was born and raised in was just tore down in the last few years. They built a new home on her place now. They rode to school in a horse and buggy, from there, down here to a little one-room school. They had brick on their feet and blankets over them. That was all they had to keep warm.

H: Is she still living?

R: Yes.

H: Really, how old is she?

R: My mother and father are both seventy. Well, my mother is seventy-four and my father has had a heart attack; but he is in good health, considering. Still very active, still has cows -- always will.

H: Was he a farmer?

R: Yes. He lost his parents when he was twelve or thirteen years old. Then he just went out and worked. Back then, they worked as hard as men when they were young. He said he always had to do a man's load when he was just a boy. In fact, just farming.

H: Here in Mecca? He lived all his life in Mecca?

R: Yes. He worked a half a day in a steel mill. He went out for lunch and never went back. He said they still owed him a half a day. He could not stand all that noise, so he never went back. So he has always been a farmer. My mother has never worked away from home. She worked hard, but she never worked away from home.

H: You are a farmer's daughter then?

R: Yes, and I love it.

H: Well, definitely. That is great. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

R: I have two sisters, but no brothers. My youngest sister was supposed to be a boy, but she was not.

H: Are you the oldest?

R: I am the oldest. My one sister lives in Indiana. My other one live right back behind my dad like I do.

H: So, your parents said that it was a hard life for them?

R: Yes, it was. They had to keep busy raising three daughters and farming. My father hauled milk by horse when he was young, and then he hauled to Youngstown for another man for years. He hauled milk and in the winter time we made maple syrup. Besides, we had a whole barn full of cows. He had three jobs half of the time. It was hard work. It was the Depression time when I was born.

H: Did you have time for fun? What did they do for activities, your parents? What did they tell you?

R: What they did?

H: Yes.

- R: I really do not know what they did. They did not do much of anything, like play ball or something like that.
- H: Just hard workers.
- R: They did not go to movie theaters or stuff like that. My mother had three sisters and a brother. My father had a sister.
- H: What did they tell you about Mecca when they were young and first married and living here? I am sure they told you things. What were their impressions of Mecca then?
- R: Mecca is the only place they know. They never traveled at all. They went to Nebraska on their honeymoon because my dad's brother, he was in Nebraska. He went out there. He still talks to this day about going to Nebraska. That was a big thing. But they never traveled. Never got away from Mecca. Mecca is everything to them. When they were growing up there was a tornado that went through here. There was a church and stuff that got blown. Parts of it ended up in Gustavus. For years when we used to plow, we would plow up cup handles, saucers and all kinds of stuff in the fields from that tornado. My mother's house was struck by lightening two or three times. She was deathly afraid of it. As we were growing up, she was always afraid of it.
- H: Very interesting. You were born in 1932, as we said earlier, during the Depression. What were your thoughts as you were growing up? What can you remember in your childhood years, those years in the 1930's? What can you remember about that?
- R: Not too much in the 1930's.
- H: Can you remember anything?
- R: Not too much in the 1930's. It is tough. It is just like kids nowadays. They do not realize now what could happen. We did not really realize what my parents were going through because we were only like nine or ten in the 1940's. My mother raised and canned everything. We raised our beef and our own pig. We always had plenty to eat. We did not have a big wardrobe, but we always had clothes. We were better off than some people, as far as that goes. We always had plenty to eat. They fixed everything themselves. We baked and everything like that.
- H: What year did you start school?

R: I started when I was five.

H: About 1937 or 1938?

R: 1937, yes. I started when I was five.

H: Awfully young. Yes, and graduated when I was seventeen, when there were not any jobs to be had.

H: Why did you start at five?

R: You could then. Back then you could start at five if your birthday was by December or January. They did not have that many kids so I got to go, because mine was in January. I would not have got to go if they would have been filled up. There was not that many children so got to go. I got out of school at seventeen and there was not any more jobs then than there is now, especially for a 17-year-old.

H: Where did you begin school? What was the name of the school?

R: Mecca Centralized School.

H: Is that the one that is in the lake right now?

R: Yes.

H: What did that look like? Can you tell me about your childhood, you know, first, second, third grade?

R: That was a brick building. I cannot remember too much about it, but it was not real small. It had an outside toilet. I can remember that because the boys used to take our lunch pails and throw them down the toilet. I do not know how many we lost going down the toilet. I can remember that very well. When we went out for recess, we went outside.

H: Who were some of the kids you went to school with in your early years?

R: The same ones I graduated with.

H: Those are?

R: Like, well, there was Berle. Her maiden name was Grove. She is Berle Francis now. And a Marvis Darr. Her maiden name was Chronister. There was just

three girls.

H: All through your years in school?

R: Well, there was about five girls when we started and we ended up with three. There were six boys and I do not remember if there were anymore than that when we started or not. There were nine of us when we graduated.

H: Your graduating class had nine people?

R: Had nine people. The boys always got their own way when it came to a class meeting because there were six of them.

H: You went through all those years in school with nine people?

R: We probably had about 12. We lost two or three because they moved.

H: When you went to elementary school, how was the school set up? Grade one in one room, grade two in another? Or was it grade one and two together?

R: Each grade was by itself. We stayed in that room all day. We only had one teacher, even clear through high school. Then maybe we only moved one room in high school. We did not move different classes, we had different teachers. Like one for history, one for spelling. They might have been the same teacher, you just might have went to another room. When our school was tore down, we went to Johnson, when they decided to put the lake in.

H: Up here on 88?

R: Yes, on 88. This side went to Johnson, that was like when I was in seventh or eighth grade. The other, West Mecca, went to Cortland.

H: I did not realize that.

R: And then we came back. The school sets on my dad's property. He sold that to the school.

H: The new school? Where it is at right now?

R: The new school.

H: Is that right?



R: That was my father's property. We used to farm that. Then he sold ten acres to the school.

H: Out of curiosity, how much did you sell it for? Do you know?

R: Oh, I do not remember. I think I remember him saying like \$500 for the land. Now that might be wrong, it might be \$5,000. I cannot remember, but it was really, really reasonable compared to now. There were ten acres. I can remember walking behind the horses many times farming that.

H: Is that right?

R: Yes. I used to be the one. I was the oldest one. I used to walk all day behind the horses, dragging or plowing or discing or whatever.

H: When you went to school and when you were in junior high and high school, after your day at school, would you have to go home and work?

R: Yes.

H: Did you like that?

R: Yes, I loved it.

H: Did you really?

R: Yes.

H: Tell me about that.

R: I had a cow to milk. I had five cows to milk at night. Whatever there was to do, you went home and did it. In the summer, mostly, we did not have to work real, real hard. But in the winter, we would come home from school and go back in the woods, like in February and March, and gather sap, or bring in wood, or whatever, to make maple syrup. My father would work all night and all day when that time of the year came.

H: Let me ask you this. Describe the typical day for you when you were in high school. Did you have to get up at 5:00 or 5:30 to milk the cows, then go to school? How was the typical day for you?

R: No, I did not have to get up in the morning and milk. Not when school was going. In the summer time, sometimes I would get up. You did not have to; you

did it because you wanted to. You would get up and go to school. School started at nine o'clock and got out at 3:30. You would come home, always had something to eat. Your mother was always home. Your mother was always home when you came home from school. My mother was always home. I cannot ever remember coming home from school and my mother not being there. Of course, she did not work away from home, but she was always there. Then you did your homework or watched Stella Dallas. Not watched it, listened to it on the radio then, because my mother always had to have Stella Dallas about 3:30 or 4:15, I think Stella Dallas came on. Then you had supper and you went to bed with the chickens, like 7:30 or 8:00.

H: Is that right?

R: Before it was even dark in the summer time. You went to bed when your dad said it was time to go to bed. He went to bed real early and he got up at 4:30 in the morning. When he figured it was bed time, everybody went to bed. We were never allowed to go out, to date when we were in school, until we were about 17.

H: Did that bother you? Did your friends date and you could not?

R: Well, not really. The guys did not have girls and the girls did not have boyfriends. Some of them did, but not in our class. I do not think any of them did when we graduated, really. I know one time I was asked to go to a wiener roast. The poor guy had to go to the barn to see my dad, then he had to come to the house to see my mother. Then he had to go to the barn to see my dad and I think he got disgusted.

H: You never ended up going?

R: No. They had to know how fast he drove and all this and that. That is the way it was. They just did not let you go. Maybe once in a great while on a Sunday, we would go for a ride. The three of us would fight to see who was going to sit next to the window in the car. One of us had to sit in the middle. Once in a great, great while -- there was a theater in Kinsman -- my dad would take us to a show on Saturday night if Roy Acuff was on, because he liked Roy Acuff. That was a treat to go to a movie. You did not go that often, but it was a real treat. You did not go for a ride too often, either. It was always the back roads. The same back roads, no matter when you went for a ride. It was the same trip. To see whose corn was growing the nicest or something like that. In the winter time, you never went nowhere, just to school and home.

H: What did you do for fun?

- R: We had comic books or had popped popcorn at night or whatever, played rummy. That was about the extent of that.
- H: Did the school have any activities for you?
- R: Not a lot. They had the donkey ball game once in a while. When I first went to school, my father was on the school board. Once in a great while they had a donkey ball game or PTA with a Christmas program or something. That was about all we ever went to. They had basketball and stuff, but we were not allowed to go. We had a baseball team. Just similar to what they have now, only not this large. They had volleyball. We played volleyball in school in the winter time. We had a lot of fun playing volleyball. The girls and boys would all get out and play together, but all the whole high school did not hardly take up both sides of the net, really.
- H: You went up here to Johnson then. When did you come back down to Mecca?
- R: About two years.
- H: Two years later, so you would have been about a freshman or sophomore?
- R: Yes, about.
- H: So then you graduated from what is now Maplewood?
- R: Not this Maplewood. They built on to this school since I graduated. We all say we went to the old school.
- H: Other than the building on, what has changed for you? What can you see? Are there any changes in the school from when you were there? Other than the physical features of building on?
- R: Not too much, no. The only thing that was so different was that the school had no windows when they built on.
- H: Is that right?
- R: There are no windows now, around on this side, at all. When they started talking about building with now windows, everybody thought, oh, what is that going to be like? So dark inside and all this and that. We were used to going to school and it was all windows, windows, windows.
- H: Did you have a cafeteria? Did you bring your lunch?

R: We took our lunch.

H: They did not have someone to serve you a hot lunch, like they do today?

R: I think as we got in high school, after we got this school, I think they had lunches, but we never bought them. We took our lunch from home.

H: You graduated in what year?

R: 1949. We had a big prom and we had a big baccalaureate.

H: You were in high school during World War II. What were your feelings? Did you know what was going on in the world? Did they keep you informed here?

R: Yes.

H: Did it bother you?

R: We knew, but I do not remember paying that much attention to it. I knew a lot of guys who left and went.

H: From your class? From this area?

R: From this area. Well, my father's hired man or somebody like that. You would know that they were drafted and were leaving. Well, we were just kids. I did not have any brothers to worry about having to go or anything like that. I do not think we worried that much about it when we were in high school. We knew it was going on and everything. The day Pearl Harbor was bombed, my father flew to Cleveland. That was the only airplane ride he ever had. He was ready to go out the door when it came over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed.

H: You mean he flew to Cleveland?

R: He flew to Cleveland with two friends, and back -- just for a trip -- from Vienna to Cleveland.

H: What was he going to do there?

R: He just flew up there. I think the one person went on or something, to some place else. He just went because he had never been on an airplane. So we went to the airport and the whole bit. He still talks about that, too. That was his only airplane ride. My mother did not go. That was the day Pearl harbor was bombed. Really, I know my parents worried about the war.

H: Did they?

R: They would be talking about it. It was always in the paper and everything. There was a lot, there was quite a few people who did not come back from Mecca, too.

H: Do you know of any?

R: I cannot think of a name right now. We used to have a thing in front of the school, a board, a memorial board, and it had quite a few names on it. I cannot think of one person right this minute. There was quite a few that did not come back from Mecca that you heard of.

H: When you graduated, what did Mecca look like then? Was it still pretty much farm land?

R: Yes. The houses were far apart and you knew most everybody.

H: Is that right?

R: You knew most everybody. Everybody helped everybody.

H: Did you like that?

R: Yes, it was nice that way.

H: Has that part of Mecca changed?

R: Yes, I see where it has changed. No one helps nobody but themselves nowadays, a lot of them. It has really changed. The younger generation and a lot of people from the city are coming out here, too. They have their own family and their own thing. They do not pay much attention to a lot of other people. The neighbors help the neighbors but it is different. Much, much different. The land is all gone, a lot of the trees and a lot of the woods.

H: Right before you graduated, and even after, what were your plans after high school? What did you want to do with yourself?

R: My father wanted me to go to college and I did not want to go. I did not go and I regretted it many times; but I was 17 and there was a little restaurant down here on the corner in Mecca. It was just called the Mecca Restaurant. I do not even remember if there was a name. The Harrison's owned it. It had a little Dairy

Queen. It was not called Dairy Queen then. It was custards, frozen custard. I got a job in there. I did not work full-time because I was not old enough, but that was the first place I worked.

H: How much did they pay you? Do you remember?

R: I do not remember, but it was not even a dollar, I do not think.

H: How long did you stay at that job?

R: Until I went to Ohio Lamp. I went to Ohio Lamp in 1951. I did not even get that job when I first got out of school, but I was there probably a year or so. That was when we had slot machines.

H: Slot machines?

R: Yes. They are illegal now.

H: Where were those at?

R: In that restaurant.

H: In this Mecca? The little restaurant had slot machines?

R: Yes.

H: They were not illegal then?

R: I do not think they were. I did not realize they were not legal, but I can remember that the guy who took care of them always went in the back room and shut the door with the owner and we did not get to see. Now I know why.

H: I see.

R: Yes, we had them. They were right out in front.

H: Was it busy there? You must have had a lot of people coming in.

R: It was busy. It was like truck drivers going through. It was busy. On Sunday it was terribly busy because this frozen custard was really something. To me, it was vanilla ice cream softened up, but to other people it was something to get frozen custard. We were busy. We just served chili hamburgers and sandwiches and like that. There were two of us working. That was my first step

out into life. Really, away from home.

H: Roughly in that same time period, 1948 to 1949, they started building the lake. What was your feeling about that? Were you glad to see that lake being built?

R: No.

H: Why?

R: Well, they started before that. They started when they took the school and nobody liked that either.

H: Why?

R: It was sad, really. There were homes down there that had been there for years and they could not move them. They moved a couple of them. The people had to leave and find some place else. There were older people in those homes. They did not want to move.

H: The government did not find them a place to live. They just gave them money and said "Here" ?

R: Well, in a way, yes. They had time to find a place. They knew it was going to happen, but it was hard to visualize that it was going to happen. To this day that water does not thrill me one bit. I do not like water anyway.

H: Do you remember Mosquito Creek very well?

R: Yes.

H: What was that like?

R: It was just a stream of running water. It was never empty or nothing. It was not pretty, as far as that goes. It was a creek. Trees, it was just nature. It was put there by nature. It still runs through the middle, under the bridge is where the creek was. It is deep under there. It is real deep under that creek. We had a janitor. Our janitor lived over there. They took his house.

H: What was his name?

R: Mr. Chaney. When we were in school, in the younger grades, we used to clean erasers for him and he would give us a sucker. We really cleaned erasers to get them suckers.

H: Were you part of the rivalry between West Mecca and East Mecca?? I have heard a lot about that. Were you part of that? Did you see that going on?

R: Yes. You would see it going on. It was just like the creek separated. They stayed separated. They had their own church. We had our church. When they went to PTA, they sat on one side of the isle and East Mecca sat on the other side of the isle. It was just the thing. I do not think anyone was mad at nobody. It was just the thing. It always happened and that is the way it always was. To some extent, it still is. West Mecca is proud of west Mecca and East Mecca is proud of East Mecca. We have our same trustees but they have their voting place over there and we have our voting place over here. That is just the way it has always been.

H: Interesting. So in 1951 you started to work at Ohio Lamp. Where is that located at?

R: In Warren, on Dana Street.

H: How did you get back and forth? Did you have your own car?

R: No. I drove my parent's car for a year -- well, almost a year. I rode with Mr. Graham, Nellie's husband. When I went to work my father said, "Now you have your own money and you can have anything you want and you can pay." So he let me use his car for about a year and then he said I could buy a car. So I bought a car.

H: What was your first car?

R: A Chevrolet. A used car; I never had a new car in my life.

H: What year was it?

R: A 1949.

H: How much did you pay for it?

R: Like nine hundred or eight hundred dollars.

H: It was a lot of money.

R: It was a lot of money then. I had it repainted right away because I wanted it green. It really was nice.



H: How much did you make at Ohio Lamp an hour?

R: I started out at \$1.01

H: How many years did you work there?

R: Eighteen. When Sandy was ten years old she wanted me to stay home so she could stay home in the summer, so I quit. I was going to quit the year before but I did not. So I finally quit, and I am glad I did.

H: Why?

R: Because she grew up so quick. I only had one.

H: So you quit in 1969 then?

R: 1968.

H: 1968. You worked there all those years. What did you do there?

R: I was a miler when I first went there. Then I ran a steam machine, and after I had been there 13 years I got bumped off this steam machine because I did not have enough seniority after 13 years to hold it. Then I was a floater and ended up being a seamer, which I liked, but it was hard work. It was piece work. There was no loafing.

H: When you worked there and you were still living at home, did you have to have your responsibilities here also, or did you give them up? Did you still have to help out here on the farm?

R: I did some, yes. Because I liked it.

H: Because you liked it?

R: Yes, really. I am a farmer at heart. I like to do it. Well, by that time my father had got a tractor. He did not have the horses no more.

H: Did your sisters help out?

R: Not very much, because my father would not trust them with anything. Mostly that was the reason. My one sister was four years younger than me, but I learned to drive out in the fields. First day I ever drove in town was the day I took my test. That was the first day I ever drove in town and parked. I did not

have to park like they do now and I did not have to take no written test, but I had to park the car. That was the first time I drove downtown. I was nervous.

H: I am sure of that.

R: I love to drive in the truck out in the field. I loved to drive. We did not have driver's training. You did not have to have anything like that then.

H: Was your father patient with you? Did he give you the truck and say, "Go ahead and go"?

R: No, we would sneak it, my sister and me.. Well, he would let us have it. Well, he would send us out in the field to get something, but when he was not around, sometimes my sister and me would get it and run around the grainery with it. That is how we learned to drive.

H: Growing up in your house, it sounds like a very happy time. In the pictures you see a big white farm house. Was it like that? What did your parent's house look like?

R: No, it was not. Well, it was sided, but our house was moved. It was at Mecca Center and my father moved it up where it is now, right over there. He moved it.

H: What is the location on that?

R: Right on 88, about a fourth of a mile from where it used to sit. There was a lady that used to live in that ho use that was crippled. It is in the book of Mecca.

H: Tell me a little bit about that.

R: All I know is that she was crippled. She lived alone.

H: Is the lady that Singing Sal?

R: Yes.

H: Yes, I heard a lot about her. Bill Hoffman told me about Singing Sal.

R: Well, that is the house I grew up in.

H: Is that right?

R: She used to go up and down those steps. Upstairs, she would sit down and

scoot down and crawl up. The steps are really steep that go up stairs. She did the same way to go down the cellar. All I know is what little bit I was told, but my father moved that house up. Then we did the upstairs a little bit.

H: Why did he move it?

R: He bought it and moved it. He had this land he moved the house up there after he got married because he acquired this land. He lived across the street all of his life.

H: What ever happened to Singing Sal?

R: She died, I think, before or about the time he bought the house. It still looks the same in the front. It still has the lattice work, the old-fashioned lattice work it had way back then. I do not know how they moved it, though.

H: That was one of my next questions. How in that time did they move it?

R: I do not even know. They just put it on rollers and moved it real slow on rollers like. That is all I know. It was not damaged that much. It is old.

H: It has a fine history to it, the house. What year were you married?

R: In 1955.

H: What is your husband's name?

R: Ralph.

H: How did you meet him?

R: Through a friend of his.

H: Is he from Mecca?

R: Who?

H: Ralph, your husband.

R: No. He is from Leavittsburg. He was born in Leavittsburg. Then his mother and dad both died. He was like an orphan, but he was never in the orphanage. He was went from house to house and he had to work. He was like 13 or 14 when his parents died and he has been on his own ever since. That is why he always

said, "If you want to make it, you can make it. I did." It was hard for him.

H: So where did you meet him?

R: He had a friend that always kept calling me up to go out with him. Not with him, with Ralph. I would not go. I refused four different times. Finally, he called me up and said, "If you do not go out with me, I am never going to call you again." All you did then was go to a movie or something, there was nothing else doing. Well, there was bars and stuff, but I never did drink. My parents would have never approved of that. I never learned to dance and he never had the opportunity. Well, he square danced a little bit. But you mostly went to a movie.

H: Do you have any children?

R: I have one daughter.

H: How old is she?

R: Twenty-two.

H: What does she do? Does she still live here?

R: She works at Hillside Hospital. She has been there a couple of years.

H: Is she a nurse?

R: No. She is an aid. She groomed horses at one time, race horses.

H: Is she still living with you?

R: No, she is married. She has an apartment. She did not get married until she was 21, almost 21. I sure hated to see her get married, hated to see her leave, hated to see her graduate.

H: Did she have the work that you do? Did she have to farm?

R: No.

H: Did your husband do any farming?

R: Yes, we lived here. She worked in the garden or something like that. She was in 4H. She was very active in school. She was a cheerleader for six years. She was a cheerleader in 6th grade. Then in 7th grade she did not get cheerleader.

Then she was a cheerleader from there on out. She was in baseball and track. She kept us busy for just one child, but I was glad. She mowed the yard or something like that. She had everything she wanted. It was not hard for her. I think, sometimes, it was a mistake.

H: Did you want her to have the life that you did? Have responsibilities of cows or the farming aspect of it? Did you want her to have that?

R: We did not have the cows that I grew up with, or the land that I grew up on, or anything like that, so I never gave it any thought.

R: He works at Packard. He is a tinner. He has been there for 33 years.

H: You have almost stopped the farming part of your life. Do you still do any of that at all?

R: No, we still have seven horses now.

H: Is that right? Are they show horses?

R: Well, we have half Arabian, which has been in 4H and like that, but we do not even have the time to ride. We have Belgians, the big Belgian horses. We have them mostly for breeding. We have the colts and sell the colts, which I love. We have some chickens. I have my garden and I have land to plow and hay to make.

H: Did you ever think about going back to work? Maybe Ohio Lamp or some place like that.

R: No. Once in a great while I think about it. I think about people I worked with. I am still in contact with some of them. But, no. I have plenty to do. When I went to quit work they used to say, "What are you going to do with all your spare time?" I have never had any spare time since I quit, because I always find something to do, as you can see. I got all kinds of dust collectors.

H: Very pretty. You are involved in a lot of organizations. I know that you are involved in school organizations, the Maplewood Booster Club. How did that come about? How was that developed here in Maplewood or Mecca?

R: I was not in it when it was first started. Sandy was young. She was little then. I have been in for eight, nine, or ten years.

H: You are very active in it?

R: It is not too big of an organization. We always have a lot of help when we need it. Mostly school was the only thing. I was never a lady's aid person or a club lady. Never. Just church and school. I like kids and that is why I stay in it.

H: That is great. We need more people like that.

R: I like to work with the kids.

H: You just said that you are active in school and church. You belong to the Mecca Community Church. Are you an active church-goer there?

R: Yes. I was treasurer for a few years. Yes, I go to church and specials, stuff like that.

H: You said that you were treasurer. What does that mean?

R: Well, we have a church board. I was the treasurer. Well, the church as far as that goes.

H: Where is this church located?

R: On [Route] 46.

H: Who is the pastor?

R: Our Reverend Kendall, now.

H: How many years have you belonged to this church?

R: Ever since I was a little girl. I do not know exactly when I joined, but I went ever since. When we were little we used to go every Sunday. If we went every Sunday and did not miss a Sunday by the end of the year, our Sunday school teacher would give us a plaque or a picture. I have one in the living room hanging now. I never missed a Sunday. My father would take us down. He did not go, but he would take us and come and get us. We went every Sunday.

H: What religion is that?

R: It is Methodist.

H: Were you married at that church?

R: Yes. Well, I was married in a preacher's home because the minister had

appendicitis. He had an operation so I got married in his home and the reception was in the church basement. There was not any other way. It is a nice church. It is small but in style.

H: When you started to work in the 1950's, at the beginning of the Korean War, what was that like for you? Did you know your husband then?

R: No.

H: Did anyone you know have to go to Korea?

R: I am not sure if Jeff Switzer went to Korea or not. He was in the service. Yes, that was our boy that went. The men I grew up with -- yes, he was one of them that went. He was in a real bad fight over there. Some of them went. They were on ships or something and never got off. But he was a foot soldier and he was in a bad part of it.

H: What was Mecca like during the 1950's? During the late 1950's there is a lot of change in music and the attitude of the children. What was Mecca like during the 1950's? Had Mecca changed over the years, or is it changing now?

R: It is changing now. It has changed in the last five or so years much, much more. We more or less changed little, nothing affected a lot of us out here, things that went on. In the last five to seven years, the buildings started and the land started going. There are many, many more people out here. The school is much larger than it was.

H: Do you like that idea?

R: I never did. We consolidated when I was in school. No, after I got out of school, they talked about it then. Everybody was mostly against it, but it just slid through. We were one of the first ones. In fact, I think we were the first district to consolidate.

H: What was the reason they gave for consolidation?

R: Oh, I do not know. The superintendent we had was for it and he kind of just pushed it. Well, to get more kids in the school, but sometime I would just as soon have the small school. We had more attention from our teachers because there was not very many of us. The teachers had a lot more time to spend with us. I do not know if we were any smarter than the kids are now, but we had a lot more attention. We had discipline in school, too. But, it did not hurt us any. We had discipline at home, too.

- H: So you are not really fond of all these people moving in here?
- R: They really do not bother me because we have the land next to us so nobody can build on it. I do not like to see all the farm land going. Well, it is different, though, because there are houses up the road that went up over night. Like, in three weeks the house would start and be up. They would just come, one after the other. There used to be five or six houses on my road from here to Cortland. Now, there must be 25 or 30. I am not real glad.
- H: Why do you think everyone is moving out here?
- R: I do not know. They like it, I guess. They say they just want to get out of the hum-drum of the city, but now we are getting to be a little city out here.
- H: Do you think industry will ever move into here, into Mecca?
- R: Not right in here. There is no place. There is hardly any land left.
- H: Would you like to see it if they did?
- R: I do not know. I like it to be Mecca. I do not know where they would put anything. Cortland is the closest place that there is industry. There are two or three places down there. I do not think we will ever have industry out here. We do not have the water and the stuff they need, I do not think.
- H: Does it bother you to see all the people come up and hang out in the center here? What was the center like for you as a child? I know it has changed a lot.
- R: Well, we had a big grocery store where we have our bar now. The park was clean and there were benches. The people actually picnicked there then. Of course, there was always people at the park, there was always people there. But at dark they left, or at night nobody bothered the park. We have always had a bar. That one bar has been there for years, ever since I was little. We had a big store. Well, the houses that are still there yet, the big houses. The park is still like it was when I was growing up. It is still there, but it is being misused now.
- H: Do you ever go down there now?
- R: No, just drive around it.
- H: Did you spend time down there as a child?



R: No. We never did anything like that, as far as picnicking or anything. If we did anything we went to one fair, Jefferson Fair. We would pack a lunch and go to the fair and spend all day there and that was our treat for the whole fall. But it was fun. When you go to do something then, it was really a treat. That was all the time my father had, really.

H: Has the life of the farmer changed? Have you seen a big change in that?

R: Oh, yes.

H: Because of the modernized equipment?

R: Yes. They get much faster.

H: Do you regret to see all that coming down?

R: Oh, not really. I like the horses still. The tractors made a big difference. Oh yes, in a way, everybody was glad about the more modern stuff. I just like the horses. I just love the Amish people. We have some Amish friends and we go to their houses and visit with them, and they will stop no matter what they are doing and talk to us, if they are out in the field or whatever. I think that that is the life. I would like to live among the Amish.

H: Is that right?

R: I would never move until my parents were not living any longer, but some day, I would love to live among the Amish. They help each other. I just like those people. I just love the country and the farm.

H: Is that what keeps you here?

R: I have no desire to even move or to go anywhere.

H: None? You have never lived in the city?

R: Did I ever?

H: Would you ever move to the city?

R: No. I do not like to travel. I do not like to go past my mailbox. I am not a traveler. I am afraid of the traffic. I go to my sister's. I promise her for two years and then I go. Then I do not go back for three more. I do not like to travel. I am a homebody. I do not like to go shopping. I hate to go shopping. I would rather

do it out of the catalog. That is the way we did it when I was growing up.

H: What catalogs?

R: Penny's, Montgomery Ward's, and Sears and Roebuck. My mother went to town once a year to shop for clothes, and that was just before school would start. She would go to Warren. She might go twice, maybe around Christmas. That was the only time she ever went. Everything came out of the catalog. That was far then, what you call far. Now it is just like 15 minutes to get into Warren, but back then it was far. She only took one certain road, always. In town, she only knew one parking lot down there. My father never went to town, never.

H: Let's talk a little bit more. Let's go back for a few minutes about your child life. I find it very interesting. Did your parents ever talk to you about the Mecca Oil? Was there any oil for your parents here?

R: Yes, Mecca Oil. Sure, we used that. Then you could get Mecca Oil, and you used it.

H: How did you do that?

R: On your machinery and stuff. That was the best oil ever was. There was nothing like Mecca Oil according to everybody.

H: You used it, right?

R: Yes.

H: Do you still use it? Is there anything left or is it all dried out?

R: You do not get any now, what they called Mecca Oil, but you used to.

H: Did you have a well on your property?

R: Yes.

H: Did you really?

R: Oh, an oil well?

H: Yes, an oil well.

R: No. I thought you meant water. We had drilled water wells. No, not on ours, but

there is some around.

H: Is that right?

R: Yes, we had Mecca oil. Every time you would see a streak in the water, my father would say that was Mecca Oil.

H: I find your life growing up here very, very interesting.

R: Not exciting, compared to now a days, but it was exciting to us. It was a good life. If you had a girl friend stay with you all night once a year it was a treat. You grew up and you went to school and that was it.

H: Would you advise people to move out here and live that kind of life?

R: The kind I grew up with?

H: Like carefree living and living on a farm.

R: I loved it. I do not think I had it bad at all. We had a good life, but that life just is not here anymore. Even if they moved out here, that life, it is too fast now. It is fast moving and the days come and go. I mean, there are not anymore hours than there were then, but it is just different. You did not have a neighbor. We had one across the street, a bachelor, an old man. He lived to be eighty-some years old.

H: What was his name?

R: Lewis Beebee. They were early people in Mecca. There was Beebees that were very early. His mother and him lived over there until she passed away. He taught me my first words, which I cannot believe were my first words. But, my father and him were fixing the upstairs in the house and he says he kept pulling on my blouse all day long when I was little, real little. He kept pulling on my blouse and saying, "Woa, back up." He says that that was the first thing that I ever said, "Woa, back up." Now I cannot believe this, but he thinks he taught me my first words. He was really good to me.

We farmed all of his land, too. My father rented all of it, too. He was busy besides in those days. He had a binder and horses. He would go all around the neighborhood and thresh and cut their wheat and then they would chop it. My father did all this besides his own. He would leave the horses overnight and we would go get him in the car or something. He would leave the binder and go back and the next day. That was the fun for us kids, it was work of him. He worked many, many long hours, but he always said work never killed anybody.

- H: Was it hard for your husband to get adjusted to this type of work?
- R: No, because that was all he ever did was farm work. That was all he ever did because he had to go from house to house. When he ran out of work one place then he would just move on to another place. His sister and one brother ended up in the orphanage, but he did not.
- H: He wanted to stay here along with you, he wanted to make this his home also?
- R: Yes. He is a farmer at heart. Of course, he worked at Packard. He worked there when I met him and when I married him, but he was nothing but a farmer, really. We always help make hay for my dad. I think we have the best life.
- H: That is good. Looking back, would you make any changes in your life? You said earlier maybe you should have went on to college. Why would you say that?
- R: Because there is sometimes when I would like to be a school teacher. I would like to teach home economics and English. I sometimes think if I would have went to college, I could be among the kids now. I really like the children. That is about the only reason. After I got out of school, I had a boyfriend and I thought I wanted to get married. Well, I did not really want to get married. He went to the service. He always said, "You will write me a Dear John letter." I always said I would not, but I did.
- H: Was he a local boy?
- R: Yes. I went to school with him. We were not allowed to go out when we were growing up, but I went out with him after. I always thought that I did not want to go to college. My father had an insurance policy that he said he was going to send me to college with. Back then it would have cost me about \$1,000 to go to college, probably. That would not even buy the books now. And I wanted my daughter to go to college, too, but she did not want to. But now she would like to take something in night school. It is no different when you are growing up. Your parents are no different now. You do not listen to them.
- H: I see what you are saying. Is the high school big to you now? We have a small class. We only graduate around 100 each year.
- R: 100?
- H: That is big?
- R: That is huge. When I hear these people downtown say 500 in a class, I cannot

even picture it. They must only know five people in that class.

H: You like the idea of knowing everybody?

R: I like small.

H: Real small?

R: Really. Sandy only had 84 or something like that in her class. She knew most of them by name, but some of them she never got acquainted with. How do you get acquainted with that many when you are in all different rooms and everything? We knew everybody in the whole high school because there was not that many people. You know, you just went to school for four years with the same people. I do not know, I just like it.

H: That is good. Is there anything else that you would like to add that you think that is important that we have not covered?

R: Oh, I do not know what. There are probably lots of things that I should remember, but I am not one to remember at all.

H: We have looked at Irishtown, we have talked about the split in West Mecca and East Mecca and attending the school and we talked about the oil. Are we missing anything, do you think?

R: I do not know. We have grew and grew. It seems like we have just out-grown ourselves.

H: Do you belong to any other organizations besides the school and the church?

R: No, not really.

H: Is your church the one that has purchased this land over here?

R: Yes, we have a new church.

H: Did you want to see that happen?

R: No.

H: Why?

R: I do not know, our church just seems to me like it is sufficient enough for the

amount of people that come because we have two churches in Green. We have quite a few Catholics in Mecca that go to Cortland to church because we do not have a Catholic church here. The church is just one of the landmarks in Mecca. It seems to me like it should just be there forever, but they say that the older people do not want to change. I think our church is sufficient. I really do not want to see the church rebuilt.

H: Is your church the one that does the witnessing?

R: Some of it, yes. There is some people that do; a lot of people still do not.

H: Are you involved with that at all?

R: No, not really.

H: Would you do it?

R: I do not care to do that. This minister is the first minister that really got into it that much. No, I do not really.

H: Who were the ministers when you were there, when you were growing up? Who were some of the ministers?

R: We had Reverend Yukman, who was a very, very nice man. Reverend Yukman was there most all the time when I grew up. He was from Green, really, but he was our minister. I cannot think of some of the ones we had.

H: Were there rules and regulations that you had to follow in that church? Was it a strict church?

R: It was what you call a free Methodist. They did not have all the restrictions that some of the Methodists do have. It was what they call a free Methodist. I know my girl friend went to a Methodist church which did not allow her to wear lipstick and stuff like that. This church never had rules like that. It is just a regular small town community church.

H: Are there a lot of community functions down there?

R: Not a lot. We always have wedding showers down in the basement. They refixed the basement and redid the upstairs.

H: Is Mecca Center around that church? Does Mecca itself have activities? Do you have a homecoming or a parade?

R: We used to have a homecoming, but we do not anymore because everybody lost interest, more or less.

H: What was the homecoming you were used to? You obviously saw the homecoming, then. What were they?

R: Many, many of the homecomings. They were small. People got together that had been out of school for awhile. That was about the only time they seen anybody they knew, really. They had a parade. They had games for the kids.

H: When did that stop?

R: That has not been for probably five or six years, at least. They did not have any money to work with and they more or less just loss interest in it. The younger people are not interested and the older people, a lot of them are not living any longer. We should have a homecoming. Most every community still does.

H: I know Green does and Johnson does.

R: We should, the fire department should get with it and start something, and old homes day or something. Mr. Love went to our homecoming. The last time I knew, he had not missed 52 in a row.

H: Where was the hill? Right out here, which is now 88?

R: Well, at the school. The parade would go around in a circle. It came up Griffith Drive at the end of the homecoming, I rode a horse in the parade. Sandy would ride hers. We had fire trucks after we got our fire department. The only fire department we had when I was growing up was Cortland. Nobody else had a fire department.

H: Who helped start the fire department here? Did you help start it?

R: My husband was one of the first ones in it. John Glad and my brother-in-law, Frank Glad and guys like that were the first guys in it.

H: Did they build that fire house?

R: They did everything.

H: Is that right?

R: They built it, they worked real hard. They had fish fries. They had auctions.

They did everything. They did not get a federal grant or nothing. They did all the work on the trucks and everything.

H: Does he still work there?

R: He is retired from it now, but he still goes. We have a social once a month.

R: What is that?

R: For anybody that is not active. They go and play cards and have a meeting. I think they still have refreshments sometimes. It is just a social, it is not a regular meeting. They have a social for anybody who wants to. My father used to go, too. Anybody can go to that meeting. They have a ladies auxiliary, but I never joined that either because I am not a club goer. I helped. I always helped if they needed anything baked or anything. I helped but never went to the meeting.

H: So, does the church and the fire department contribute a lot to Mecca today? Do they do a lot for the community itself?

R: Yes. The fire department is there when ever you need them, not just for fires. For water in your basement or to fill people's swimming pools or car accidents or whatever. That is about all we have here in Mecca. A fire department and a church. We have one grocery store, that is all now. There used to be one in West Mecca. That is all we have. We have no more PTA in the high school. We used to have a PTA.

H: Why did that stop?

R: Lack of interest along with everything else. I do not know.

H: You do not like to see change, do you?

R: Well, it grows on you after a while. I do not mind. It is here now and you have to live with it. It just came so fast. It came in the last five to seven years. These houses are not old houses. It just came in the last ten years. When it came, it was a big change. It is a big change from what Mecca used to be. Especially our road. You never saw a house trailer, now there is house trailers all over.

H: Does that bother you?

R: No, a house trailer does not bother me, it is just they are all over. When I was growing up, you very seldom saw a house trailer. You just see these homes and they were far, far apart. Now there is house trailers and everybody has a



camper. It is all different. I am still, I do not know, old fashioned.

H: Can you tell us of anybody else who can help us with this project?

R: I think Lynn Rofter could do wonders. He used to be a teacher in our school and he was excellent. Then he went to Lakeview and he was down there a long time. He is retired now but he is very versed on everything.

H: Did he live in Mecca?

R: The Rofter family had a big farm up on 46. The house is still there but it is getting pretty dilapidated. Him and his mother lived there last. The barn burned. He sold all the land off in lots. He lived here for a long time, the Rofter family lived here. There is still quite a few Rofters around here. They were a big family. He could tell you quite a bit.

H: Where does he live?

R: Cortland.

H: Anybody else?

R: I know Tom Ketcher will be magnificent. I do not know who is willing to talk and who is not. Ruth Chatlin probably, but she might now want to. I do not think she grew up here. She did not grow up here or anything. The Rofters, they lived here for years and years. You have some of the other ones.

H: Do you feel that most of the original people from Mecca have died or moved on?

R: Yes. The older people, mostly, have died, that would be 70 or 80. They have not really moved. Most of them have died or their husband or wife might be in one of these, like Cortview or some place. Then they sold their property. There is not too many of the older homes. Now, Zerviches have lived here for years, but they did not grow up here. Like the older homes that are far and few between. The homes are here but the people are all together different people.

H: Thank you for your time.

End of Interview