Buxton Project: 424-2104
Narrator's Name: Lola Reeves
Tape Number: 3-A
Date of Interview: 6-21-80
Place of Interview:
Interviewer's Names: Elmer Schwieder and Joseph Hraba

A. (Can't understand) When we'd have our programs at school, except for graduation, I do remember going to _____ graduation.

Q. Do you remember Victoria Brown?

A. No.

In Waterloo? Marjorie.

Q. Marjorie, that's right. Majorie Brown from Waterloo.

A. Marjorie Lee she used to be.

Q. Marjorie Lee.

A. Oh is that who that is, Marjorie Lee. **Remember,** played piano at the movies. Can you remember those two.

Q. *Ms. Reeves when was this picture taken that Elmer is looking at, I just looked at, 19 what?

A. I imagine it was about 21.

Q. *I noticed that in a way that most of the children are black children. Was that always the case in the schools, was there more black children.

A. _____ as I can remember, I _____ they had more black than they had white. _____ they lived. I don't know whether the white kids lived in Swedetown.

#Now my first grade teacher, the school had more whites, this one had. My brother and I _____.

Q. *But depending upon the neighborhood, maybe in some of the schools most of the children were white children huh? Is that possible?

A. Well it could be.

Q. *It could be? But you're not sure?

A. I'm not sure.

Q. Did Swedetown have a school?

A. Yeah, they had their own school.

Q. *Was there a public school or a church related school in Swedetown?

A. I don't know, but I think it was a school _____ go to church.

#I have a picture of one of the teachers in Swedetown and it was mixed you know,

A. #I guess the colored and that lived further out.

When they ruled segregation out, everything was mixed.

Q. *Racial separation in Buxton.

A. No.

Q. *Blacks and whites lived side by side, interspersed, mixed.

A. Uh huh.

Q. *What about the lodges. We've talked about this before but what lodges do you remember Ms. Reeves in town, for both men and women?

A. Well the Eastern Stars I remember that.

Q. *Did you belong to any of these lodges?

A. Yeah, (Can't understand) And he took my application and also Mrs. Miles. There were three of us. I can't remember who the other person was. But anyway I was accepted _____ was blackballed, I can't remember who that was but I was accepted and I didn't care_____. It just really wasn't very important to me. So anyway, my husband, he was a lodge man. He was a mason and he was _____going to the grand lodges and _____ and they had officers. But I had never had no _____. I was _____. So the only thing they'd do if they wanted my presence. So in order to make me come to the lodge they took my dues as tax _____. I figured I was paying the dues I wasn't paying them for taxes. That was just _____.

Q. *Were you married, did you get married in Buxton or was it after you left there?

A. I married in Buxton.

Q. *What year?

A. In 1921.

Q. *What did your husband do?

A. He was a miner.

Q. *He was a miner there? Okay and moved in 1922. Where'd you move to?

A. Where'd I move to?

Q. *Uh huh.

A. I moved to Haydah.

Q. *How long did you live there?

A. I can't, Haydah didn't last too long. We didn't live there longer than 4 years.

Q. *About 4 years and then to Des Moines?

A. Then we moved to a little place called Rex 5 _____ coal mine _____. Another mine was going to open _____ up and Rex 5 was the _____ was 9 years old when we first_____ 6 years old, so we moved up here to Des Moines. _____

Q. What did your husband do when you moved here?

A. Well for a while he worked for Sholer.

Q. That's out in _____ and along in there?

A. I don't know.

Q. But the Sholer mine was?

A. And the first _____ he worked in there _____ and he finally went, when the Rock Island Railroad came through here, he worked at _____ stations out at 20th and Grand and he died _____.

Q. *Did you work any after you left Buxton?

A. (Can't understand). In the meantime my teaching certificate run out _____.

Q. Where was your husband born?

A. Virginia.

Q. Did he come directly to Buxton from Virginia?

A. When they came from Virginia, they came to Mutchakinok. That was a big mine.

Q. That was a big mine. And from Mutchakinok to Buxton? Do you know if he came in when they had a strike or labor trouble? We've heard that the company went down to Virginia and brought an awfully lot of blacks in when they had strikes. Do you know if they went and got him or if he had relatives in Mutcha and he came to be with them?

A. Well I think he was quite a youngster. His mother died. I don't know when she died, if she died before they left Virginia or if she died in Mutchakinok. His father raised him. _____ They did have people from all walks of life that they went to Mutchakinok and Buxton. _____ lawyers and doctors and teachers and _____, occupation that you could find came through at Buxton. Attorneys that they had came from Oskaloosa. He was one of the best _____.

Q. *Did you know these people well, did you associate with them? These people you're talking about, the lawyers, did you associate with these people?

A. Yes.

Q. *They were your friends?

A. (Can't understand response).

Q. *Who were your close friends there in Buxton?

A. Well my closest friends were teachers?

Q. *Were the teachers both black and white?

A. #Well at our school they were all black.

Q. *They were all black ones?

A. #I don't know. I think, I wasn't there when Buxton first opened up.

Q. *But at the time you were there they were all black in the schools?

A. #They were all black. They were black at both schools.

Q. *At both schools they were?

A. #5th Street and 11th Street School. But out in Swedetown they were white teachers.

Q. *So your closest friends tended to be your coworkers?

A. Doctors and lawyers. Dr. Robinson, he was a doctor over there in Coopertown and that was a section of Buxton too, Coopertown. Robinson had his office, doctor's office over there. And then there was Dr. Carter. He was a local boy. Buxton _____ with this religious group and he had his office downtown, Eddie Carter and then there was a dentist, then Dr. Willis. He was a Buxton boy too, took dentistry up here in Iowa City. Then he came back and he practiced dentistry in Buxton. Then they had a barber there named Mr. Hicks. We had a Justice of the Peace _____

#There was a Roman.

What was his first name?

#Tom Roman, he was a constable.

And John Baker. I think he was a constable too and there was a post office. Berk _____ used to work in the post office.

Side 2.

Q. When we were first talking with her, she told us she came to Buxton when she was 2 years old, in 1906 when she was 2.

A. #She must be close to _____

Q. *You're 86, when were?

A. Last year, I'll be 87 the 19th of November.

Q. Were you born in Buxton?

A. No, I was born in Davenport, Iowa.

Q. You were born in Davenport, So you're a native Iowan?

A. Yeah, uh huh.

Q. Now where did your parents come from?

A. I don't really know. I heard my mother say, I know she said that she was born,

A. just the time when the war was over and they were mining in the south and seem like she was born _____. Her mother died and her uncle, her mother's brother took her, he and his wife and raised her.

Q. *Where was this?

A. I don't know, I don't remember her telling me what _____ from the south after the slaves were.

Q. After the Civil War?

A. Well I know the rest of my kin. My mother and father separated when I was a baby and she went back to her husband's _____ and there is where I was raised _____ See my complete education through high school, I graduated from high school.

Q. But you were living with an uncle?

A. No that was my mother's uncle. I lived in _____ and he lived in _____ and his wife died before I could remember. I do remember him. He was the man that, you know a long time ago when they _____ the dust on the streets in town and they'd have a horse and _____ a tank where a wagon what they call a sprinkler and he had a sprinkler and he used to sprinkle the streets _____.

Q. Keep the dust down?

A. Yeah to keep the dust down.

Q. *After you graduated from high school, did you move then to Buxton to teach?

A. I moved to Buxton _____ I took Corney examination and passed the test. I _____ grade school _____. But Kate Morris was the county superintendent and she was anxious for me to take the teaching test. And I took the test and passed and she _____.

Q. *What year was it that you moved?

A. 1914.

Q. *1914, how long did you live in Buxton.

A. I lived there, the camp was beginning to grow out when I lived there. _____ and we moved to Haydah.

Q. By 1914 then the camp was declining already?

A. At that time.

Q. At that time? So then it must have had most of his people earlier than 1914 but _____ it hadn't died out by 1922. It was still there.

A. _____ camp. We moved to, my last year teaching in Buxton was in 1922 and the camp was moved to Haydah. You were already up there?

#Yeah, we left in 16.

You left before.

Q. Where's Haydah? Is that near Buxton?

A. Yeah. Most of all of Buxton houses were moved from Buxton to Haydah and I had a book here of the coal mining in Iowa and I just let my minister have it, 2 or 3 weeks ago. He's writing a book, the story of the black churches in the state of Iowa.

Q. In other words, Haydah still is Consolidated Coal Company then. Was it the same?

A. _____ They didn't last near as long as Buxton.

Q. Buxton did. But it was the same company that moved?

A. I think so. I don't know

#Wasn't one of them 18 Mrs. Reeves?

The mines around there.

#Haydah and Buckneal.

I didn't go to Buckneal.

I mean those were little towns.

A lot of them towns _____ Then there was Rex 5.

#But I mean these were the new towns they were making from Buxton, Haydah.

Q. Do you remember who moved the houses? Did the company move the houses?

A. I don't know. I don't know. I guess so. They were Buxton houses.

Q. We've heard they came in and sawed them in half and put them on a flat bed and moved them and then nailed them back together when they got them moved. But I've never heard that moved to Haydah.

A. They moved to Haydah because Paul Wilson's father bought several houses and made a hotel when they moved the houses from Buxton to Haydah but he had a hotel made from them houses. Well he could tell you more about it.

Q. Does Haydah still exist or is it gone too?

A. Haydah, oh yeah it's gone.

Q. It's gone too.

A. Mt. Zion Baptist Church, it was right next door to the school where I taught. I taught at 5th Street School and that church moved to Haydah and the pastor was, in Buxton the pastor was Rev. Woodard. Do you remember Rev. Woodard? I remember Buxton broke up in 22. Rev. Woodard took his family and they went to Cedar Rapids. So then we had a new pastor when Mt. Zion Church moved to Haydah. Now one of the ministers' name was Karr. They tell me they had more than one minister there. I knew that _____. I tell you who could tell you a lot more about that. You know _____ Walker's daughter.

#Geraldine?

Geraldine. _____ Yes, cause she was the one that told me who the ministers were in Mt. Zion Baptist Church after they moved.

Q. *Her name is Geraldine Walker?

A. Geraldine Harris now.

Q. *Harris? Where did you live in Buxton?

A. Where did I live?

Q. *Uh huh.

A. I lived right across the street from the school where I taught, a family named Williams.

Q. *Williams. Was this one

A. _____ and his wife was named Bertha. We all called her Bertha. And I stayed with them until _____ moved to Clinton _____ and they moved to Clinton and then I stayed with a family by the name of Tate, Joe Tate and his wife.

Q. *Was this a company house? Were these company houses?

A. They were all, all the houses belong to the company.

Q. *Can you describe the houses you lived in for us? How many rooms?

A. The big house had 5 rooms. They had a main part of the house like this house and then the kitchen was added on to the _____. The small houses had 4 rooms.

Q. *So there was a living room?

A. A kitchen.

Q. *Kitchen.

A. 2 bedrooms.

Q. *2 bedrooms. Were there dining rooms?

A. The dining room _____ according to the size of your family. I wish I had that book here. I would _____ the kitchen.

Q. When you lived with these people, did you have a room of your own?

A. I had a room of my own. _____ 3 bedrooms, cause they had a daughter and this was upstairs. Seem like _____ downstairs.

Q. *But there were two-stories. This was two-story?

A. A story and a half.

Q. *A story and a half, okay. Good size.

A. Yeah, they were good size. Everybody had a nice size lot. Most of them had gardens. And then there was another church out to _____ called Tabernacle Baptist Church. That was _____ . We called that area Sharpe End and Rev. Lee Garrett pastored that. When Buxton went out, worked out he moved to West Des Moines and he pastored the Mt. _____ Baptist Church in West Des Moines.

Q. *Do you recall, how many churches were there in Buxton when you were there?

A. Oh, I can't remember. Now there was a methodist church a St. John Methodist Church there. And then there was another area of town called Swedetown where most of the white people live and they had a church over there. They had _____ They had 4 churches.

Q. *Was that a Lutheran Church that they had?

A. I don't remember.

Q. *You don't remember? You say that was where most of the white people lived. Was there a section of town where most of

A. Area where there were more Swedes lived over there. The white and the black lived over in Buxton too, the main part of Buxton. But they called it Swedetown so I think it was more Swedes.

Q. *So the Swedes were sort of sat off to themselves huh?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, we've heard about an east and west Swedetown in Buxton. Do you recall?

A. I never _____ Swedetown.

Q. *You never have gone

A. _____

Q. *How much rent did you pay?
Rent and Board.

A. I can't remember.

Q. You remember what they paid you to teach school?

A. It seems like I was getting, seems like I was getting around a hundred dollars _____. I remember I used to save my money, _____ which _____ was cheap at that time.

Q. That would be a hundred dollar for how long?

A. A month.

Q. A $100 a month. You mentioned that you taught at 5th Street School. Was there more than one grade school in Buxton then?

A. Yeah, there was a school out at the other end of town called 11th Street School. That was out in the area they called they talk about Sharpe End. That was the north of Buxton. It was called Sharpe End.

Q. So you had two grade schools and then the one big high school.

A. The high school when I was there, the high school had burned down. So I don't know anything about that.

Q. *Was it replaced by the time you got there?

1597

A. Beg your pardon?

Q. Where did the high school students meet? Did they go to a high school there in Buxton after the building had burnt down or did they go elsewhere?

A. They had to go out of town.

Q. *They had to go out of town.

A. To Albia. _____.

Q. *You didn't understand that?

You remember the YM?

A. Yes. It was down at Sharpe End across the street from the company store.

Q. What was the name of the company store, do you remember?

A. It was owned by Buxton, Buxton Company Store. They just called it the company store.

Q. We've heard of the Morton Consolidated, isn't that it?

A. Monroe.

Q. Monroe Merchantile and I'm trying to out if they called that, if that's the same store. Most people are like you. They remember it just called the company store.

A. Yeah, that's all I heard.

Q. Do you remember any of the prices, did the company store seem

*Joseph Hraba

#2nd Respondent

Buxton Project: 424-2104
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Interviewers' Names: Elmer Schwieder and Joseph Hraba

A. (Can't understand)

Q. But you know some things about the school because you've talked that others don't know too that makes a big difference.

A. (Can't understand).

#Yeah I remember. We had quite a few of them living _____ and a bunch of &wede kids

(Can't understand).

Q. Well we have taken almost 2 hours of your time.

A. Already, has it been that long?

Q. It's been nearly that long. It just doesn't seem it goes that fast but maybe we can shut this.

Buxton Project: 424-2104
Narrator's Name: Lola Reeves
Tape Number: 3-B
Date of Interview: 6-21-80
Place of Interview:
Interviewers' Names: Elmer Schwieder and Joseph Hraba.

Q. *Even when you were still a single woman there, what did you do for entertainment? What was your social life like? Did you go on picnics, did you go to dances or just what?

A. Picnics. They'd have, well I guess the lodges had quite a few things there too, which I couldn't afford but they had. They had their _____and their dances.

Q. *How about you, what did you do?

A. I couldn't dance, _____ . But I went with the group. We'd play cards and take partners _____.

Q. *You went to church on Sundays, right?

A. I went to church. I used to play for the people choir at St. John's. _____ all the time I was in Buxton. I didn't join the baptist church until after I moved to Haydah.

#Was a baptist and they used to sing in the methodist choir. (Can't understand). But I was very active _____.

Our social activity was rather limited. Of course I say the lodge, there were a lot of _____ and they had a wonderful ball team. The Buxton Wonders they used to have. That was probably the _____ ball club. This Buxton team, I think they used to travel.

Q. You mentioned that you lived across from 5th Street School, which would be kind of downtown, is that right?

A. 5th Street School is up on the hill.

Q. What I was wondering is if you could tell us a little bit about the town after it was dark. Was it quit, _____ or were there any roudies running around. I gather there was not a tarven downtown.

A. I don't know. You never heard of no trouble _____ course I didn't go out much at night. If there were trouble, it'd be around Sharpe End which was considered as a dangerous neighborhood. But that was around 11th Street. I believe it was a church up in there. And our social functions at nights and we never had any problems.

Q. Do you remember any violence because of strikes at all or did they?

A. Yeah.

Q. The men just went, they didn't call it a strike, what did they call it. What did they call it? What did they get, he gave us a term, a release.

*A suspension.

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Q. A suspension. But even if the men were out on a suspension, you don't remember any great parades or any great labor trouble?

A. They were always hopeful of going back to work. See the contract ran out _____ a new contract and they would go back to work. But there was never, well who would they parade for?

Q. I guess that's true.

A. Yeah. The company had their officers there.

Q. Parade in front of each other.

*That's a very good point.

Yeah, it sure is.

A. And you know they weren't gonna break up the store or anything because that's where they got their food and all their supplies, from the store and _____ and a strike like that the coal miners always ended up in debt to the company because they would let the miners have food and the company would own the houses and therefore they would be in debt for house rent. Well the company supplied everything and the time the men went back to work, they were working a long period of time to get out of debt.

Q. Just to pay off?

A. Yeah, just to pay off. Once they paid off and got to the place where they could save something then they would have to, be time for another new contract see. One thing about it, the men made good money and when they were working. I guess they thought Buxton was gonna last forever. They were very extravagant. And so _____ and I used to see too, the men would have their watch _____ of course they had _____ . They didn't have too many watches charms . Vest pocket watches with charms. They'd have a $50 gold piece or something _____ very extravagant and clothes. The women would dress nice. It was at a time when the women were wearing these hats that you see in the movies with these great big ostrich plumes on them and pay big prices for them and they had their lodges that they would attend, the grand lodges and always go to these conventions. They made money, good money but they spent it too.

Q. That fits in. Marjorie Brown told us that when we were up there that her mother paid $25 for two plumes, ostrich plumes, just for a hat.

A. Yeah. _____ She had 3 on her's and they were $25 a piece.

Q. That's a lot of digging in the coal mine to buy a feather it sounds like.

A. They made good money but they didn't save it. Some bought the farms and their homes _____. After the mines went out, I don't know what happened to the coal _____ But I know the Washington lived out there at the time and also this family that you were talking about, Chaplan, they lived out there at the time _____. He and his first wife acquired a lovely home. But after the mine moved there was nothing to stay there for.

Q. *What about the school. Can you tell us a little bit about the school? Did you feel it was about as adequate as schools in the state at the time? Did kids get a good education there in Buxton?

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A. Well, I think so. It's according to, well according to the child and the parent. If your parents, I guess just like it is today. If you had parents _____ with the school and the children would _____ with the school, the child could acquire a very nice education. We had some intelligent and very smart children and then in a class, in some classes now, we'd have all size children. When I was teaching 2nd and 3rd grade, some of the 3rd graders were old as _____. Well you see, it's just up to the child and the parent. If you try to teach a child, and as I say, the child was very cooperative _____ in charge of those classes but you had some children and some parents, every time the child would go home and tell something went wrong and the parents were up there _____.

Q. *What are some of the things that you were teaching the children then?

A. Beg your pardon,

Q. *What were you teaching the children? You taught 7th?

A. Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling _____. I think a lot of children left that school and went right into high school out of the grade school.

Q. *You made mentioned of the Swedes living there. Were there other kinds of white people there, especially immigrant white people? We've heard that there were some Polish in Buxton too.

A. _____

Q. *Imagine so. Do you remember any other nationalities there?

A. When we moved to Buxton, when we moved _____, these people had come from a little coal camp _____. There was a family in there, Polish I think, named _____. And we had a _____ a lawyer down here, me and his parents _____ came from a coal camp in Iowa. _____ his folks. But I thought they were from Missouri, he was _____ and his parents.

Q. *Do you know where his parents lived in Buxton?

A. They lived in Rex 5. I don't know whether they lived in Buxton or not. But all those people around Rex 5 came from those different coal camps when _____ moved from Buxton to Rex 5.

Q. *Well how did these different groups get along in Buxton? Was there any

A. Fine, they got along fine, that I know of.

Q. *You can't remember any trouble whatsoever?

A. I can't remember any trouble _____. Like I say they used to talk about a lot of trouble out at Sharpe End, but I didn't know.

Q. *What trouble happened in Sharpe End?

A. I guess just like trouble happen around here in the rough places.

Q. Why Sharpe End, why was that _____?

A. Well Sharpe End was an area of town like any town has a bad area.

Q. *Okay. That was a bad area of Buxton?

A. Right.

Q. A salone or something there probably.

A. Probably.

Q. *Were there families living out there?

A. Yeah, there were families, children. They had a school out there. Tabernacle Baptist Church was out there. And I think, I know 11th Street School was at Sharpe End.

Q. *We heard there were some holly rollers in Buxton, do you remember those people?

A. No.

Q. *No.

Out on the edge or something.

A. Buxton was a big place.

Q. That's what we're finding out. There's lots of parts of Buxton. Somebody named one part and somebody. Now you left in 1922 and you felt it had been going down or decreasing from about 1916 on. By 1922.

A. It was going down when I went there in 1914.

Q. But by 1922 when you left, would you say the number of people were about half that were there when you came in 1914? Had it gone down that much, half of the population?

A. Oh yeah. It had gone down to the place where, the Buxton coal mines were going out. People had to move.

Q. They had to move?

A. They had to move.

Q. And usually when they get ready to move, when something closes up they'll move wholesale, a whole lot of them.

A. Houses and all. So when Buxton houses were moving, I don't know whether, now Armstrong's Meat Market had moved. William's Drugstore had moved and the churches moved. So there wasn't anything left in Buxton.

Q. One of the things that we've learned about Buxton was that there were some newspapers. Do you remember anything about the names of the various news?

1603

Side Two

Q. When it rained, it was mud. Is that it?

A. Mud. You had to tie your boots or your shoes on. If you walked out then you'd fall.

Q. Walked out of your boots and they're gone.

A. They never did pave the streets. They used to have a road down they called Cinder Road. I don't know whether it was any better than the rest of them or not. But we lived up the hill from the store and I'm telling you, it was something else when it rained.

Q. Were there a lot of activities for young people, for youth? With family size, there should have been a lot of teenagers and older youngsters or fairly active type or young people in an active community. I keep hearing the kids here say, nothing goes on in Ames. It's dead. But I got the feeling that it was a pretty active and a lot of things that young people were doing. Had quite a number of them in Buxton.

A. Well I guess there were. I don't know cause I was interested in the school work. If the parents could be very cooperative, we had their picnics and things. And I can remember _____.

Q. Didn't need any Little League or some of those things to keep them busy? They kept pretty busy.

A. Well they did have this famous ball team. I don't know, they might have. I think the parents and children were more closely related than they are at the present time. I don't think there was, discipline was as bad as it is right now. In fact _____ my children getting into any real trouble.

Q. Did kids have a lot of chores like coal, bringing in the coal? You had some things to keep them busy?

A. Oh yeah. Everybody had a little chore to do. Chore _____ . They come to Sunday School and they go to church. They would go to different schools. One thing about it, so many times the boys would want to go in the mines with their fathers at an early age and I think they did. _____ family, as I say they made such good money that the boys went to work early and they didn't strive for higher education and then they _____.

Q. When you say they went in the mine early, what do you mean by early? Are you talking about 15 or 12 or how soon they mined?

A. Yeah. I would _____ to say they would falsify their age _____ go to work _____.

Q. The legal age was 16 but apparently they could go down and they couldn't. Now I'm telling you what we've heard and then you can tell us whether that's true or not. They couldn't get a car. They couldn't join the union and they couldn't officially work. But they could go down with dad and then they helped him and he got more cars out that day. So we've heard as young as 12, having sons. But generally it seems about 14 to 15 that they often started to go down in the mine and then by the time they're 16, they already know how to mine and they could get their union card and go right to work. So that they did their apprentice

Q. before they were legally able to go underground.

A. I know they went in there but what they did down there I don't know. Maybe to help their family. Once they started making that good money, it was awful hard a coal miner to get him out of anything but a coal miner.

Q. To get him back to school or anything.

A. A coal miner at that time was making more money than a businessman it they _____. And I don't want to leave out our band. A famous band_____ Buxton's regular band _____ come up here to Des Moines.

Q. Is that right?

*How big a band was this?

A. It was _____

Q. Do you remember how many people are in the band?

A. I don't know how nice they are but they have these band outfits on.

Q. One of the stories we've picked up is from Marjorie Brown, who was not born in Buxton or was not a part of Buxton but when the band traveled out somewhere, she saw this trombone player and she said that's the man I'm gonna marry. He didn't know it at the time but she knew it and she eventually ended up with him and then got back to Buxton _____. At least that's _____ the story she told it. It was very interesting. She made great point about the band. The band, it was apparently more than just a marching band. They played many, many things.

A. #It had another one they called the cornet band.

Q. A bugle type thing. Well can you think of anything else that would help us know, what was your happiest memory in Buxton that you had. Think back on the time when you were most pleased to be there.

A. You know Buxton to me was a new experience and I really enjoyed it. I lived in _____ . I wasn't raised in _____. It was just down the railroad track from the _____ (Can't Understand). I meant to say that there were only three colored families in _____. And I was the youngest child of all the families. Therefore, my last 5 years in school, I was the only colored child in the town that I went to school. Consequently, I had been raised in a white surrounding. Going to Buxton with all the people of my own race was a great experience for me. I learned a lot and I acted shy and timid first. But after I got there, I could exercise my feelings, my potentials, my talent and my _____ and I think Buxton brought a whole lot of joy to me, just to be able to live and, a colored girl, in a colored area and feeling like I was one of them and I was happy.

Q. Feeling more the majority?

A. Yes I did.

Q. Which makes a big difference.

A. Yes it would. _____ I was sorry that it moved.

Q. *Would it be fair to say that it was the happiest time of your life?

A. Well I wouldn't say it was the happiest time of my life but it was, as I grew up it was happy, socially. My mother was a widow. We were busy all the time. We had a big place, 4 or 5 lots. We had ____ chickens, pigs and everything and we all were busy all the time trying to help make ends meet. I could remember _____ sometimes my mother worked. She'd do day work. Sometimes we didn't have money to buy ____ meat and things like that. We lived about 2 blocks from the river and she'd take me and we'd get a fishing pole and we'd go down to the river and catch us a bunch of fish. I enjoyed doing this. This was helping out with the family. I enjoyed helping my mother. I appreciated _____. But socially, after I moved to Buxton it was a different social life. I had a lot of hardships _____ didn't chang. Being a religious person, I can't remember when I didn't go to church, even when I was _____. We went to church, Congregational Chruch. I learned about God and the Bible, and Jesus Christ the Savior _____ and life was _____.

Q. *How many children would did you have?

A. I have 3 daughters. 2 died _____.

Q. *What did your daughters do?

A. My daughters?

Q. *Uh huh.

A. My oldest daughter, she doesn't work at all now _____.

Q. *Post office?

A. Uh huh.

Q. *What about the other daughters.

A. The other daughter she works at Montgomery Wards. She _____ department _____. And my youngest daughter is _____.

Q. *What does she do?

A. She's married and has three children. She works a store down _____ for the waterworks department.

#Can I ask Ms. Reeves a question?

Q. Sure.

A. #Ms. Reeves do you remember the movie women? Ned and Kally. The women that ran the movie show in Buxton. Ned and Kally _____. Ned used to ride a buck wagon, have a big wagon going and that skirt.

No.

#Who was running the movies when you were there, do you remember?

I never went to movies.

#We did all the time, Ned and Kally. She played the piano sometimes and Ned ran the movie just like a man you know. They would act roudy in the movie, she'd go there and put them out. I can remember Ned and Kally. She'd drive the buck board down the streets standing up.

Q. Is that right?

A. #I don't know what nationality they were, they Germans or what. They didn't speak any kind of language.

See Dorothy was there a long time before I was there. And she left before we left.

#Yeah we moved in 16 right after March.

Q. But the thing that's important is that we're getting a picture and that's why I pushed you at the early stage. By 1914 it was beginning to go downhill already, which _____ about 1925. That's about 9 years. But it was steadily declining and you know just like any little small town, one store closes up and then the next store closes up and the mine hangs on and they don't work full days, they work part weeks and then pretty soon it's just every other week and finally it just clashes altogether.

Narrator's name: Sister Sofranko
Tape Number: 15
Date of Interview: September 28, 1980.
Place of Interview: Ottumwa Heights Center, Ottumwa, Iowa
Interviewers' names: Dorothy Schwieder, Elmer Schwieder
For: Buxton Project, ISU

A. My grandfather's farm where I lived was about a quarter of a mile from a cross-roads, which was the beginning of Buxton. At that corner there was a church and across the street there was a Jewish store.

Q. Which church?

A. It was a Protestant church, and I don't remember the name of it.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Adjoining here there was a pond. down this road a ways was the Garfield school that I attended for about two years. At this school there were both Negro children who belonged to the miners, who lived rather on the fringe of Buxton. There were other students. We have an old picture of the teacher with the children in Garfield school, and it seemed to me there were quite a few students on that. Now if you see Ellie, she has that picture.

Q. Okay.

A. Okay. Then there were houses here, and now intersperesed here and there there were farms. Down at this crossroads here is what we called Tate's Corner. I will refer to this a little later on. Continuing in this direction straight west, we used to call it Sharp End, but it is also called Sharp Hill because of the sharpness of the hill.

Q. Okay.

A. It was a very steep hill. Now there were even stores along here, too. Now in here, there were many, many houses. Down, a right turn at Tate's Corner would take you down toward the business and the big area of Buxton. This is where Hobe Armstrong lived.

Q. Okay, Okay.

A. Now, I never saw old Hobe, but I do recall, I remember Chet Armstrong, his son.

Q. His son.

A. And I remember that when we'd go by, that my parents, we had a car then, which was... not very many people had them, but my father was always interested in cars and he had cars and the'd point out, this is where Hobe Amrstrong lived, and as I remember it was a white house that had a lot of shrubbery around it and a fence across the front. It seemed that Hobe was maybe, shall I say, the elite of old Buxton. He didn't live in a company house. The continuing down, we could take another left turn, now this took us right into the heart of Buxton as I remember it.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Yes, and this was where the big company store was, I remember that. I remember the school, ah, the big YMCA building and all the other little stores. Just before you got to where those stores were there was a big livery stable. Where shoppers or business people come in on business and leave their wagons and their horses and what not. It was all dirt road, of course, once I remember when it was slightly rainy, we were driving along and my father slipped on the ... the car slid on the muddy road and we ended in the side of the livery barn. I probably wouldn't have remembered the livery barn except for that. The big concern was, did we hurt the car? (laughter). Nor were any of us injured ... very little damage was done. Okay, so much for the map, now around here I just jotted who some of the farmers were. Ah this is where Smith's lived. Earle Smith is living around Lovillia. I think Ellie was going to try to contact him, I don't know whether you had his name or not.

Q. No...no.

A. Earle is older than I am, and I'm very close to seventy, but I think he remembers many of these things very, very well.

Q. All right, fine, we'll make a point of....

A. Now before I go into this, maybe if I just give you a little, ah, background here, I have another copy of that.

Q. Okay.

A. A little bit of background ... my maternal great-grandparents and grandparents and paternal grandparents and even my father at the age of seven, were immigrants from Austria-Hungary and they came over in the early 1880s. Now they were over in Austria which was then Czechoslovakia, of course and now is or, I mean was just Slovakia. Ahhm, they lived in the rural areas. My paternal grandfather was twenty when he came over, he lived about twenty miles from the Russian border. He was a schoolteacher, he knew the English language very well, when he came over, he could speak and write it, fluently. Ahh, so since they were rural people I rather imagine that when they came to this country they also sought rural areas rather than industrial centers. And I'm very happy they did. Ah, and ah, for the most part, I think you know, when people came through New York, they stayed together as groups. Ah, and so, you know, as national groups. And so we find that very many ... ah ... people of our nationality worked in the coal mines. It was the only thing they could do, they had language difficulties. Many of these people could not speak English. Ahhm ... and many of them were married and only and they came over, the men came over and left their wives and children in Europe. That happened to my father's family.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. His father came over ... he got a job in a mine, earned enough money and went back and brought, and sent for ... or sent for his family.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. My father was only seven years old. Ahhm, there were three children. Then, at first ... then my grandfather too was able because he knew the language, he was able to help many of these people. He would write letters for their passports and ahhm ... see that, you know, arrange for the families to come over, because these people who did not know the language, weren't able to go through this..

Q. So this was after he had reached this country that he would continue to help people ... more people to come from the old country.

A. Yes, yes. He could help the men who were already over here to make arrangements to bring their things by getting their tickets and arranging for boats and that sort of thing.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Ahhm ... at first they settled around What Cheer, then they moved into the Oskaloosa area.

Q. Do you remember the year? The approximate year, that they came?

A. In the early 1880s. Now I was in the National Archives in Washington and I spent several days going through all this microfilmed materials, now there for some reason, they do not have a ah ... list of people as they came over as they have for other years. There's a period of history ... a time when they only have the ship lists, adn so here I was, you know, turning the knob up here and nothing in this you know, and going through these names, many of which had been Anglicized, and I nearly pulled my eyes out doing it and I never found the exact date. However, now I realize that I was going a little bit in advance of when they came over. I should have looked between 1880 and '85 and I think I would have found it. But there were thousands of names.

Q. Yeah.

A. Ahh, from the ship lists, some of the writing was poor, some of the writing was faded. So I was not successful in getting the exact date.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. If I went back again, which I hope to do some time if I'm in Washington again ... ahhm ... I'll look that up again and see if I can find the exact list but it was the early 1880s.

Q. The family name then was ---

A. Durbala, D-u-r-b-a-l-a, my father's name was Sofranko, but the Durbala figures more in from in this history than the Sofranko does. Ahh, then they moved in from What Cheer when the mines were kind of mined out there. They moved into the Oskaloosa area. Muchakinock, you're familiar with that and Evans was the other place. Evans was around Beacon.

Q. Yes, I heard of Beacon.

A. Seven and a half miles out from Oskaloosa in that direction.

A. Would be west then ---

A. It would be west, yest it would be west. And ahhm, then from there they moved over to the Buxton area.

Q. Did they ever live in Muchy then?

A. They never lived in Muchakinock no, but they did live in Evans for quite some time. When my grandfather was working in the mines in Evans, through a mine accident, both of his legs were broken.

Q. Hmmm.

A. Ahhm, he had a company doctore. He set one of the legs, my grandfather thought the other leg was broken, but the doctor said, no it wasn't. Six weeks later the doctor said, yes the other leg was broken.

Q. Hmmm.

A. As a result, my father -- my grandfather could never work in the mines again....

Q. And he was about how old, at that point?

A. I'm not sure, I'm not sure, I would say in ... well, I'm afraid, I'm afraid of making a mistake. I could go back and figure this out from my family history but I've never done that, but as a result, he was a man who wasn't as tall as I am because his stature was, you know his legs were bowed out a little bit like this and he walked with a limp. A darling little man. Then tragedy rather struck that family again, there were um ... seven boys, the little boy, the last little boy was only a week old. There were two girls, my mother was the oldest at seventeen years of age, and the grandmother -- my grandmother died. So ... a great-grandmother, you know a great-grandparent took the little boy, but, my mother then immediately assumed the role of mother in the family. My grandfather then bought a ... this farm and moved over there. My mother married, and so my father moved right in with the family and my mother stayed with the family until her brothers were grown enough that she could go out and get her own home. So see I was born at my grandfather's farm. --

Q. Oh, I see.

A. -- and I grew up with umm ... teenage ahh ... uncles, older than I am. And then you know how boys bring in all of this stuff and I would listen to all of this you know, and I'm amazed that I can remember this stuff because I was only nine when I left there. I must have been very impressionable not that I have that good a mind, but I remember so much of this, just talk, you know...

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And, uh -- well ...

Q. You were the oldest in your family then?

A. Yes, there were three younger children. Ray, myself, I was the oldest, and then Ray, and then Ellie. We were all born on the farm.

Q. On the farm ... uh-huh.

A. But ah ... Ellie doesn't remember as much, or Ray of the farm because they were each two years younger than I was, you know.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. So, uh, that kinnd of accounts for my memories of that ...

Q. And so if you ... you say you're almost seventy, that's hard to believe. If you were born, let's say around 1910 or 1911.

A. 1910.

Q. 1910, yes. So you really, then, that was really at the height of Buxton then, it was a great deal. It was a very active community.

A. Oh, very much going on there. And through the First World War, it was ... I went to school that day, and we were ... Armistice Day. And I remember many things about the World War. On Armistice Day someone came to the school and said, no school today. So we went home. I remember my grandfather very well that day because he had carpenters who were building a new barn. His old barn had been demolished by a tornado. And so he told the carpenters to go home, this is Armistice Day. So it was really in the fall of 1919 that I moved from the farm.

Q. So almost twenty years. Almost twenty years that you lived in that location, then.

A. No, only ten. From 1910 until 1919.

Q. Oh, okey, right.

A. Okay, now a little bit about mining. That's the general background that I've given you, which I think is rather important.

Q. Yes.

A. And while many immigrants will say we're satisfied with just working in the mines, you know, they had the security of a paycheck and they didn't have to worry. They didn't care about an education or something more than that. Mines, too, cut back in summer employment, because there wasn't the demand for coal during the summer months. And so often to supplement the income of a family, a little acreage or a little farm is very valuable. Now in my grandfather's case, he had so suffered through his mining accident that he was not going to have his sons spend their

A. (cont'd.) lives working in mines. So he really bought this farm, and this was shortly after my grandmother had died. And so they moved to this farm in Monroe County. The young sons helped him farm, he had 80 acres. My grandfather also bought teams of horses and mules, and so when they farmed their own, the young sons went out and they farmed ... they plowed and helped the neighbors in the area, so they were able to earn some money on their own, too. They were working for my grandfather, they were also able to supplement their income. Now on my father's side of the family, they had to work in the mines, too. My father would work for a short period in the mines. Then he would have none of it, either. He wanted something more. So he told about how he went to his father and asked if he would pay for a correspondence course for him. My grandfather said, "Yes, if you will really be serious about this." My father was. He wrote his biography shortly before he died at the age of eighty-one. And in it he tells about when he started his course he would work by day and at night he would study this correspondence course and often he said his mother would turn off the kerosene light and say, "Son, go to bed now. It's time to go to sleep." He took an examination for a hoisting engineer. He passed ... for Illinois, he passed the license there and he worked in Illinois as a hoisting engineer in these mines, you know, pulling these big carts up cables, up and down. Then when he married my mother, and she was from around Given, that's where my grandfather Sofranko had a farm. And then he came back and took the same examination for a license for the state of Iowa and passed it. And he was hoisting engineer at #7 mine, which was very close to Miami, which is a little west of Buxton. And until he had to give it up for reasons of health ... he had sciatic rheumatism and then he came to town. He also had a brother Paul at the age of seventeen who was killed in a mining accident. I see why ... and I can remember for a little while, when my father was hoisting engineer, we lived for about six months in Whiteburg, which is the local place connected with number 7 mine. And I would see these farmers, these miners going down at the beginning of the day, and at night they would be coming back, this was during the summer months. In the winter they went in the dark, they came back in the dark. The work was hard, they were dirty, they were black, they were grimy. They hd to take a bath out of a big tin tub, before they could dare mix with the family or come to the table or anything. It was an awful life. It was justlike working down in the dungeon. Constant danger of black damp or gas explosions, or whatever it was that brought about deaths. Props giving way. Mines, coal mine accidents were really very frequent and the fact that it touched both sides of my family isn't unusual at all. It isn't unusual. Okay. So then after that my family ... when my father had to give up his work because of sciatic rheumatism, sitting for long hours, you know, and hoisting up and down, then they moved to Lovillia and he took up car salesmanship there. So, I would say, then, going into Buxton for the satisifed job workers who had this check coming in, it's my opinion from what I've heard that the security of a regular paycheck and a better standard of living that they had in your, you know, where they had to ... give forced service in warfare and that sort of thing. That this was attractive and it was self sufficient for them, and I would say that this is especially true of the Negroes, because there were many of them in Buxton. And they came up from the South. What they had up in the North was so much better than down in the South that this was it for them. Now when they got their paychecks, they really lived it up. They celebrated on Saturday nights. I can

A. (cont'd.) remember being awakened on my grandfather's farm. Now on this you can see how far this is from Buxton. Hearing loud laughter, noise, and just really having a good time. And then, so my uncles cou-d add a few stores, too. I remember once he brought in a big long hari switch, as they were called then, about this long, and it had a big green ribbon bow attached to it, as was the style there. They had picked it up on the road somewhere on Sunday morning, so they came down home waving this around.

Q. Now what was it again? I...

A. A hair...

Q. A toupee?

A. A hairpiece. Yes, you just attached it to the back here, and it had a long switch of hair about this long, and this big green bow. And bows were very much the fashion. And you fastened the thing on somewhere, you see, but through the merry-making, whoever, whereever it was, had lost this thing, you see. It was beautiful, big green bow, you know. Waving it around, this is really a fine, Sunday morning.

Q. (ES) What percentage would you say of either blacks or others were that comfortable? I've got a feeling that very ... almost all the blacks felt that sense of security.

A. I wouldn't say it was all black. But a great many blacks. You know, I can't tell you, 'cause I was young then. But I know there were many, many black people, many of them. When Jane Odell had her presentation, she interviewed some people, and I remember particularly a Negro woman who really dressed this up, like we had linen tablecloths, and we had the finest of everything, that wasn't true, that really .... I don't think that would be true, at least.

Q. (DS) For the great majority of blacks, you don't think they lived that way?

A. No, I think they had oil tableclothes like most people, oil cloth table cloths. Now maybe for a special occasion, they might have had a cloth tablecloth, but they didn't live it up that much. There were murders. There were murders. I never went down into Buxton when it was night. My people didn't go down there at night. It was in the daytime that we went, so I never saw this. But Ellie has a picture of somebody laid out on a slab that had been murdered. She can show you that. And give you some information on that. So ... Now, next into church. Are you limited on your time?

Q. (DS & ES) No, no limit at all. Delighted to hear everything you have to say.

A. I don't want to be too rambling on.

Q. (DS) No, this is just marvelous.

A. But what I think I'm telling you is accurate. I think it really is. Now with regard to church. Sometimes we went into Lovillia to church. But that was quite a distance, it must be at least eight miles or so. There were times when the roads

A. (cont'd.) were very, very bad. We could not go through, and I remember a little section out ... quite a bit west, in which there were railroad ties laying down right in the mud so that people could go through either by wagon or by car. More often than not, though, well sometimes the priest would come out from Lovillia to say Mass. Sometimes...

Q. (DS) Would this be in somebody's home, then?

Q. (DS) ... that he would do that, or would there be a church there?

A. Well, now this is what we did. We went to the old YMCA, and up on the second floor they had the big auditorium with the stage up there and a table put up in the front of it; and there were folding chairs that we sat on; and we would have the Sunday Mass ... would be offered there. I remember that in my little mind I had been to a nice church, and I couldn't quite understand why we would go to church and there would be peanut shells all over the floor. The floor was covered with peanut shells. I couldn't understand that. Then I heard that they had Saturday night movies. And the place hadn't been cleaned so these peanut shells would be on the floor. And sometimes we couldn't ... the priest couldn't get into Buxton, and we couldn't get through, so there was no church. But I remember my grandfather was quite a religious man and so on Sunday mornings, we would still dress up in our Sunday clothes, but we would have a half hour of forty five minutes where we just all congregated in the dining room, all dressed up as if we were going to church, and my grandfather would read from the Bible and we would pray and then we would have a little time to be quiet and just think. And that was our Sunday service, right in our own home. Which I thought was rather dear, really. As I said there was a livery stable there too. Now I remember also the company store, I was there with my mother. One of my uncles worked in that store, and during the World War there was a shortage of white flour. People made bread out of it, and it was out of a dark flour, and I don't know what it was, except it was almost like a black bread, very dark. Once my uncle was able to get a sack of white flour, so he brought it home. I remember my mother was rather careful of this, we didn't want to be reported, we weren't supposed to have white flour. So she would mix the white flour with the dark flour and we would have a lighter bread. It was a real treat and this sack of flour was stretched out for many, many weeks, so we could have that. Now in Buxton, there was also many, many businesses. I remember a photographer. Once after we'd been to church, we stopped at this photographer ... again, I'm very impressionable, or I was. I was about three and a half and my brother was about nine months old and we stopped at this photography place and had our pictures taken. It's still a really good print, even after this many years. The reason I remember it is I had a little gold locket and chain and I kept putting my hand up here to make sure it was up here, you know, and I remember them taking my hand down several times and said, "Keep your hand down." Finally I insisted on putting my hand here before they could take the picture, that -- okay, I could have it here. Which I think added a little bit to the picture when I looked at it in later years. Okay, I attended the Garfield school.

Q. (DS) I take it that was a grade school, elementary?

A. Yes, it was. They had a hard time keeping teachers there because it was a big room and there were some big boys in it who even towered over the teacher. Mrs. Gusway was ... who later became ... no, Gushway was her name ... was one of the teachers that I remember. Another teacher was Myra Fowler who was the daughter of Dr. Fowler. She taught there for a longer period of time.

Q. Did you have any black teachers?

A. We had some, but not many. We had children of mineres who lived, say around in this area in here, when it was too far to go to school over here, then they would come here. For example, there was a store in Sharp Hill, Sharp End Hill. It must have been kind of a general store with candy and maybe some groceries and dry goods and that sort of thing, but there was a little girl who was my classmate whose mother had a store there. And she used to often bring to school and would treat me to, you know, these big flat, colored, flour tasting candy. They were great because we didn't ... we were too poor to buy these things in our house. And so she would bring these things to me. And she would, she was very ... she was a little white girl, she wasn't Negro. But there were several Negroes who went to school there. And they were right in this area. Now I remember the Smiths went to school, that school. The Lewises some of the Lewises went and some of the youngest Durbala's went to Garfield school. Nella Vancos lived here, they had children in school.

Q. What was that name again?

A. That's Nella Vanco. Nella Vanco.

Q. Nella Vanco.

A. They had a little farm and Mr. Nella Vanco worked in the coal mines. In fact he had a daughter who is a Sister, too.

Q. I see.

A. I believe she works in Des Moines. She's younger than I am. I doubt very much whether she would remember much from that. Okay. The next thing is Tate's Corner down here. Now, Tate's, Mr.Tate was a Negro. He had a whole little series, as I remember them. Just little shanties and shacks. And there were always a lot of horses around feeding, and mules. Now he was engaged in some kind of questionable business, but I quite don't know what it was. But this was always known as Tate's Corner. Tate's Corner. I'm sure other people remember Tate, and maybe someone can give you a clue on what went on in Tate's Corner.

Q. (DS) ... Corner.

A. But is was really a tumble down shack place, and I remember going by and seeing these horses out feeding on hay and whatnot. Okay, now let's come back down to this Jewish family here. This evidently was, they had a store down below. They lived in a two-story structure. It was wooden, unpainted. They carried on some kind of grocery store. We never did any trading there that I can recall. Now

A. (cont'd.) maybe we did. But I think most of our buying of food would be done at the company store. I dnow they didn't do ... it was mostly staples, because they had their own meat, their own vegetables, their own fruit on the farm. My grandfather used to sell butter and eggs in exchange for foodstuffs at the company store. Now these Jewish people had the store down below and they lived upstairs. They were very strict Jews because I remember my uncle saying, "Oh, but when they eat, they have to have everything in a separate dish." Their food can't touch, they couldn't eat pork. They could eat chicken, but they had to take that chicken ... at least so my uncles told me. And this like quite a deal. But they would have to take the train in from Buxton that ran into Oskaloosa they would take the live chicken in with them, they would go on Saturdays. They would take the chicken to the Jewish, or the chickens to the Jewish rabbi. He would kill the chicken and then they would come home that night.

Q. In other words it had to be what they call Kosher.

A. Yes, now would you go along with that?

Q. Yes.

A. Does that sound preposterous to you?

Q. No.

Q. (ES) Talking about Kosher foods ...

Q. (DS) Now ... I'm curious. I take it they were the only Jewish family in the area?

A. There must have been other Jewish people. There must have been. But I wouldn't know who they were.

Q. You wouldn't remember. I would seem like they would be fairly isolated then?

A. They would.

Q. From most of the other people.

. If they had ... they were such strict Jews, there must have been other Jews around who would come and buy from them. ... Now maybe someone can give you another clue.

Q. (ES) That's kind of a peddler, a lot of Russian Jews were peddlers. They'd settle in a place...

A. Yeah...

Q. (DS) Very likely the family, the man had started out as a peddler and then after he had earned so much, he managed to build a store -- that happened many times.

A. Yeah, it could be Russian Jews, you know. You see my grandfather Durbala was born and lived just about twenty miles from the Russian border and ah ... so you know, his religion was a little bit different, even though he was a Catholic.

Q. Yes ... ah...

A. And it was that Russian influence.

Q. I was interested in -- I told you that I had several of your nieces in class...

A. Uh-huh...

Q. And that they had written family history papers and they talked about the ... the Catholic religion but the fact that it was ... I forget the term they used for it but "Orthodox Catholic"?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And I've always been curious about the difference.

A. Uh-huh.

Q. And it's now like if your family in this country had just gone to what we think of as the Roman Catholic Church.

A. Uh-huh. It was the affiliation with Rome, that was very ture. I'm really not sure of what it was myself. I do know that even when I was a teenager in Lovillia that there would be an Orthodox priest who would come once a year and hear the confessions of these people who were of this particular religion. They held on to that old religion of theirs even thought still it was to the church that was in communion with Rome. They belonged to a particular religious sect, a national group or something. I'm sure it had something to do with the Russian Orthodox, but I'm not sure, I could look it up in my family history, I don't recall, and see what I had to say about it. I had a few comments there. But I remember my grandfather had some of these customs. For example, on Christmas Eve, we had a special kind of dinner. Itiwas a ceremoney we had, I rember one thing we had to have was mushroom soup. That was one thing and there were other particular dishes that we had to have. My grandfather would read at the table, something like the Jewish people do. He'd read from scripture, he had unleavened bread, and I still remember, there were big white hosts like this, and he would pray. And this was, you know, for the deliverance of the people. Maybe I should get a copy of my family history and look up in that and see, would you excuse me for just a few minutes, please? First there were prayers followed by a serving of a thin wafer of unleavened bread called Oblaky, which was dipped in honey. Many years later I leanred the ceremoney was called the manna of the gods sent to the people as they sojourned in the desert. It was also a reminder that Jesus was the bread of life. Then followed the rest of the meal... there was a sweet and sour mushroom soup and a dish called bobutky. But now let's see if I can find ... if I had referred to the ... I thought I had referred someplace to the ...

Q. (DS) That's your grandfather?

A. That's the little grandfather.

Q. Oh, my, he's very ....

A. Now here's another picture of him in the very back. (picture of him and Sister Sofranco in habit.) There's the little man. He's not as tall as I am.

Q. (ES) Very nice.

A. There's another picture of him. I shouldn;t take time to...

Q. (DS) Oh, that's fine, that's fine.

A. I though t I had put it in here someplace. But maybe I didn't ... if this would be of any value to you....

Q. I would be extremely interested to read this myself because of my general interest in family history and Iowa history.

A. Okay.

Q. If ... I take it you have many of these copies?

A. I have some other copies. You may have that, yes. You can find that in there someplace.

Q. To keep?

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, that would be wonderful!

A. And you probably will recall some of the...

Q. Oh, that's great!

A. It's a little different family history. I am the oldest of over 35 grandchildren. And many of these younger grandchildren knew very little about my grandfather. I felt he was really a remarkable man. And so I ghought ... I really started this to ... give a story of my grandfather's life, and then I got quite deeply involved in it. So I first contacted some cousins and said, "Now, this is going to be a big work, but if you want me to do it, I will." Unanimously they did, so that is the outgrowth of that. And I was able to trace back a number of generations to get information.

Q. (DS) That's marvelous.

A. But there's quite a little bit on European background and there some errors in it.

Q. That's usually what is so hard to get, the European background.

A. Okay. let's see. We've passed Tate's Corner and the Jewish family. Now Hobe Armstrong, okay, that was a familiar name that I heard tossed around in the family. And I told you that he lived within the confines of Buxton, but not in a company house. And now Hobe was part white, part white and so was Chet. I

A. (cont'd.) never remember of seeing Hobe Armstrong. I never remember. I have a feeling that maybe he was a little more active when he was in Muchakinock than when he was in Buxton. I can't say that for sure. I do remember Chet because Hobe Armstrong had a farm right across the street, right across the road here. And Chet would be out working in that field. They always planted corn, he never planted anything but corn there. There was a house that was kind of in between what I have marked Nella Vanco's there. But the house was empty for the most part. Nobody lived in the house, they just farmed the land. Once there was a Robinson family that lived there. For just a very short time.

Q. (ES) Do you remember whether Hobe was responsible of bringing blacks up from the South or ... we've heard that he was engaged in ... there's nothing illegal about it. But he just simply went to the South land and because he was part black he knew where to go and he brought them into Buxton to fill the mine positions.

A. I'm afraid I can't answer that, either. This is rather interesting, though. That Hobe Armstrong had a daughter, Daisy, who came to the Heights (Ottuma) here. To school She was here for four years. Daisy Armstrong, she graduated in 1919. I have asked some of our older Sisters, two particularly who were here at that time if they remember Daisy Armstrong, and of course one Sister is ninety and one is almost that. "Why, yes, I remember Daisy," but they couldn't tell me anything specific about Daisy, but she was here for four years. Except that she was a lovely girl. That's all that one said. Sister Jerome said that she was a lovely girl and that was all that she could recall. Which is understandable. However, in our alum records I find that she married and her name now was Mrs. H. M. Gray. She lived at this address. I looked it up in the directory, but I was not able to find it. So I wonder if she is even still living, you know.

Q. (DS) But we could certainly check on that.

A. You might check on that. But we have that on our records, and I thought that might give you a little lead. Now Hobe had other children, too, but I'm just not too sure of this. Except he had ... I said other children. Now he had a daughter who was married to a man by the name of Irwin, I believe. And Irwin together with Mr. Hammond operated a car salesmanship in Lovillia. Now as I understood it, the Armstrongs were part Negro, part white. And that they were considered the elite of Buxton.

Q. (DS) This has been our impression, too, from other people we've talked to. That they've spoken of Hobe Armstrong in really a different manner than they talked about....

A. He was kind of a power. He went down South and brought back these Negroes. Now in the back of that history there, too ... I didn't go into Buxton, but I did do a little something ... now this is probably material you already know because I have researched and got some of this from various sources and that may give you a little lead in to that.

Q. Uh-huh. That's fine.

A. Are you acquainted with, I'm sure you must be, with Helen Hanaman ...

END OF SIDE ONE -- SISTER SOFRANCO

SIDE TWO -- SISTER SOFRANCO

A. And then this is the one of Buxton.

Q. (DS) This woman, then, is a reporter?

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, these look quite extensive, then.

A. Yes.

Q. Oh, that looks great. Do you suppose we could get these zerozed somewhere?

A. Yes, we've got a Zerox. I wonder if we can...

Q. Can we pay you for them?

A. Oh, I'd be glad to do this for you ... but I wonder if we get in something that large.

Q. We'd have to do it in two or three pieces.

A. We could do it in sections. Uh-huh.

Q. That'd be great.

A. If I had other copies, I'd be glad to share them with you, but I'd hate to part with my one and only.

Q. And I've learned that it's much easier to get a copy at the time than to say I'll take it and mail it back, then if there's any problem, you feel so badly that you've lost the copy.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember when you were younger any talk about East Swede Town and West Swede Town?

A. Oh, yes, yes. And I might, on the map here ... and you can take this little ... and this is just really very, very rough. Now, see here, I have only put Main Street but what we'll have to keep in mind that out here and around here, this was all Buxton in here, becuase it us up to nine thousand people. That wasn't just a little one-way street with a few houses on it. But they were according to sections. Now if you went on here, I had the impression that this is where, this is the East End up here, and this was where the east end Swedes were. And there were a couple of churches up in here, too. Have you been back to that area to ride through it?

Q. Well, this is interesting. We're going to go this afternoon. We've met an older gentleman by the name of Alex Erickson, who, he and his sister Agnes Erickson lived in Buxton ... Well, they moved there, lived there for twenty-three years. Moved there in 1900 with their family from Muchakinock and stayed there until it was almost totally closed down in 1923. And these two people now .. Agnes is 90 and Alex is 84. And they live at Pershing.

A. Wonderful.

Q. And so on our way down ... we came down last night ... and we stopped and we visited with them for a couple of hours last night. Just a delightful couple. And this afternoon, we're going to drive back and pick Alex up and he's going to point out where, I have seem the main side of Buxton.

A. Really there isn't much to see. Just some cornfields. But you kind of get the feel of it, you kind of get the feel of it.

Q. (ES) yes, uh-huh.

Q. (ES) The cemetery is still there.

A. Yes.

Q. (ES) Apparently an all black cemetery too.

A. There are maybe ... see this wasn't just flat land, this was kind of, some of this was kind of rolling land in there. The main street of Buxton wasn't just flat. There were hills, not real steep hills, but it was rolling land. But that's my impression that right around in here is where the Swedes; and I know there were a couple of churches. There was a Bethel church up here, the denomination I don't know. And there was a cemetery there with that. But it was a little bit east of what was really Buxton. Yes, various nationalities. They stayed together.

Q. (DS) They did? Do you remember many Italians?

A. What is it?

Q. Italians.

A. You know, I don't remember a thing about Italians.

Q. Hmmm.

A. Not a thing.

Q. (ES) They might have stayed down in Centerville, Numa and Seymour.

Q. Yeah, it could be that there were not very many Itlains there.

A. Aye, yes, now I'm trying to recall, see, when we moved to Lovillia, there were mines around there. Lots of mines out west of town. Wanlock, 0, 19, 20, Rex 4, Rex 5, and even in Lovillia itself there were very few Italians, very few. There were quite a few Croatians. They were miners. In fact there are still quite a few Croatians living around Lovillia. Papich who has a grocery store, there is a Croationa there. Stenkel. And there are others. 'Course they're the Yugoslavians. And now around Centerville, that is a big mining place, I think there are a few more Italians that I can recall. But you know, in Lovillia itself....

Q. (ES) Do you remember any Franzens in Lovillia?

A. Franzen?

Q. In Lovillia itself?

A. Yes. That's a familiar name. And they probably worked in the mines.

Q. (DS) I think so. In fact, I think there is still a Franzen who lives there.

A. They do trucking, trucking, uh-huh.

Q. (ES) I think that's what they might be in now. Now there's a sister who lives in Newton. Who has a brother, and she says he may talk to you and he may not want to. So we're not sure whether he'll speak with us.

A. Yes. See there are ... there's still coal mining out west of Lovillia. Right now they're putting up that big enormous coal washing plant. It's worth a ride just to go out and see that.

Q. That's the Wignall mine?

A. Uh-huh. Trying to get some of the sulphur out of the coal. Pella has a strip mine over there, and I think they use the coal there for their light and power company. And a lot of coal was shipped out of Lovillia.

Q. (DS) So your family moved to Lovillia then, when you were around nine years or ten years old?

A. Ah ... We moved in 1919 into Lovillia. And my father was in business there and then my two brothers took over the business from him. But they are, they've sold that within the last year, they are retired ... one brother is retired now. So I have two brothers and also I have two sisters, who lived in Lovillia. Ellis is retired postmaster.

Q. I see. So she would be well known, then?

A. Yes. and she worked for many years in the postal work with Bill Gattis who was the publisher of the Lovillia Press. So she and Katheryn Kaross wrote this history of Lovillia which Ellie will show you. It's a big, thick volume. So she's just filled with the history of the place; she knows so much about it. And while she won't be able to give you the kind of information I have, nevertheless she can give you a lot of historical data and, you know, coal mining, whether it is in Buxton or it is someplace else, there is a great similarity of things. But the point that I would like to make is that it was a very had and very dangerous work. I think I bring that out in the history there when I talk about it. And I know a couple of sisters who are teaching now in our school in Centerville, they said this past year they had two retired coal miners come in and atalk to the children about it. And she said, "Oh, they loved it." And they would go back to it right away if they could, and it was the life for them and everything. Unless they didn't have anything before, it couldn't be. And you know, maybe if you ... our people were more ambitious that that, I guess. They wanted an education. And I

A. (cont'd.) think my grandfather handed that down to us. He was really an intellectual, and I've often thought if he had the opportunity of an education he would really be a highly educated man today. He loved to read. I can remember him reading The Sinking of the Titanic, reading Ben-Hur, sitting for hours. We tell this joke, I must not digress, but this is really cute. Many years later at the old family farm, one of my uncles had the farm and he had a young family there and my grandfather lived with them. My aunt was doing something one day, she had to be outdoors, and she said to my grandpa, "Now, will you rock the baby?" or "Watch the baby?" And after a while my aunt heard the baby crying so she came in to see what was going on. Here's my grandfather with a book, rocking the baby in the big buggy and the baby was in the other room on the bed. (laug-ing) He was so absorbed in what he was reading, he never even knew where the baby was.

Q. (DS) That's a funny story. That's good. Now did your father mine coal for a time, too, then?

A. For a little while, until he asked his father if he would put him ...

Q. Correspondence....

A. Correspondence course in Engineering. We still have, or we did have thos big thick books that he used, a whole volume of them, you know, that he studied.

Q. (ES) Hoisting engineer. That's a tough job in the mining business.

A. Uh-huh.

Q. It's not a ... you know, you have to have a good bit of learning whether you did it technically in school or study as he did. That's a great achievement.

Q. (DS) well, it was a very well-regarded position, wasn't it? I mean a hoisting engineer was someone who ...

A. Yes, yes, and ah ... he ... there was kind of a separate building that was completely enclosed but I don't think there was any heat in it. As I remember, it was once in a while we would take his lunch down to him and my mother might have sent something hot down to him, and it wasn't very far, 'cause we were right on the edge, in a little company house on the edge of a pasture, and we'd go down a road ... a back road to themine and I can remember seeing in this big chair up high and then, you know, and great big ah ... coils and what-not you know, and he would be working these levers, pulling these cages up and down. And ah ... he was, you know, I suppose the cold and sitting for long hours, you know, through the day was just too much and I think those people had more than an eight-hour day ... they really did.

Q. Humm.

Q. (ES) You interest me. A couple of comments that you made ... if we think about it a little bit historically, the Civil War was over in 1865, and its really 1870 or later ... before the sort of settlement comes in. So they would go South and then would pick up some of these people who might have been slaves. We've had some Blacks talk about slavery. And make a big point of the fact, ..."My grandfather was a slave." So that we're taking about maybe ten years span and from 1870 to 1880, they show up in coal mining communities. By 1900, it still they would be

Q. (ES cont'd.) relatively young people. I'm sort of entranced by the idea that they went from nothing to a company house which we've never had before apparently....

Q. (DS) You mean from the perspective of the Black person?

Q. (ES) yeah from the perspective of the Blacks. You commented that they were so satisfied with their lives. Here they are, maybe a young man who comes to Iowa and he's 20, or 25, but his father was 40, and his father was a slave. But he comes here to get out of that and they find a company house, which before was a hut or hovel, and they're able to buy in the company store and it's almost as though that is, indeed, Utopia.

A. Right, right. And see, they werent' cheated in the stores like they are in the South, you know, given inferior goods and that sort of thing. I remember riding through some of the back woods area down through Mississippi, and those places maybe you've been down there, too, those people didn't even have windows in their homes. All they had were just like barn doors. We have far nicer barns in Iowa than they had down there. And they just opened these barn windows. Just doors, there weren't windows at all. And these people would be sitting out in front. But, you know, what would be ... why would they be ambitious? They couldn't get ahead, no matter how they tried, because they were so suppressed.

Q. (DS) That's right. Particular practices, liek the com ... even, well the store keeper in the South manipulating against them.

A. Right, right. We had Sisters who took students with them and worked in some of those areas in the summer, as missionaries. And that's how I happened to go through there visiting once on a bus tour with some of the Heights students. The Sisters would tell us that when these people would go to the store, these Negroes, and they would just be cheated right and left. Like short measurement of yardage or goods, or if something had a flaw in it, the Negroe's get it -- no discount or anything. They were just unjustly dealt with every place.

Q. (ES) That's the thing that they keep tellus us, the Blacks themselves about Buxton. We could trade at the company store, we weren't cheated, we got the same wages as everybody else. But the thing that's interesting in this is that we've sort of come to the conclusion in interviewing a number of people, that it's almost Utopia, but it's not integration. They had their own churches; they had their own lodges; they had their own place to stay. But what they really say is "We don't get prejudice when we go downtown ... we're not cheated when we go downtown."

Q. (DS) We're not cheated....

A. You're right on that.

Q. (ES) And yet it was not the mixture, even though they were the dominant ethnic group ... was Black. It was still ... when it was started were there any Black policemen. Were there any Black. There was white representation but they didn't dominate the community, but they were treated fairly in the community.

A. Right.

Q. So they see that as a real Utopia.

A. Yes, see, in a sense, all these people were pilgrims whether they came from Europe or the South or whereever, and of course you're well acquainted with why they came from the South in the beginning. Why Hobe went down to get them was because ...

Q. (DS) Strikebreakers...

A. The others wanted to unionize and they wouldn't let them unionize. Now I think of this little example, my father tells this in the autobiography that he wrote that they were forced to buy from the company store. Now this was around Muchi-kinock, I think. Or one of those places, I'm not sure what the place exactly what the camp was. But my grandfather yet was working in the mines, wasn't able to break away from them. .. Grandfather Sofranko. They had to buy from the company store. The prices were upped, from the general store. My grandmother discovered she could go into Oskaloosa and get clothes for the children much more reasonably ... Well, why wouldn't you? She did. They found out, the company store, or whoever was ... you know, the powers that be at that time, and my grandfather was told that if that happened again, he would lose his job. But that actually happened. So you can see why those people wanted to strike, because of that. When you were talking about all the people coming in with their own groups, and yet not bothering any of the others. I have a picture here that shows that very thing is true of my people. When my grandfather was the president of a lodge of Slovak men, they hung together. Yes, there they are, ready in procession. Raady to go into the church. This is at St. Peter's at Lovillia. And they all had badges that they wore ... see, they stuck together. They'd help each other if they needed it. And those people needed it. If we went over to Europe, we'd do the same thing, we'd stick together as a group.

Q. (ES) Do you remember anything about the lodge activities? Was that an important...

A. About the ...?

Q. Any lodge activities, was that an important social event or social ... institution? Church was, obviously, and ...

A. This was an ... I'll put it ... let's see ... In this country there was an, it was, the lodge was really an insurance thing for Slovakians. Now the headquarters of that was in Pennsylvania. The men had their lodge and the women had their lodge. They had a publication which, and it's still published, the Jednota. J-e-d-n-o-t-a, Jednota. And then they would meet periodically. I remember my mother was president of the Laides group of it, and every year on August 15, they went to Albia, and they met as a group. It was both social and so on. I can remember women coming in and paying what they called their lodge dues. Lodge dues were their insurance policy.

Q. (DS) And this was, I suppose, a death benefit?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it sickness too?

A. No, it was just death, just death, that's all it was. So this was the men's group, my grandfather was the head of that.

Q. He looks like he should be in that position.

A. Uh-huh. Oh, he really was remarkable. When you read, if you ever have time to read all the things that he did, he really was such a brave man. What would you do with nine children, a week old baby, and he in a disabled condition. He never relied on anybody to come in and help or anything, he was totally independent.

Q. (DS) And he never remarried?

A. Never remarried. And they said when my grandmother died, that he drew all his little children around him, and they said now, talked to them, and said, "Do you think we can do this by ourselves? Or do you think we should have another mother?" They wanted to do it alone. And they did.

Q. (ES) Remarkable!

A. And everyone of the sons ... there was no trouble with any of the sons. Every one of them turned out to be a very fine man. They were not able to get, most of them, even a high school education, but they got additional training after they finished eighth grade, but they were a wonderful, very fine group of people.

Q. (DS) Now, I'm just curious again, this term ... this is an Austrian lodge then?

A. It would be a Slovakian ... and the reason, in my grandfather's naturalization papers he renounces forever the King of Austria. And its always he is a citizen of Austria-Hungary. Not Slovakia, but of Austria-Hungary. And I've found a lot of that information, research in Mahaska County. But he took out his citizenship papers, became a naturalized citizen.

Q. Let me ask you a question about your early life. I've interviewed quite a number of Italian-American women in my own -- what we're really working on now is the Buxton project, but I also, for the past five years at least, I have been researching the subject of coal mining in Iowa in a more general way. And in fact, I'm finishing up my dissertation on American history at the University of Iowa. The topic is coal mining in Iowa. And one chapter in that dissertation will deal with the lives of women in coal mining communities and I met quite a few Italian-American women around Granger, Madrid, some in Des Moines, some in Seymour.

A. South side of Des Moines.

Q. South side of Des Moines. And one of the things that comes through so strongly is a feeling that they had that they are really second class citizens. They felt discrimination. This one woman summed it up so well, she said, "We have three strikes against us. First of all, we were Italian. Secondly we were Catholic, and thirdly, we were daughters of coal miners. And all of those things sort of, well, put us outside, made us sort of, not outcasts, but because of those three things, we experience some discrimination." And I wondered if you remember any of that growing up. Or if you didn't experience any of that.

A. The only thing that I experienced was sometimes people, Slovak people, would be called Bohunks. But then, on the other hand, we called people Shanty Irish, too. (laughing) And the Wops. And so, if you were really sensitive to that, you'd probably would let yourself be hurt. But as I grew up I didn't feel any of that. I was accepted, you know. I would say -- as far as Catholicism, there was a line that was drawn as I was growing up in Lovillia where, you know, on the farm, I didn't have that much association outside of the family, but as I grew older and in Lovillia, I did. But you'll have to recall that in '25, 20s in Lovillia, the Ku Klux Klan was very, very strong. Now one of the most rampant places in the state was in Lovillia. It nearly split the town in two. We almost had a vigilante there. And when I mentioned a little while ago about Chet Armstrong's son who was in business, or Irwin who was in business, or his daughter, who was in business, her husband was in business there with a man by the name of Hammond. Now Hammond was a big Ku Klux Klan man, and so you just didn't associate, you didn't do business, you didn't do anything with people who were Ku Klux Klanners. We had, I remember once we had a big four county parade and demonstation, at night with the Ku Klux Klan walking through town all over there, you know, on trucks, singing American songs and walking all over.

Q. (DS) With their white robes?

A. Oh yes, none of them were .. it was very secretive. I can also remember a little kid standing next to me and saying, "Oh, that's my grandma, I know her shoes." (laughing).

Q. (DS) That's wonderful.

A. We laughed about it when we got home.

Q. I bet you did. Was this, was their activity particularly geared toward the Catholics or any Blacks in the community or was it ... did you feel that?

A. We had the feeling that they hated Catholics.

Q. That was my understanding too. That in the 20s, the Klan members discovered that they just got a lot more mileage out of opposing Catholics, and in the larger areas, Jews.

A. You see Catholics and Negroes and Jewish pretty much were put in the same category.

Q. I see.

A. And the Negroes were hated with the Klan, and so the Jews and the Catholics were hated, too. And we felt that this largely aimed at us. But we had a next door neighbor who was an undertaker, who was a Klan. And as we grew up, we just, you know... my mother and father didn't speak to him and his wife. He didn't speak to us, either. And we were next door neighbors. But when it came to the next generation, his daughter and his sons were friends of mine. See, it took a generation to get this out. So when I say, you know, prejudice, I feel most of it was because of the Ku Klux Klan and that sort of hatred there. Now, you know, it's rather strange, too. I have always been proud of my heritage as a Slovak. I have always been very happy because I felt that it was a great heritage. But somehow or another, I do not want to be identified with the Croation people. I don't know why, but I grew up with that. Maybe it was because the Croatian kids as I grew up lived at the other end of the town. and they were always getting into trouble. And I didn't want to have anything to do with the Croatian kids. And so even -- we have one Sister now who -- if she wants to tease me, I simply cannot refrain from responding to here. All she has to do is say, "Oh, you're Coratian, aren't you?" That just sets me off. So the point there is that within some of those European peoples, you can still find some prejudice. So maybe, I have never lived that close to Italians. The closest I've lived to them would be with some of them that are members of our community. Very find people. So, I think not only will you get the North and the South, you will also get within the country that sort of thing.

Q. (DS) I think in this case, too, what the one woman was referring to was not prejudice from other European groups. She was referring to the prejudice she felt was prejudice from the white, Protestant farming families. The WASP community that surrounded the coal camps. That's where I think she was ... that's what she was referring to.

A. But my uncles, as young boys were accepted by -- on this little map -- there's the Lewis family. There's a man, one member of that family is still living here in Ottumwa, oh, here it is -- right here. Near my grandfather, there was the Lewis family. The Lewis boys. They chummed together, they played together. There were the Kulnon's. They played ... that was an Irish family. This was a Protestant, this was a Catholic. The Smiths were Protestants. My best little friends, when I was a little girl were the little Smith girls, I went to school with.

Q. So your family really had strong associations then?

A. Oh, we did.

Q. With all the ...

A. Here were the Kerrs. A Kerr family up here, and there was a Kerr family here. A good relationship. They were friendly. IN fact, once this Mrs. Kerr on my birthday when I was a little girl, sent he little girl down to my grandfather's with a beautiful little cut glass vase with a flower in it for me because it was my birthday. They were nice to us. But you had to love Grandfather. He loved everybody. You know, and that makes a big difference.

Q. (DS) Yes.

Q. (ES) You mentioned school several times. Did you go to school in Buxton?

A. I went two years to Garfield school.

Q. Was the school, was the high school that they built, was that already burned by that time?

A. I don't know that.

Q. They apparent.y built a high school, but they only had it one year of high school. And then it burned and the kids started going out to high school elsewhere.

A. Uh-huh. I can't offer any information on that. Maybe on this material that we're going to duplicate for you before you go, we can find something there.

Q. (DS) Now are we keeping you from anything?

A. No. I've set aside for....

Q. (ES) Unless it's their lunch period, Dorothy.

Q. Yeah, you probably want to have your lunch.

A. No, that's all right. Now, let's see, Here is something else, too, now "They Treasure Memory of Buxton."

Q. (DS) I think from the Iowa....

Q. I think this is the article about our project.

A. Okay, I saved your letters, too, and...

Q. I think I tucked away a copy of that. Well, I'm trying to think of any other questions we might ask.

A. I think this is the most exciting thing that you're doing.

Q. Oh, good.

A. Yes.

Q. Now your sister Ellie is in Lovillia?

A. Yes, it would be Ellie Sofranko.

Q. We could find her very easily by just asking at the??

A. She, today they're having a fireman's day and celebration and what not. She might not be at home, but you just ask anybody where Ellie is.

Q. (DS) Well, we'll be coming back to chat with her, and this you said was ... Smith?

A. Earle.

Q. Earle Smith, and he still lives in Lovillia?

A. He still lives there and Ellie has talked to him some when I told her about this. And she said, "Oh, if I can do anything, I'll be happy to." And she said "I'll think about several people around town that you might be interested in." And she said Earle is one, and so I called her after you had called me and I said you were coming down Saturday, and she said, "Well, I'll call Earle."

Q. Oh, that's great.

A. I told her I wasn't sure how much time you had.

Q. (DS) Yeah. What we did ... we knew we wanted to stop and see the Ericksons, so we'll see them this afternoon. But we'll be coming back down again and we'll contact her.

A. I would suggest that you might show this to Earle and see if he verifies the same thing as a little nine year old girl.

Q. Well, I think your memory is tremendous, just tremendous.

A. I rather ... I thought of that. I'm not a really intellectual person at all. But I must have been very impressionable as a child, because I recall. For example, I remember that drive taken at two and a half years old very distinctly. I remember things even before that. Before the age of two, that my mother has verified with me.

Q. That's really very unusual.

A. I guess I was just really impressionable. Which, you know, and I've often thought of that in relationship to children growing up now, what is it going to do to them to watch all this violence?

Q. That's right. That's right.

A. They're exposed to so much.

Q. I know one question I wanted to ask. If you could elaborate a little bit on the company store. What you remember of the way it was arranged, things that you bought there or certain impressions that you had about going into the company sotre. The big company store in Buxton.

A. I don't remember too much. I remember the front of the store, and as you walk in ... I don't think I must have been in it very many times. I really can't tell you now where the rows of cans and big counters and stuff of that kind. It's mostly outside of the store that I can remember. And other than that I don't ... And I'm sure I didn't go into it very many times. Now I do know that we did shopping for clothing and things like that, we went into Albia to buy that. And

A. (cont'd.) maybe we did some buying of staples, and I'm sure there wasn't a grocery list that we went to the store with every week. Because as you read this you'll see what a tremendous garden and orchard that my grandfather had.

Q. Self sufficient, really.

A. Another remarkable thing is that I could remember, I can still remember that orchard, and the particular kind of apples that came from these trees, as a little kid! And when I drew this all out and verified it with one of my uncles and he said, "You're right. How do you remember all this?" And he was a little older.

Q. (ES) This is completely aside. But how did they deal with the apples. We've got two trees that somebody gave us. They grew up, and now they say your apples aren't going to be any good because you didn't spray them. What happened back then? You didn't spray them either.

A. No, we didn't.

Q. (DS) And they weren't all green?

A. No, they weren't. We had gorgeous apples. But you know, if they would be Jonathans or eating apples, we had barrels and we put them down in the cave and then we had old Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck catalogues. And we tore them up page by page and wrapped each apple in the sheet of catalogue paper. And put them in the barrels. And took them down to the cellar -- to the cave, it was a cave. And then used them from there through the winter.

Q. (DS) I guess you have really answered this already. But I'll just sort of ask -- I take it then, that living where you did, even though Buxton contained a large number of Black people, your family as such really had very little contact with the Blacks.

A. Oh yes, I would say that. I would say that.

Q. No social contacts, no business contacts?

A. However, and I don't know too much about this, except that a Negro doctor attended my mother when my little brother was born. Which was unusual. Now not for me, it was and old Dr. Trayster. Dr. Trayster, who was the doctor. And of course you didn't go to the hospital, you were born on the farm. And it was a Negro doctor, which again, indicates to me there was no prejudice there. My people with the Negroes, they accepted the Negroes. And that had always been true of my family. We have always accepted Negro people. Now there's a little Negro church on the south end of Lovillia. My father died ... it was an old custom in the town to send floral things, you know, to different churches. And it happened to be on a Saturday, and so what will we send on down to the little Negro church? We picked out the brightest flowers and sent them down. When my father died, it was really fast, he just dropped dead of a heart attack. One of the first people to come up

A. (cont'd.) that day was the little Negro minister to offer his sympathy to my mother. Beautiful. And I think Negroes liked our family, too. Once my mother took my little niece down to the store. And she introduced her to the Negro man, "Now shake hands with him." And little Sue held up her hand, shook hands with the Negro, and when she took her hand back she looked at it. And the Negro said, "It won't rub off, honey." But see, they greeted the Negroes, and there weren't many Negroes in Lovillia. There aren't very many. I don't know if there are any of them right now really because that little church has burned and Negroes have left there.

Q. (ES) I think we better ....

Q. (ES) I suppose that's it.

A. Well this is just ... oh, maybe then we'll go down the hall and see if we can get copies of that.

Q. Okay.

END OF SISTER SOFRANKO, SIDE TWO.