

Interviewee: Anna Ramsey
Interviewer: Susanne M. Graham
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Transcriber: Jennifer Pustz

Anna Ramsey
Side One

Susanne M. Graham [SG]: 1992. I'll be talking to Anna Ramsey. This is for the Friends of Stewart Library Oral History Project covering the period from the Great Depression through World War II, life in Grinnell in the thirties and forties. [pause and background noise] Anna would like to start talking about the way things were in 1924.

Anna Ramsey [AR]: I don't know how I'll come out on this either. [pause] The reason I picked 1924 is because that was the time or the date in which our banks started closing. The Merchants National Bank, which was housed in the Sullivan Bank was the first to go and it was announced by a simple sign on the door which said "Bank Closed by the authority of the State Banking Department." And everyone was thrown into a panic. I was in high school at the time and I felt it was the end of the world probably. [laughter] Then another bank, the State Bank, closed its doors soon after that, but it seemed to be in better condition and was purchased and did not have to go through the state department. The Breton Bank of Des Moines bought the Citizens' Bank, which was at the corner of Fourth and Main street and they brought in money to survive the run on that bank and those were pretty exciting times. They bought it and then almost, it seemed like overnight, that bank had moved from its location down into the what was the Merchants' National Bank. Then, also at that time we had a savings and loan which closed and that was a time of great distress for many people because they had stock and the only way they could get their stock out was to try to find a house that the Grinnell Savings and Loan owned and they could take that house for the amount of indebtedness they had to the – to the savings and loan company. Also, under the laws of the banking business anyone who was a director of a bank was liable for the extent of his stock in the bank. This ruined, ruined many people because they had to give up everything they had – any business, any properties in order to satisfy that.

SG: No federal guarantees in those days.

AR: There were absol — , no, there was absolutely no federal guarantees in those days. And when it was gone, it was gone. I happened to have a small — I thought it was a large — but it was a small savings account in the Merchants' National Bank and that bank was the settlement of — The amounts of money in the bank were not made known for several years — I would say probably five years or so afterward — when we received six cents on the dollar.

SG: It probably seemed big to you at the time though, at your age.

AR: My bank account. Oh, I thought it was terrific because we sold our pony and bought more savings stamps for the First World War and then, then we — The money that we put into our savings account — I had two sisters and we all shared alike on the sale of the pony — and had all bought savings stamps and we put the money in the bank.

[Break in tape.]

SG: Is this — as far as you're concerned? —

AR: Does it sound like me?

SG: No. Well, I never think of myself as having a southern accent until I hear this on the tape. Okay, let's go back now, you said, you were talking about the bank and the money you had in the bank and you sister had decided she was going to —

AR: The three of us had divided the money so all of us had an account, each of us had an account, right.

SG: It was 1924.

AR: This was the beginning, '24 would be the beginning of my sister's senior year at Grinnell College and she announced that she was going to take her savings account and go to Des Moines and buy herself some clothes — she was sick and tired of not having any clothes — which wasn't true. And my father was horrified but my mother thought it was all right, so the two of 'em went to Des Moines and she bought some very nice clothes. She came back, started teaching, no started going to school.

Side Two

SG: Okay, where were we?

AR: What did I say?

SG: You were talking about your sister buying the clothes and –

AR: But the tape was on, oh, I'm still on it –

SG: But then, I don't know, you didn't finish the story up, you were saying that you had kept your money in the bank.

AR: Yes, and received six cents on the dollar. That was on there.

SG: And had you lost, your sister had gotten her money and spent it on clothes, you didn't get anything.

AR: Didn't get anything but six cents on the dollar. Then, of course – [pause] Is this going?

SG: Yes, but it's all right. Take all the time you want.

AR: I can't think what I said next. You asked a question. You asked if this hurt my family personally.

SG: Yeah, the way it affected your family.

AR: Well, very, very much, because my family, what money we had, was in our business, money was in the bank, and people had to well – There was signs. I guess we talked about this, there were signs.

SG: You said your father had repossessed things.

AR: And houses were repossessed by banks and there was a just an uneasy feeling which was in great contrast to what there had been before that because, before that, right during the war and following the first world war there was a huge land boom where land was sold at exorbitant prices. And then all at once the bottom fell out of that and that's when, why things became so bad in such a short time. But everything we had here in the way of industry, I'm not sure about the Spaulding Company, I think they had perhaps had folded up by this time, but there was a Grinnell Washing Machine Company and the Dodge Tool Company, both of which were going concerns, and employed lots of people, and Grinnell Brick and Tile, which was another business that one doesn't hear about, but it was quite a good spot, and just numerous pl – Things like that were just gone. They all went up, under.

SG: And they all went out of business. What happened to the people who were employed in those places?

AR: Well, for the most part, it wasn't very skilled labor and I don't know, because you know we didn't have any unemployment insurance. And they were out, but then of course, things didn't get any better, because things rode along until 1929, of course, when the bank, and the stock market crashed after that. And I was a senior in college in 1929 and had— Was an economics major and was enrolled in an investment class. So we went to our investment class and we picked out the stocks that we were going to buy, and we had to say why we were buying it and all this kind of stuff, analyzing it, and then bingo! October 27th or 29th or around that time, there wasn't any stock market, and there wasn't any investment class. And they substituted something in place of that.

SG: Oh, they actually did away with the investment class?

AR: Oh, yes, absolutely. We did a little analyzing and then we closed it off because there wasn't anything more for us to study. And I can't think what we took, but it probably was not too great a course, but anyway we all got credit for it.

SG: That's interesting that it affected curriculum at the college. Do you know of any other ways, did you notice any other things happening on the campus?

AR: No, except I did notice this. By the time 1930 graduation time came around, it was really very sad because there were not jobs. All these boys were graduating. And I recalled that the year before, 1929, June of '29, a group of senior boys and girls had gone into Chicago on a job-hunt, and they had all come back with any one of two or three jobs, they were just, just loads of jobs to be had. And when 1930 came, the boys, a year later, they just couldn't get jobs. Consequently, our class spread out all over the United States. Ordinarily, you'd have a few people here in Des Moines and lots in Chicago and so on and so forth in a graduating class. But there were people just spread all over, you know, little teeny towns, any place that they could get a job. So that was kind of a contrast. We did feel that. But—

SG: Well, it's interesting that that happened also in World War II. People were just scattered all over the place and it's made a big difference in our whole society.

AR: Certainly has.

SG: You were saying that your parents were New Englanders.

AR: Right.

SG: And tell us where they were from.

AR: Well, my father was from East Corinth, Vermont, which is a very small, little town, about ten miles from the Connecticut River, half-way up the state. And my mother lived in Montpelier, New Hampshire, which was just across the Connecticut River. And my father had gone to college at Randolph—it was a teachers' college—and he had gone there just long enough to get what he needed to teach in Vermont. And so he did teach for a year or two and was not very happy with it and he had, through someone, he had learned of the Spaulding Company in Grinnell and they were looking for people, so he came out here. And it seemed that— Well, he was a very fine mathematician. He had a very keen mind, and they would hire him if he would take a business course. So he went to Davenport and enrolled in a business college and then came back and was associated with Spaulding for a number of years. And my mother came out later, about four years after he came out here. And my grandparents moved out here and they— my father and my grandfather— started a buggy business, selling buggies, and later, my grand— The two of them went together and had an automobile business.

SG: He didn't manufacture buggies, he sold them.

AR: No, no, but there were buggy manufacturers here, the Spaulding, and then they went into automobiles. And—
[at the same time]

AR: These were buggies my father was working on.

SG: But you think it was the crash that did away with Spaulding? Is that what happened?

AR: No, I think they probably were out shortly before that.

SG: And you were saying that your parents were staunch Congregationalists.

AR: Yes, they were. Do you want to learn about the Congregational Church?

SG: Yes, I do. I think it would be wonderful.

AR: Well, the Congregational Church was the largest, biggest building in town and remind me to tell you a story about that when we get through with this, and everybody went to the Congregational Church, this was really a Congregational college, don't think it wasn't, and continued to be for a good many years. They were certainly affiliated with the Congregational Church. But it was a very large building and we had very large attendance, all, well I

think everybody knows this, all the college things were held at the church, graduations and concerts and everything were at the old stone church. And I recall that having seen, or having had in my possession, and I don't know where it is now, a picture of the Congregational Church Sunday School and I'm sure there were 300 people in it. It was just huge! They had – Everybody went to Sunday School or taught Sunday School.

SG: What was the typical Sunday like?

AR: Oh, just like any day. I mean, we went to Sunday school.

SG: How many times; did you go to church more than once? Was there an evening service, too?

AR: No. There were evening services but we didn't – Our family never went to evening services. Of course, there was Christian Endeavor, that everybody went to, hoping to get a date. But we all went to church. We had a church orchestra, I remember, and Mr. Matlack was the organist. Well, it was quite an era.

SG: Tell me about the dating scene.

AR: Oh, well, you were just, you know – Christian Endeavor you mean, the reference I made?

SG: Yes, the social – What was it like to be a teenager at that time?

AR: Well, it was nice if your fellow had a car. And there, you see at that time, you didn't have to have a driver's license.

SG: Not at all?

AR: No.

SG: Did many of the boys have cars?

AR: Yes, they did. And the girls too. And, but, we, you know, we couldn't, we didn't go out of town, for one thing the roads weren't very good, but we could drive out into the country a ways, but you wouldn't spend an evening out of town. So we had lots of parties, kind of little groups. And we'd entertain in our homes and have dances, you know. I came from the era where you rolled up the rugs [laughter] and danced.

SG: Who were some of your friends from that era?

AR: Well, Margaret Matlack was one of my friends from that era. And, I'm trying to think of people who live here, I just think she might be the only one who ever came back here. But a friend of mine was Wilma Gallagher, whose father was a dentist here. And Virginia Edge, whose father was the first, well, I think he was the first manager of the gas company that we had

here. You see, we had a private gas company here before we brought in any other kind of gas. And we always had electricity. I have no knowledge of not having electric lights or inside plumbing or gas, I don't know about— Never used anything but a gas stove, or an electric stove.

SG: But now in the rural areas it was —

AR: Rural areas, much different. And in many, many small towns it was quite different too. Grinnell, for all of its problems, was really a very civilized place. That was nice. We appreciated that very much. And, well, as I say, we made our own entertainment.

SG: Were there parks in town at that time?

AR: Yes, I think Merrill Park was established when I was in grade school, because I remember on Arbor Day, all the children in the school system went to Merrill Park, how they got there I don't know, probably everybody drove— Their parents took them or something, and all those trees were planted around that circle. And we all wrote our names on a slip of paper. And they had all these holes dug, we all wrote our names on a slip of paper, took them, and dumped them in there and then we put the tree down. And I think about it every time I come around that I know just exactly which tree we planted. [laughter]

SG: Oh, that's wonderful. And they're still there, some of them must be.

AR: Yes, they — these are the ones on the side, as you are coming out of the park — are still there.

SG: That's great. What sorts of things did they do in the schools, I'm sure they must have had entertainments of various kinds, programs and so on, for parents. [pause] Do you remember anything like that?

AR: [pause] I think that there was not too much of that in the grade schools. As I recall, we didn't give concerts. We had music and we had art and — But, it wasn't until we got along at the high school — that's not quite right. I started taking violin lessons when I was in fourth grade, but this was through the college. The college started a group. I think there were ten of us who started taking violin lessons.

SG: And the teacher was on the faculty.

AR: From the faculty, yes. Very fine teacher. And I kept on until I graduated from college. In fact, I was a music student for the first two years, but then it was more expensive to take music and I wanted — They did give a

bachelor of music degree, and that's what I would have liked to have had, but couldn't have it. It was more expensive and so then that's when I transferred into economics, but I kept on taking lessons.

SG: You were talking about hobbies a while ago. I noticed the piano over here, do you play the piano?

AR: Well, we all took piano lessons.

SG: You all took piano lessons.

AR: And I don't, I'm sorry to say, I don't play that one any more, but I've always played the piano. The reason I haven't is because it needs to be reconstructed. It's not in very good shape.

SG: You still have your violin?

AR: I had a viola, I also played the viola. I gave my viola to Emily Kissane and a few years ago I decided to sell my violin, because I didn't use it anymore. When I asked my children what they would do with it, they said they'd sell it, so I said, well, I guess I'll sell it. So I did, but it was a very fine violin. My folks had purchased it for me. I'm sure they thought I was going to be a concert violinist. [laughter] And I'm sure I thought so too!

SG: Well, you might have been if you had your music major, who knows. Let's see, getting along a little bit—

AR: Yeah, that's what I was going to say.

SG: How about the thirties: any special memories?

AR: No, just that I graduated from college, and went to California, and was married out there. And lived there for three years and then we came back.

SG: Did you know your husband before you went to California?

AR: Yes, he was from Grinnell.

SG: He was from Grinnell?

AR: And, actually, we were high school sweethearts. And then he had left college and gone to California and was working in the investment department of the Bank of America when October 29, 1929 came along. So he didn't have a job and we had planned to be married that next June after I got out of school, or next August. But he was able to go to San Diego and picked up another job with Standard Oil. And so we were married and the jobs disappeared again, you know, they just—

SG: What did you do?

AR: We came home. [laughter] And Fred worked with his father who was doing – Selling insurance and real estate business. And then we had a very, very good life here, really it was fine. And we had lots of friends who had come back to Grinnell, some of them were at least affiliated with like the Lannom Company and the college – we had lots of friends in the college. And we had real good times, we didn't have much money but we had – we did lots of good things.

SG: Well, we have found Grinnell to be that kind of place. It's just a little gem set down in –

[Tape stops and starts again.]

SG: Anna's been telling me that her mother made wonderful pies. [laughter] Tell us about the kinds of things you ate . And what was your source of food – where'd the groc – what grocery stores were here in town?

AR: Oh dear. There was a Moyes Store and a [pause] a Malen and Clendenon Store.

SG: A what?

AR: A Malen and Clendenon [Susanne repeats it]. Those were two men who had this grocery store. And Fred, my husband's father, had a very large grocery store, and he had his own meat market, and he had his own bakery.

SG: No wonder you ate well.

AR: It was a super store really, a supermarket.

SG: An early supermarket.

AR: Yeah, it really was. [pause] Well, I was trying to think of –

SG: When was this that he had the grocery store?

AR: Oh, that would have been back [pause] in the 1918, '17, '16. Good times. Is this being recorded?

SG: Um-hum.

AR: Grinnell was always a quite favorite trading spot. People came from quite a long, quite great distances to trade here, as they still do. As you can tell by the amount of tax – not tax – but the figures that come out that show Grinnell as always gaining in its effectiveness as a market. Oh, you were asking me about the thirties. I was just – All I could say was that we had – We made fun, we had for ourselves – We had lots of poker played for very low stakes. [laughter]

SG: When did you start playing bridge?

AR: I started playing bridge when I was in high school. And –

SG: And was that a mostly women's kind of thing?

AR: Yes, yes. But we used to play bridge and then we played on into college, we played quite a bit. And I've always played bridge. And I don't play as much as some people do, but I thoroughly enjoy it – the game of bridge.

SG: Well, it's always an interesting game.

AR: My husband liked to play.

SG: And the more you know about it the more interesting it gets. And also for amateurs it's interesting if you can play with people who are charitable.

AR: Right, we all have our share

SG: So, were there bridge clubs?

AR: Oh, yes. Lots of bridge clubs.

SG: And these would be like maybe two tables with –

AR: Yes, or two or three tables. Then there, we belonged to a couples' club.

SG: That played bridge?

AR: That played bridge – a Monday Club, it was called. And goodness, that –

SG: Was it every Monday?

AR: No, no, just –

SG: Once a month?

AR: I think every other Monday.

SG: Every other Monday.

AR: I think so, yeah, I'm sure it was.

SG: And was it dinner?

AR: We had dinner and – We used – they used to have dinner in the homes. And then, by the time Fred and I belonged to it, we were eating out mostly and then going places to play.

SG: Where did you go to eat out?

AR: Well, there was a Mrs. Ziegenmeyer who had a tea room, do you remember?

SG: No.

AR: Down here right at the corner of Broad and Sixth. And she had great, great food, She was a wonderful cook. And so we would usually eat there. Actually I think there were five tables.

SG: Was it at her house?

AR: Uh-huh, in her house.

SG: Five tables?

AR: I think there were five tables. Alice and Lou Phelps belonged to it and Strongs and the Biermans and the Richardsons, who you may not remember.

SG: I do.

AR: And the, I guess I can't think of their names, [pause]— Well, it doesn't make any difference. But that was just a few of the people I thought you might know. But we had very, very— And the Dukes belonged to it, and the Gales— We had very happy times.

SG: Oh, those were— That's a great bunch of people. And has the college always had open the things on campus available to everybody in town, the way they are now?

AR: No, that, as I recall, there used to always be an admission fee, it wouldn't be very much, but I don't know when this practice started.

SG: So, a lot of town people didn't go.

AR: That's right.

SG: I mean there would not be crowds of town people.

AR: No, but the people who were interested went anyway, you know, regardless. And, well actually I think there was, for the most part I think there has been good feeling between the college and the town. I don't talk to the people who believe differently, I guess.

SG: Well, I had never been aware of that. I may be insensitive or I may be shielded from it but I've never had any feeling like that about town and gown, I suppose it's there, but my personal experience—

AR: No, I don't run into that either. I don't know how much longer you want me to talk.

SG: As long as you want to, I have three tapes! [laughter]

[Tape stops and starts again.]

AR: The next thing that I think about in particular, of course, is the war, and I remember we by this time we had moved to 1426 West Street, which is where the Dawsons live.

SG: Um-hum, I know that house.

AR: That was Fred's house – that was where he grew up.

SG: That's a great house.

AR: Isn't it though? That's where he grew up, and the interesting thing was that the Dawsons bought it from us and then they adopted this little boy Bruce, who was the age of Mike Ramsey. So Mike enjoyed that house, he was over there a lot, which I think it kind of interesting.

SG: Wonderful. To be in his grandfather's house with a good friend.

AR: And we had moved in there in May and were really very well settled, very happy. And in, on December 7th, we, on a Sunday, we decided to go for a ride which we did. And then we stopped to fill up the car with gas and the manager of the station said, "Well, I guess we're into it." And Fred said, "What do you mean, we're into it." He said, "Well, they've bombed Pearl Harbor." And that, I'll never forget that, that scene. And I'm sorry that my children can't remember that, because they were along but they were not old enough. But it just, I'll never forget, the whole, the whole thing – the scene, the scenario, the whole business – I'll never forget. And so that really made a little difference to some extent. Pretty soon people were talking about the draft and several people did leave Grinnell who had been in our group. And –

SG: They left Grinnell to go into the service, you mean?

AR: Service, uh-huh. Many of them wanted to get commissions, you know, they would volunteer. But then, of course, Grinnell College, there weren't many people left at Grinnell College. Were you here then?

SG: No.

AR: I didn't hardly think you were.

SG: No, we didn't come until '61.

AR: Oh. Oh. Well, there weren't many students – many male students – at Grinnell College as the years wore on. And I remember Les Duke stayed here – he tried to get a commission and – But they kept him here. And he was doing everything in the physical education department – even coaching the basketball team – which was a new experience for him. And I came across my diary the other day, which is – Someone has written

this – this is not original with me – that if anyone got a hold of my diaries, they would come to the conclusion that I lived only two months of each year because [laughter] –

SG: January and February?

AR: I usually manage to write something, and I can't think who said that, it was somebody like Dorothy Parker or somebody else. But I did find one and I was looking through it and it happened to be for the years '42 and '43. And there was quite a little of talk about, well, for instance, our neighbors were a major and his wife and two children, and he was an instructor in the OCS school over here. And we became quite friendly with them and enjoyed them very much. In fact, we have some movies of them.

SG: Do you remember his name?

AR: Durham. And, I think he was major. They were out of Tyler, Texas. And the really – the bringing of several very fine families into Grinnell was really a boon to Grinnell. You know, they had money to spend. And they were, for the most part, they were very fine, they mingled with the townspeople. It was a very happy situation.

SG: Oh, we had good friends among ROTC after we came here before they disbanded it.

AR: And I was trying to think of something else that had happened during that time, I also – in this diary which I found – I had the – Will now be shoe rationing.

SG: Oh, shoe rationing.

AR: Three pairs, three pairs a year. And, you see, we were already into sugar and flour and, of course, into gasoline, but I'm getting kind of far off field about what Grinnell did during the war. One of the things that united the community considerably was, was the establishment of the USO here. [pause] You want me to quit?

SG: No, no, go ahead.

AR: – establishment of the USO. And it so happened that my husband was one of the chairmen for establishing this and so some rooms were found on the second floors of buildings downtown and were completely converted into a social area for the USO.

SG: And who came to this?

AR: We had students here, you know. The ROTC.

SG: Was it the ROTC then?

AR: Uh-huh. There were two different— There was officer-training group—

SG: Oh, these were not Grinnell students per se, they had come in for the program. I remember, they were at our university, too.

AR: No,— [Susanne talks over her]— And we had this, and they would come down here, come down to the USO and there were dances. It really, it seemed to touch people quite generally and people would take turns, you know, taking charge for the evenings, and seeing that there was food for them, and—

SG: So, it was a community effort?

AR: It was a gr— Really a good effort, very good — [Susanne talking over]. And Fred, after this was over, was approached to travel through the state getting money for USO. Well, this was a little bit ticklish, because he was starting a new business all by himself. And, but, he managed. He had a very, one very fine office girl, [laughter] who took care of things. And, he would be gone long weekends and then he'd be home about three days. And then he'd be gone again. And so we felt we were quite touched by the war, too. And— But, one of the nice things was that he had a gas coupon which entitled him to more gasoline. [laughter]

SG: Oh, because he was traveling for that reason.

AR: [laughter] Because he was traveling for that reason. Because we had very limited gas, as everybody did.

SG: But distances here were greater than in places where you can get to things more easily. I don't even remember how they did that. Was it, did they try to be equitable, did everybody get the same amount no matter where they lived or was it different—±

AR: I think that farmers got more, but there was a general amount for around here I think and then there were classes—class A, B, C and so on and so forth.

SG: Oh, yes, according to the need.

AR: And, I was thinking, too, this morning that during that time, we were all canning food— which I have never liked to do and I hate it now — [laughter] because we did, we had to can.

SG: I know it. And gardens, did everybody—

AR: And gardens. Everybody had a garden. We had a garden with the Gales and the Dukes down at the end of Tenth Avenue and the boys would go down there and work and then we'd have to can the darn things and –

SG: And no freezers –

AR: No freezers. And I also recall that we, you – If we could get canned stuff –

Side Three

AR: Also, I remember very, as everyone does, standing in line when things would come into the grocery store, like marshmallows, or jello, or chocolate, and the word would get around: A&P is going to have this today and there would be lines. We stood in lines to get these things. And when nylons came to town – oh, nylons were almost unheard of – and – Which, I remember, caused Les Duke to write when he gave Lois some nylons for Christmas. That's what everybody wanted, was nylons because you couldn't get them, and I remember he wrote this cute poem. All I can remember of it was, "I stood in line a long, long time to get you nylons at Christmas time." [laughter]. And I can't remember what the rest of it was. [laughter] But –

SG: Truly a loving, sacrificing husband.

AR: It was really darling. But the [pause] travel was really bad. We couldn't go by car and, of course, they were moving troops all the time through this part of the country. The railroads –

SG: So the trains were really not available?

AR: The trains were really packed. And – I'm, sometimes – I had a sister who lived in Chicago and she had cause to come out here several times and it was a real hassle. You often stood up.

SG: All the way from Chicago?

AR: All the way from Chicago. Because they just put as many in as –

SG: They could cram, jam in there.

AR: But, anyhow, those were the war years. And I remember in 1945 – [pause] Oh, first I want to say when I asked Rick what he remembered about the war – you know – he was born in '38, you know, and they were over here – They had been five or six years old. And he said, "Well, not very much, except soldiers marching and they would march down the streets."

SG: Of Grinnell?

AR: Uh-huh, uh-huh. We lived on Tenth Avenue and they would come – Dormitories –

SG: Oh, these would be the people on the campus?

AR: And they would come up and march on Tenth. And I can see that, this would have been in the [pause] – Edie – I can't think of her name – Dawson's yard, you know. And the kids would just sit there all morning long and wait for people come.

SG: And watch the people go by.

AR: And then as they would go, they would say, "Hut two three four, hut two." And the kids would just march and march. They marched all over town that way. And he did really say – I said, "You can remember that now?" And he said, "Oh yeah, I remember that." He remembered the soldiers marching.

SG: Well, that's a great age for imitating what they see people do.

AR: Yeah, right, what they see, uh-huh.

SG: Was Rick born in the Grinnell hospital?

AR: Yes, uh-huh, and Julie too.

SG: What was the – What was that facility like at that time?

AR: Well, as we think of it now, it really wasn't a good, it wasn't, I guess, a very good hospital. But, it was as good as the other hospitals, but that was not saying much for hospitals.

SG: Well, I mean, in what way –

AR: Well, we did have, [pause] at one time, I think, that they were, that Community Hospital had been approved by the joint commission, which is what every hospital strives to do. And then some place along the line, we lost that. And I don't know, I don't think we got it back until we built the new hospital. But I, I'm extremely impressed with hospitals here now.

SG: I am too. I think they're marvelous. And they look so beautiful.

AR: Don't they though? I just think it's great. But that hospital, I expect, was built about 1918, and it, well –

SG: Who was your doctor when your babies were born?

AR: John Parrish. [chuckle] And I, we had always gone to the Parrishes. You see, his father was our doctor in my home, in my Knight – my name was Knight before I was married – And so we'd always gone to Dr. Parrish and then, of course, John was just our age. And then when he came back, why, we turned to him.

SG: I miss him.

AR: Oh, don't you know it. I do ,too.

SG: And what was the routine when you went in for your babies. Did you stay in the hospital for a long time?

AR: For two weeks.

SG: Two weeks! [laughter] Those were the good old days.

AR: It seemed like a very long time to stay in the hospital for the first one. But then when you had the second one, you weren't quite that anxious to get out. Because you can imagine what it must be like at home.

SG: Oh and think what it's like now. They just— In a day or two they're just gone.

AR: [said at same time as above] I know, in and out.

SG: For serious kinds of things, medical sorts of things, what did you do?

AR: Went to Des Moines. There were several doctors here who belonged to the college of surgeons. But the hospitals were not equipped to handle a good many things. And so many people went to Methodist in Des Moines and then some to Iowa City, as it is now.

SG: But a lot more stay here now than in previous years.

AR: Goodness yes. But you see, these doctors who were surgeons were G.P.s too you know, like John. He was a general practitioner but he could operate. Dale Porter, the same. Lloyd Parrish, the same. So, it was not very sophisticated surgery they could do.

SG: But adequate for most things.

AR: Yeah, right. We seem to survive things, like appendixes and that kind of thing, without any trouble. I wanted to say something about the end of the war. [pause] We had gone—Fred was home, and we—he had taken the children and me up to Cherokee, where we had friends, and we had spent the weekend with these friends up there. Then he had to go on up into the northern part of the state, and we were to take—come home on the train. Well, we got on the train and got to Waterloo and the only way you could get from Grinnell to Waterloo was to make arrangements to ride with the man who took the Des Moines papers to Waterloo, from Grinnell to Waterloo. So, I called this man and asked him if we might come home with him on this certain day. And he said, "Yes, that would be fine," and told us where to meet him. Well, the children were quite small and, for some dumb reason, I

decided that we would just take a hotel room and then we wouldn't have to be roaming around the streets. So, we did that, and they didn't think that was much fun, and it really wasn't because we weren't there more than half a day. And so we met the man and he, we piled the kids in the car. Well, when we had been at our friends that weekend, they were talking about— It was around August 12th and they were talking about victory and about in the Pacific how things were going to be taken care of. Well, we got started and this man was listening very intently to the radio, as was I, and the children were in the back seat. And then they said that it's been done, it is over, and this man— this was the middle of August— and this man was just broken out in goose bumps. And I said, I said, "Are you cold?" "No", he said, "I have two boys in the Pacific." I'll nev —, there's another thing I'll never forget. And I just— I practically cried. And he was crying. [laughter]. But you just— those things just—

SG: Stay with you forever.

AR: Forever, yeah. And so then we came on home, but that I can't forget. And the beginning of the war— I can't forget, although I wasn't really connected with it except as I, as we all are connected when we're at war.

SG: Well, and if you have any, any knowledge of what war is, it's just so devastating to hear about it. Terrible.

AR: Dreadful. So that was the end of the war, as far, I mean in '45.

SG: And then what did you see happening in Grinnell economically with World War II coming to an end?

AR: I think things were better, I really do. I imagine, I'm not a great student of [pause] of agricultural economics, but I just think that there must have been help coming to the farmers, and by this time the Lannom Company had opened up a shoe factory and they had also purchased the glove company, and that was— They were expanding those.

SG: So things were beginning to revive?

AR: And I imagine the reinsurance company was building pretty fast around that time. And, and there were new people, there were young people coming to Grinnell. And the, pretty soon the, all the college students were coming back and they were having a full complement over here. No, I really think that things really did become much better— At least I was very conscious of very poor times and I can't say—

SG: Well, the good times come on quite gradually I think and suddenly you are aware and you think, well, things are a lot better than they were.

AR: [at the same time] Then things are better. Things are better, right.

SG: But your own family and what you had, come on, tell us about when the bottom dropped out, you said your family had a safe at home.

AR: We had a safe where we kept some money, so we did have a little money, but the Gales were the envy of all of us, because they had been putting money in the postal savings, which I'm sure is defunct now. But you used to go to post office and put money in the postal savings. They were able to get their money out.

SG: All of it?

AR: Well, yes. That wasn't included in the bank failing. And so we were all very envious of them because they had money. I'm sure Grant will tell that whole story. [laughter]

SG: Oh, that's so funny!

AR: Isn't funny the things you remember? Well, that was all part of the daily living then.