

Dr. Radke Women's Oral History Collection

# Blanche Edwardson - Life Experiences

By Blanche Edwardson

September 4, 2005

## Box 1 Folder 10

Oral Interview conducted by Stephanie Kay

Transcript copied by Bradley Broschinsky

February 2006

Brigham Young University- Idaho

SK: What is your name?

BE: Blanche Edwardson.

SK: When were you born?

BE: April 17, 1925.

SK: Where were you born?

BE: Bisbee, North Dakota.

SK: Who were your parents?

BE: Henry and Sophie Gores.

SK: What are some the memories you have, childhood activities you have from living in the Great Depression?

BE: Depression. Well, the Depression started in 1929, so I was only four years old, but I can remember nobody having a lot of food. My dad worked for thirty dollars a month, and I remember him telling my mother, "It cost over a dollar a day to feed this family." There was five of us, plus our mother and dad. So there was seven people. And then he had to buy coal for heat in the wintertime and it cost four dollars a ton, and we couldn't afford coal. So we were having a bad time. He used to go to Minnesota and ice fish in the winter, to bring home fish, and he would bring home lots of wad pike and perch, and they would sell it to all the rest of the residents in the town, and have some for ourselves for us to eat. I can remember my mother buying a piece of meat, and my dad worked, for my dad to eat, and she would fry up dinner, something in the frying pan, whatever... whatever. It seemed like it was a lot of oil. The rest of us would have, she made homemade bread, so she would take this bread, and dip it in this grease and put it on our plate and put syrup over it and that's what we had for dinner. I can't remember ever being hungry 'cause my mother always fed us something. But I had cousins that came over crying 'cause they were hungry. But the whole thing is, in today's day and age, it's like there's different classes: those people that can afford whatever they want and the people that are poor. But the whole town was poor. So you really don't, you didn't feel degraded because you didn't have anything. We got one pair of shoes a year. We got them usually before school started. By summertime they were worn out, and we were either trying to tape the soles back on the shoes, or wearing cardboard inside cause there holes in the bottom. But always the shoes were too small by the time summer came so we ran around barefoot most of the summer, by fall we got a new pair of shoes. The thing we did always get, which I hated, was long underwear. And we had to wear this long underwear, which I detested.

SK: Like all the way to the ankles?

BE: Oh yes! And when they stretched out you had to pull them and then pull your long socks over the top. And we would pin our stockings to the underwear, so that they wouldn't fall down. And they were like cotton stockings; you know they weren't hose of any kind, just cotton stockings. But I hated the underwear. I hated the stockings.

SK: Even when it was cold?

BE: Oh yeah. Well, they were always nice and warm, but it was just things like that you can remember. I can remember telling my mother there was an old lady, her name was, I forgot, but she had a one horse buggy. And she used to come around, and deliver milk. She had the old-fashioned milk bottles. And it wasn't separate, it wasn't homogenized and pasteurized, so the cream would come to the top of those bottles. And she used to deliver milk to our neighbors for instance, and I tell my mother, "I wish we were rich so we could get milk." It used to cost ten cents a bottle, and we couldn't afford it.

SK: Did you have cattle then so you had milk?

BE: My mother's brother and her folk lived on a farm, so he would bring in milk, but he would never bring the whole milk. After they separated the milk, and sold the cream, they'd turn the rest to the pigs, and so on. But he would bring us this little gallon, oh, one of those little tiny – like syrup pails or jelly pails for our family. That's what we'd get, well we couldn't drink milk because my mother used it for pancakes or something like that. So I think back, it could have been whole pail of milk, they were throwing it away anyway, but I often wondered about that. Then sometimes my dad would save enough money so he could buy part of a pig or a part of an animal or when the farmers would butcher. But it was, I don't remember being hungry. But my mother would buy a five-cent can of potted meat, which are the short potted meat. She'd make seven sandwiches. You could hardly get the flavor, you know on the bread, and my cousin Betty came over one afternoon, and she was crying. And she said, "I'm so hungry, Blanche do you have something to eat?" And I was home alone.

SK: About how old were you then?

BE: I was probably ten-twelve. And she was maybe three years or four years older than I was. And my mother always baked bread, so we had bread. And we tried to find something to put on the bread, and I don't know if you have ever heard of sandwich spread. It's mayonnaise with a pickle something in it. I found a jar of that and I don't know how many sandwiches she made out of bread and then this sandwich spread on top of it. And my mother came home that night, and I don't know, I didn't but sandwich spread since, she came home and said, "Who ate all this sandwich spread?" And I said, "Well, Betty was hungry." And my mother never said no, you know, it was fine. But there used to be, we called the hobos. They were just guys riding the rails, and we had two trains going through our town, and we lived like a block from the railroad tracks. And so these guys would come off the railroad tracks and most of them were hungry, and they'd always be knocking at our back door, willing to work for anything for something to eat, my mother never turned them away. If nothing else, she'd make them an egg

sandwich, or she'd do something. She always gave them something to eat. But it was amazing, you know. But everybody was in the same boat. It was um – and for a while, the government had some kind of subsidy, and I can remember they used to give us things, but it was done badly. They'd give you a whole box of grapefruit. Well, grapefruit is just great, except that how do you feed hungry kids just grapefruit? And then they'd give us jackets for winter or something, but they'd be soaked with something, like some kind of linseed oil or something that you smelled from a block away wearing them. And I can remember my brother Harry was very skinny, he had pneumonia when he was younger, and he hadn't kind of gotten, or he almost died, so he was always the skinny one. He'd take castor oil. And he'd had to take this two or three times a day, but that stuff was furnished. And rarely would you get anything, with these commodities. I don't know if somebody was taking the good stuff and we were getting the bad. I can also remember, they had some kind of machine that came through town, and set up in an empty building, and you could go there and make, it taught you how to make mattresses. And we went in there, and as kids, I can remember my mother, helping my mother, make a mattress. And they'd stuff all this cotton stuff inside this striped ticking, you know, and then you had a like a hook, that would reach in and pull this cotton to make that, they had like a ball edge around the bottom. And I remember as a kid sitting there hooking this stuff, and then they'd stitch it. It was, it was a whole different life.

SK: What did you do for fun?

BE: Oh, well we never had toys. We'd play, go out and most kids had chores to do, even in town. And at night, we'd play games like "kick-the-can." The whole neighborhood would come over. Or we had spirit fight with the, I they called it pigweed, which had to be pulled anyway. They'd grow six, seven feet tall, and you could use them like spears. In the summertime, we actually, teenagers, young kids, and all, would make mud pies. We were very decorative. We decorated these mud in a hundred different ways, and we sold them. We'd set up our little stand and sell them. Well you could buy some things for a quarter which was like a bottle cap, and the most beautiful ones we sold for a milk cardboard cap that fit the top of these bottles. And so everyone was dickering across town. We had a lot of fun. My dad was very strict, and he had a whistle that everybody in town recognized. And if he'd blew that whistle, we'd better be home in no time at all. And all the kids in town or anybody would tell us, "Your dad whistled!" We had to run, and we didn't walk home, we ran. But it was a hard time for everybody. I'm not sure that it was all bad. I think that it made stronger people out of – I think today, I'm not sure the youth of today could survive because they wouldn't know what it was really like. And I think the one I feel most sorry for was my mother. She had five kids to feed and a husband. She went out and worked. She worked for twenty-five cents an hour doing very, very hard housework. I mean scrubbing walls and floors and for twenty-five cents an hour. I can remember her getting what they called a felon, it was a bone infection of her fingers, called a felon. And she would wrap that thing and soak it at night 'cause it was so painful. She kept going out to work. I think that I never admired anyone so much in my life as I did my mother because I don't know that my people could cope with trying to feed a family of seven, with no money. It had to been, it just had to been very difficult. I don't know how you could cope with that. But she did.

And as I said, I don't remember going to bed crying for food. My cousin Ollie Edwards, he told me that he went to bed nights crying 'cause he was hungry. His mother would go out and work for farmers, and she'd usually take his sister Betty who was older than him with her. There were four in the family, my cousin Donald was the oldest. And they had what they called CC camps. And he went into the CC. It was like, almost like military, but they did a lot of good things, it wasn't military, but it was similar to that.

SK: More like a work camp?

BE: Mmhmm. And they would go out and do work and get paid a minimum, some kind of minimum salary. So he had, anyway, a place to eat. His sister Helen, would have to stay and take care of my cousin Olik 'cause he was the youngest. And they didn't have any food, 'cause their dad was out drilling wells, and he'd be gone for months at a time. Mother was out on a farm where they had food, and so was his sister. Helen and he would be in town, and no money and no food. And he went to bed, like he said, lots of nights crying. And he doesn't even like to talk about it, it affected him so deeply. But he said he admired his sister more than he ever did anybody else because she was the one who took care of him and raised him. So those are kind of – nobody had any money. A show cost...a show came on the weekend. It cost ten cents. And during part of this time, people did anything to make money, and my dad was a bootlegger, during Prohibition. And so he'd get this, I can remember, 180 proof alcohol in cans, gallon cans. And they would dilute it in half, which is still very strong, and they'd sell it for ten cents an ounce. Well, in order to go to a show, it cost ten cents, well we didn't always have ten cents, and sometimes by the time we got ten cents, the show was half over. But we got very ingenious, and so we decided that we were going to start selling popcorn at the theatre. Well, our next-door-neighbor ran the theatre, and my brothers were very young. I think Harold was probably seven or eight or something like that, and they over and asked for a job at the theatre. And they would clean the theatre after everybody left. And they did a really good job, and they stayed on there till they were teens, so they got to see the show free. Well we decided then, we couldn't afford to go to these shows, so started making popcorn and we had a cardboard box with a string that went around our necks, and we'd have all these bags of popcorn and we'd sell them for, I think, a nickel or a dime or something. Big bags of popcorn you know. So, but the only thing he asked us to do, course we had to stay out in the lobby, and then when we couldn't sell anymore popcorn, everybody's in, we could go in and see the show, but it was usually half over by then. But he insisted that we take a pencil and stick a hole in the bottom of the bag, because everybody was popping the paper bags in the theatre and making noise. So we had to stick 'em. So, that was our project. I can remember going through town selling crochet hooks. I don't know for how much, it was nothing hardly. But people would buy crochet hooks, and I could make money that way. I sold magazines one time. I earned enough money to get a Shirley Temple doll. I don't know whatever happened to my Shirley Temple doll, it would have been worth a fortune today. But, we was just kids, I mean you did what you did. It didn't seem like it was any great hardship. It was just something, we didn't envy anybody else, except the people that could afford to buy milk for ten cents. But, I can remember that we, we just lived it. If we got a nickel, anyone of us, for some reason earned a nickel, and we wanted to buy candy, which we rarely got,

we had to buy something that could be split five ways. There was five of us, and we each got equal share of it, I don't care who got the nickel. But I think that it was very, very fair. I'm glad my mother taught us this. Life wasn't always easy, but we lived with my grandmother in this big house. We had the downstairs, and she had the upstairs, couldn't afford rent. Lucky we didn't heat the place. That time was hard on everybody.

SK: Would you say it was bad memories, or good memories? You know, I look back at the Great Depression, and think what an awful time to live through, but do you look back at the memories with fondness, or do you...?

BE: Oh, well I don't think it was bad for us. I think that it made stronger people of us. I think that probably it was hard for the parents, more that it was for us because, quite frankly, they were the ones who were worried about feeding us. I can remember, I was quite young, my mother was out working, and I had to take, I was the oldest, I had to look after while my mother was working, in fact it was summertime or something. And I can remember they were hungry one time, and I thought, my mother makes rice, and I know she puts sugar in it and cinnamon, and gave them that. So I put this kettle to boil on, I couldn't have been ten, and I put some rice in it and I thought, "Oh it doesn't look like very much." It was cooking, and it was half cooked. I thought it doesn't look like it is going to be enough, so I added some more. Well, the rice that was in their first got done, and rest didn't. I never heard the end of the story about my bad rice, and everybody, they had to eat it.

SK: So how old were you when World War II started, or the attack on Pearl Harbor, so when the U.S. entered the war?

BE: I was in high school. So that was in '41, from '25 to '41, sixteen, seventeen? I don't know.

SK: Did you have friends that went to war?

BE: My senior class, about half, well we had a small class anyway, but most of the boys were gone before graduation. The one thing probably would have changed my whole life, and one thing I really, really wanted to do. They came through our high school, and offered the girls in there, that if they would go and take training, that we could become pilots and ferry these bombers over to England. That what – they were called WAAF's. And you could become a WAC, WAAF, or a WAVE, depending one which kind of service. Of course the Air Force one was a separate entity you know. I wanted to ferry these. I wanted to become a pilot. My aptitudes were all you know that way. So I wanted to do it, but I wasn't old enough and my folks wouldn't sign the papers and I couldn't go. I think that was the one thing in my life that I really regretted that I couldn't do. So in the summertime for the last two years that I was in high school, I had a school teacher that I was very fond of. Her name was Vi Keller. She was physical education teacher, she was our campfire leader, and she was from a big city in Minneapolis or something, and we were small town. Her thinking, well let's see, I think that when you live in a small town, the mental capacity is equal to the size of the town. She came from a big city so far as I

was concern, she was so inventive, so different, so forward thinking, and I really admired her. And in the summer of my two last years of school, I worked for her in the summertime because she was pregnant and needed help. And I worked for her, and I really enjoyed it. I think I learned an awful lot from her. I felt like you don't have to be this narrow minded, small town thinking that his whole avenue you could do whatever you wanted, and so I really admired her, worked for her, and enjoyed that. And while I was working for her the last year, she was still going on, and that was forty-three, when I graduated, and they came through with another plan that if you wanted to become a nurse, they would train you, and I think it was a real crash course. But you had to go wherever they sent you for two years, but you didn't have to pay for it. Well my dad told me that he wouldn't pay for me to go to college even though I wanted to go to college. He wasn't going to pay for college for anybody who was ready to get married, and he wasn't going to pay for a woman to go to college. And he only went to sixth or eighth grade or some fool thing, so he didn't know why we needed an education. So we were lucky we got through high school I guess.

SK: But it was important to you? You wanted an education?

BE: I wanted to go to college. I really wanted to go to college. So then I decided I was going to sign up for this nurses' thing because it was the closest I was going to get to college, and just as I was about to go, my husband asked me to marry him, and I gave it up for him. So I never did get there you know.

SK: Tell me your husband's name.

BE: Marvin Edwardson.

SK: And did you meet him in high school?

BE: No.

SK: Where did you meet him?

BE: He lived in a town that was like twelve miles from where I lived. That was a long ways in those days. Actually my folks knew each other. My dad knew his dad, his dad was also a bootlegger. My mother had actually gone to the same school in Perth with his mother. They just knew each other. I can remember when I was maybe twelve or thirteen, my dad going out to their farm, and I saw Marv there, and he was like two and a half years older than I was. But he was kind of, well he was a spoiled brat for one thing 'cause he was an only child, and we were five, and my dad was real strict, and his dad would let him do anything he wanted. And he had a mother and an aunt, and if his mother didn't give him what he wanted, his aunt did. So he was used to being treated like a rich boy even though they weren't rich. And he got whatever he wanted anyway 'cause his mom was a school teacher. And I remember thinking that he was kind of an arrogant kid at that age. And we knew who he was and everything else, never though anything more of it, and then him being older, when I was in high school, we were

cheerleaders and all this jazz. He had gone away to college. So he would come home, and he was dressed nice, and we knew who each other were, but not really even talking terms. But I remember we had a three-day basketball tournament in our town, and he had built a new hall, so we had a really nice hall. And he came, and his uncle had the band in the whole neighborhood. So we had dances after these basketball tournaments. And his uncle was playing, so he came to these basketball tournaments 'cause he wanted to see him. And I meet him then, and he came back, and wanted to take me home or something. Which worked okay, but I didn't think I would ever see him again because of my dad. My mother had gone to Rochester, Minnesota with my brother who was burned, and when my mother left town, my dad would get drunk, and he was only mean when he was drunk. And I happened to come home with him that night, and he was asking me about my brother, and my mother, because the only countryside knew what had happened, and that he was back getting skin grafts, and everything. So I was sitting outside the kitchen window, and he was asking me about it, and I was telling about it, and my dad says, "Blanche get in here." And I says, "Just a minute." I was going to finish my sentence at least, and so I was finishing telling him, and he comes outside angry, and I thought. "Oh, I can't be embarrassed by him doing something in front of him." So I told him, "Leave now." I get out of the car. Before he could back out of the driveway, my dad hit me, knocked me down, split my lip open, and I thought, "I'll never see him again." But he came back so – it was about a year later that we got married.

SK: Did he go to war?

BE: No, he went, drafted of course, he went is. He was deferred for farm work. So he didn't get any of the benefits of people who went to war because there were a lot of, through the rest of your life made a difference. For instance, he became a fireman, and he took this test for promotions and stuff like that. Any of the men that were in the service, got ten extra points, and he'd get a top grade. He was intelligent, he had an excellent memory, he could read something and remember every word. I had to read it three times and don't ask me any questions. But he could retain things. He'd pass these tests, but the guys would get ten more points. It was kind of hard to beat that. But he did go, and he did get promoted and everything as a fireman. But all through life you could get better loans, to build a home, or to do whatever you wanted to, you just almost a danger, and yet they thought it was crucial for the farm laborers to defer people who had to stay home and help on farms. And during the war, during the war I can remember us going to a neighboring town of Cando, which was sixteen miles away. I think we went there and did some to earn some money. You couldn't get tires for your cars, and I think we blew a tire and couldn't get home. And we spent a whole day there and Marv went down trying to get them to approve us buying a tire so that we could get home. You had to have certain stamps. I still have some of the stamp books. And you had to have stamps to buy shoes. You couldn't get sugar. Gasoline was something else. You had certain stamps for food, certain stamps for clothing, and when your stamps ran out you couldn't buy it. I don't care how much money you had, it didn't make any difference. A lot of farmers who would have butcher animals, and render lard and things like this, they were all saved and shipped for the war effort. I still don't know what they used lard for. But any kind of scrap metal. The one thing I remember most is before the war, Japan was

buying all our scrap metal. We sold it all to them cheap, and then they gave it back to us. But then there was a real effort after the war started to save all your scrap metal. You saved everything. We were fortunate to live on a farm because we got gasoline to run tractors and farm equipment. So we could use some of this gasoline on our automobiles.

SK: Now when did you get married?

BE: October 25, 1943.

SK: So how as your wedding affected: the ceremony, the celebration, being married during the war?

BE: Oh we were small town. It wasn't elaborate like it is today, but we tried. My husband had relatives that lived in Seattle. So he wanted to go to Seattle for our honeymoon. But we had a church wedding. I remember getting a long white dress. It didn't look like a wedding dress, it looked like a long white dress, but it was very sheer, you know with a lining. I remember my good school teacher made me a satin nightgown, which was really elegant, but I'd never had a satin nightgown in my whole life. And I mean, just little things like that. I remember we had this church wedding, the whole town was invited. Whoever wanted to come. And we, afterward we had the neighboring town get our pictures taken, and then we got home. My mother had this huge meal cooked for everyone who wanted to come up to the barn. And his relatives all came, his mother and dad, and I don't know how many relatives. We had four bedrooms upstairs and a bedroom downstairs. The one bedroom was a double. But she put everybody up for the night. So we spent our honeymoon night in my bedroom with all of his relatives and all of mine in the same house. And then we left for Devil's Lake the next morning, caught the train to Seattle where he wanted to visit and stay with his relatives. Well that wasn't what I thought of as a honeymoon. It wasn't my choice, but I didn't say a thing. In the first place, the trains were so crowded. You were lucky to get a seat. Full of servicemen, when you wanted to go to the dining car, the servicemen got to go first, so that by the time you got there, there was no food. And besides that, my husband got a boil, two boils, on the back of his neck. He was miserably cranky. If a sailor or a soldier talked to me he would get upset. So the train ride wasn't pleasant, I didn't enjoy staying with his relatives I didn't know, and we were in Seattle where there was no, there was no bus transportation, but we were driving cars. People in the city didn't have the extra gas like we did on the farms. And his grandfather was an old Frenchman, and really jolly guy, really lovely. Said he would take us to Seattle and take us to a show. And I thought well that's great because Seattle was a big town to me, I didn't. He takes us in, he takes us to the show, it's all news, all war news. My husband falls asleep, he falls asleep, and I'm the only one watching this news, and in the middle of this beautiful city, I could have watched war news at home. Then he takes us down to the waterfront for a lunch. I didn't get to see the beautiful part of Seattle at all. But his Uncle Camille, who I got to love dearly, and his Aunt Marge, we stayed with them. But, he also had his other aunt living there and her child, and he was very different. He was quite different then.

SK: Did you return to North Dakota? Is that where you started your married life then?

BE: Well when we got back to North Dakota, nothing turned out the way I thought it'd go. He had to work for his uncle on the farm. Well along with his uncle, and his wife, who didn't like anybody, and her daughter, his mother, and his dad and his sister, who was only four years old at the time, there were sixteen years difference in their ages. My husband turned twenty-one the week we got married; I was eighteen, eighteen and a half. And so we lived with all these people on the farm, and it was miserable. He worked from morning till night, so I didn't see him. One of the things is I felt miserable. I was used to farm work. And I felt, we were raised that everybody worked. So his uncle had eighteen cows to milk, every morning and night, so I went out and helped him milk cows. I was told you do this kind of thing, it was how I was raised. So I went out, and I would milk nine cows every morning and nine cows every night, and he milked nine every morning and nine every night. And then I came in the house one day to find that he was complaining because I was milking his favorite cows. I was milking his favorite cows, the ones he wanted me to milk. So by that time I was getting kind of independent, I decided he could milk his own cows. I quit helping him. In the fall of the year they would have the cumin, you know, the thrashing and all this stuff. And so they would come in with this grain, and put in the elevator, and you had to shovel it out of the trailers and into the – I would go out and when the wheat would come in I would shovel it. And I wore overalls and most often turned up because they were too long for me. And I'd walk into the house, and his aunt that never liked anybody, I dropped a kernel of wheat, fell out of my pants, on floor. And she screamed and hollered at me 'cause she just cleaned the floor, and I scattered wheat all over. I didn't shovel wheat anymore. I figured, if you're going to complain about me doing your work, to heck with it. So it wasn't...the people there working in the West Coast was making what we thought was good money, you know. I don't know how much money it was, but it was a lot more than we were making. My husband, I don't think they ever see a wage for him. If he needed money for something, they'd give him how much he wanted, but you settled in the fall of the year, when all the money came in from the grain sales and everything else. My husband had worked for him for two years, and settled up, his uncle gave him one hundred dollars. And so I had a, well his mother moved to the West Coast, to Seattle to live close to her relatives, took his younger sister with them, and we stayed on. Well his mother had worked her life as a housekeeper, did all the cooking, cleaning for ten dollars a week. So I got that job when she left, and I had to clean that house, and cook their food and everything for ten dollars a week. And I got so tired of the complaints that I finally decided it wasn't worth it, I was pregnant, and I decided to go home to Mama. Well my husband couldn't leave because he wouldn't leave them in a lurch till fall work was over. So then he moved back with me at my folks. Well I was pregnant, and actually had my first child Cheryl on the farm at my folks' house. Well the doctor had to come to the farm to deliver the baby, and we had fifty dollars left, and that's how much it cost us to deliver my daughter. Then we were broke. But we saved fifty dollars to pay for the doctor, he spent all Easter Sunday, and April Fools Day with us, delivering my baby.

SK: What year was this?

BE: April 1, 1945.

SK: So that is right when the War was ending. What are your memories from when the war ended?

BE: Everybody being very elated. I used to pray every night that something would happen to Hitler because he was causing such devastation in the world. That's an awful thing to pray for, but he was killing so many people. And of course he started the wars, and then the Japs came in, so we were fighting two countries at the same time, and for a country that wasn't prepared for war, it was very devastating for us. So I can remember in my family, all my friends going to war and not knowing if they were coming back, and so many of them coming back injured. It was, I feel like it was a very bad war at the time. I think now I'm very, I think now we're going to war for all the wrong reasons. I think now we're going to war to boost the economy, or make some politician look good. That was survival, and there was so much patriotism. You didn't have this mixed feelings, everybody, it was the most patriotic time I can remember in our history.

SK: So after the war ended, we went into this Cold War, you know, with the Soviet Union. Do you remember feeling things towards the Cold War?

BE: The Cold War was frightening because you never knew what they were going to do. You didn't know. They were developing things and we were developing things, and it was like a contest to who was going to destroy the world first, and I never could understand that. I didn't like that, and Russia was our ally during that time until the divided Germany. And it was just bad. I didn't think they really got along, but they had to fight together as a cause, and then afterward it was just too much cloak-and-dagger type of stuff. Nothing was all out in the open like a war, it was just not knowing what was going to happen. It was just like sitting, waiting for something to happen, you just didn't know what it was going to be. It always felt like you didn't know, you were never being told the truth about what was really going on.

SK: Now you mentioned before that education was important to you, but you chose to get married over going away and becoming a nurse. Did you ever regret that decision? Did you feel it was forced upon you?

BE: No, it wasn't forced upon me. I had, I made my own decision. Now I really loved him, and didn't want to leave him, which I think a lot of us dumb women do. But I did want to do these other things, but nursing was second choice to ferrying those airplanes. If it had been a choice between ferrying those airplanes or marrying him, I'm afraid he'd of come in second. Being a nurse, and not knowing where I was going or what I was doing, I guess I kind of wanted to have a choice in my life as to what I was going to do, or where I was going to go. Ferrying airplanes, I knew where I was going, and doing what I wanted to do. Being a nurse, I wanted to be a nurse, but maybe not badly enough at the time. And besides, he was very persuasive, he didn't want me to go.

SK: Now how many children did you guys have?

BE: Two.

SK: Did you stay at home with them? Did you ever work out of the home, or where you a stay-at-home mother?

BE: Actually a stay-at-home mother because when Cheryl, after Cheryl was born, and she was like three months old, my husband got this opportunity to run this, it was a farm. But the fellow had built this big show barn, and he had show horses, he had a big, what the call it, a pig shed. They raised a lot of pigs. And they had this tumbled down old house on the place, but he made a deal with us, that he hired four Mexicans to come a work for him. The fellow owned a grain elevator in town, but he had this farm so he didn't live on the farm. So we were hired, he to run the farm, and me to cook for the men. I got fifty cents a meal for every man I cooked for, and that was big money, I want you to know. I was working my tail off, and taking care of a three-month-old baby. And there was this old man, he had another house that was maybe a half a mile, mile down the road, that this old man lived in, but he had been taking care of both places, and I think he was jealous or something. But he would come over and work too. And I guess he was eccentric. He made pets of the rats and the gophers. And we had outhouses, and I would go to the outhouse, and all the gophers would come in, and they expected to be fed grain because that's what he did. So when I got out my gun and started shooting gophers and rats, he didn't like me because I was killing his pets. But we would open up the back door of the house, and there was a porch, and you stood there and waited until all the rats ran back and forth before you could step outside, and I had a three-month-old baby, and I was scared to death that this the baby was going to get bit by one of these rats. So he didn't like me 'cause I learned how to shoot at a very young age, and I was killing all these gophers and rats. But he, we used to take the Mexicans with us, to shows or wherever we went, just took them with us. And we were in this show in this neighboring town, we were living very close to this town of Cando, and we went into a show and took them all with us. Actually went and picked up my grandfather because he loved to go to shows, and took him, we took everybody to the shows. And while we were in the theatre, it flashed across the screen, "Marvin Edwardson, go home. The barn's on fire. We jumped out. We were watching the show, "For Whom the Bell Tolls." We all went home and the barn was burning. Not only the barn was burning, but the beautiful show horses were inside. And this was a huge beautiful barn, so new compared to all the others. And inside, in the center of the barn was a well and a water tank and all this stuff. My husband had bought five gallons of gasoline for an engine ride, and he had it in a, it was like a shed in the middle of the barn and all this stuff. Well, it was in the water tank, and somebody had taken this gasoline, and spread it throughout the barn and set it afire. The barn was like, it was the old man, he burned down the barn, which literally was the end of our job, and the Mexicans got to go home, and we lost our job. And we didn't loose it because of the fire, the whole purpose of the farm was lost. I think it wasn't a year later we found out this same old man burned up in a house, so I don't know what he did. But by this time, Cheryl was six months old, so we were only there about three months. It was the fall of the years, we went back to my folks, we didn't know what we were going to do, winter was coming on. So Marv said before we decide what we're going to do, I'd like to go back and visit my mother in Seattle, let everybody see Cheryl.

So he had saved up enough money at the back on it, and we went to Seattle. Just packed everything in the car, and left, visit his mother and aunt and everybody in Seattle. Well, my husband didn't manage money well at all. So he blew all out money on things, like I say he was a spoiled child that got everything he wanted. I wasn't used to that, and he handled all the money, and it was his money, I felt, and I didn't have much say. He and his mother shared debts, I think, and if she needed money he gave her money, if he needed money, she gave him money, but I didn't have any money. So I let him handle things. Well, he bought bow and arrow sets for himself and nice expensive ski sweaters, and things like this, while I struggled to keep my child fed and stuff. Then I realized that he'd spent all our money, and we couldn't go home. We didn't have enough money to go back home. So I asked his Aunt Marge, who I loved dearly, if she would baby-sit with my child, and I got a job at the Renton High School. And during the middle of the year, Mr. Hayson, who was head of the high school, decided I was worth more money, 'cause he had hired another woman to help me that was head of the Minneapolis Tribune or worked for, he thought she'd be excellent because we did duplicating, we handled lithograph machines, duplicating machines and stuff like that.

SK: So what was your position at the school?

BE: I was head of that department. And he hired this woman to help me, who I am sure he though was much more suited for this job than I was, because I was still the green kid, just out of high school, and had this baby and all this stuff. And here she came all recommended, for this job. So I went to work and earned enough money so that we could go home. But I didn't realize that my husband had a loan on this car that he'd bought, and that he wasn't making any payments on it. And so somehow my dad wrote me, and said that the bank had been calling and that he, of course calling, there was one phone in town, they had to get a hold of him to call the bank back. We didn't have telephones. So my dad got a hold of me and told me to call him at this certain time, at this chocolate shop, that he'd be there. So I call. He said that the bank wanted to repossess the car, but we had taken it out of the state, and they wanted their money, and we owed them seven hundred dollars, which was a lot money in that day. I talked to my husband and he just said he'd forgot to make the payments since we'd left North Dakota. So I told him, I said, my dad said I could borrow the money from his brother-in-law, and I'll pay the bank, but you have to get the money back to me. So I said, okay. So he borrowed the money and paid the bank, cleared us with the bank. Well all we had was the car. So we were in Renton, Washington, up by Skyway, and took the car into Seattle, 'cause I told him, "You have to swell the car to pay him back." So we took a day into Seattle, I didn't know Seattle, I was a hick from the sticks. Well we go to the north end of Seattle and find someone who'd buy the car at a dealership, and he gave us nine hundred dollars for the car. Well the car was worth... We got ripped off, you know, but what are you going to do? I had to get the seven hundred dollars back. So we got a check for nine hundred dollars. We went back to Renton to cash the check to send the money, nobody'd cash this check. Well we don't have a car, and the dealership is in the north end of Seattle, so I finally catch a bus, Marv's working. I finally catch a bus, and I don't know buses. Never ridden a bus in my life, didn't know Seattle. I knew where the train station was because we had come in on the train, well I knew where the train station

was in the south side of town. So I take the bus, and I know where the train station is, and I get off the bus, close to the train station. But this isn't the north end of Seattle, and I'm not sure where this is. I walked all the way to the north end of Seattle to find this dealership, make the man take me to the bank, and cash his check. Well now, by the time I walk the whole way to Seattle, and cashed, well now I have nine hundred dollars in cash, which is a lot of money, and it's getting dark, and I have to go home, and I didn't know where to catch a bus. So I walked all the way back, down to the south end of Seattle, to the bus, or the train depot, where I knew there was a bus thing. I caught the bus, well it left me up on the road called Empire Way probably would have been like a mile, two miles something, then I had to walk home. Well, we sent the seven hundred dollars, well there were two hundred dollars left over, and I said, "We're going home." So two hundred dollars got us as far as Devil's Lake. We get to Devil's Lake, we miss our connecting train into Bisbee. We were late getting in or something, no money to stay over night in Devil's Lake, and I got a baby. She was a little over a years old because we had to spent all this time, we spent from fall to July or something, in fact it was July 4<sup>th</sup> we were getting back into town. In the mean time, my mother had an accident on the farm, almost killed herself falling off a tractor, they had sold the farm, we're living in town; all these changes had happened. My brother was is the Navy in Florida. And we get to Devil's Lake and didn't know what to do. Now Devil's Lake was a good sixty miles from where we were, and I got this one-year-old child. So my husband says, "Oh, there must be somebody in town here that we know." So he went looking. He found some people, brothers or something that were named Gerard, and they had to pick up, and they'd be glad to give us a ride home, except they were both drunk. Well, I got to sit in the middle of these two drunks with a baby, with a shift that came down and hit us, and my husband got to ride in the back of the pickup. Sixty miles back, because I didn't think we would ever get there, I though we were going to hit a ditch first. And that's how we got home.

SK: Other historical events that you lived through would be like the Kennedy assassination. Do you remember where you were?

BE: Yeah, we were in Vancouver, B.C.

SK: And where were you when you found out that the president had been shot?

BE: No I wasn't in Vancouver, B.C. Excuse me I was in Vancouver, B.C. when he got elected. Kennedy was assassinated in '37? No, my brother was thirty-seven when he had his heart attack, that's why thirty-seven reminded me of. So Harry was thirty-seven years old, had been out hunting, and had a heart attack, and ended up in Ellensburg, I think in a hospital. And I wanted to go see my brother, so my friend Dawnene and I drove to Ellensburg to see him in the hospital. I was really worried about him. And while we were there, he told us to go buy his wife something for her birthday. It was Gertie's birthday, which was February. So we were in a jewelry store and picked out some jewelry for her when Kennedy was assassinated. And we dashed right back to the hospital 'cause I thought with my brother having a heart attack, and hearing this, and we

spent the day in the hospital with my brother 'cause I was afraid he was going to end up with another heart attack when he heard that Kennedy was assassinated.

SK: Do you remember your feelings and emotion?

BE: I really felt that Kennedy was one of the best presidents we had. And I was, I think like with the rest of the country, heartbroken that this could happen. And he might not have been a perfect man, but he didn't deserve to be assassinated.

SK: The other main thing that will have to do with my history class is the Equal Rights Amendment, Women's Rights and things. Do you remember your feeling about the Equal Rights Amendment and that whole time when women were fighting for equal rights?

BE: Well, maybe the first part of equal rights started a long time before my time, with the vote and all that jazz. My big thing was, that I think women's brains are as intelligent, if not superior to men. I don't think that women should be superior to men, but I don't think that men should be superior to women. And I had my experience working for Boeing Aircraft Company. And I might have started at Boeing in stores, my first wage was \$1.04 an hour. And I transferred to second shift where I got ten cents more 'cause it was \$1.14 an hour. And I went from stores into inspection, after I went to much schooling and blueprint reading and a whole bunch of stuff. I finally went into inspection, and I worked my way up, as high as a woman could go. A great six of the time, I think you went from ten to six. I don't know why, I think at Boeing they reverse this somehow. At that time you started at ten and worked your way up. A woman could never become a supervisor. I was as high as I could go as a woman. Exactly what they told me. They would bring people in, men off the street, I'd train them, and they make them my boss. I resented it. This one guy in particular was very arrogant. They should have taken him to another area, another shop. They should not have made him my boss. There was one thing in particular. I worked on the wing line, and at the time, the B-52 was a floating wing. I mean that's where all the fuel was, it was just floating in the wings, and so if you didn't seal where the rivets were and everything were with a sealant, the fuel would leak out. So the sealant, as far as I was concerned was very important. And they were just developing new sealants at the time. And it wasn't that the sealant wasn't any good it was just that they weren't cleaning the surfaces, the metal well enough, because if it was oily or greasy the sealant didn't stick. And I could stand at the end of the airplane, and get a hold of it, and it just peel loose all the way to the helm. Well, the fuel, if I could do that, and fuel got under there, the sealant would just lift off. I rejected every wing that went out of there for over a year, with my stamp rejecting it. This guy was my boss, and he'd come down and say, "Blanche, buy that thing, what's the matter with you?" I don't have to buy anything. Man or woman, if I didn't think it was good, he could override me and say it was good, and he could say, "Okay I buy it." Buying it means accepting. He did this for over a year. And he came down one day, and was telling me what to do, and I had it. And I said, "Listen you, I only taught you half of what I know." And he left me alone after that. A year later, they had to pull everyone of those airplanes out and try to reseal them within this wing, after the wings were put

together. Can you imagine, 'cause they were all leaking. So that then, Boeing developed its own sealing department. And they had a separated department with separate inspection for everything from that deal.

SK: You just talked to us about this Boeing experience. How did that make you feel towards men and how they felt towards women?

BE: Well, I really think that at the time, men probably respected women but they respected women as someone who had to stay home and take care of the kids, and didn't have the intelligence to go out into the business world. I think that the few women who did go out into the world showed their intelligence, and I feel women are, in a lot of fields, can out do men. And not that I belittle men, I respect them in their field, but I don't feel that we were respected in ours. Out in the business world, we've proven since, course I quit Boeing in '57, so since then things have changed a lot. I still like the attention of men, I like to have my car doors opened, I like being treated like a woman. It didn't mean I wanted to be treated like a man, just because I wanted to use my brain and be in the business world. But, it's gotten carried away. It's gotten carried away to the point where if you want to act like a man, you women open your own car doors, and this type of thing, which is not what we were after at all. We wanted to prove we had brain, and we could go out there and earn a living just as good as a man, and not say, "Oh, this is how high you can go as a woman." What did that have to do with our brains? You know, I can remember Boeing used your rejections as to what was wrong, and the engineers would read these rejections, and put a fix, what they called a fix, how you fix this problem. And I can remember telling these engineers if you fix it that way, you are going to make it worse, and I won't buy it. They'd say to me, "Well how would you fix it?" Now, I was not an engineer. And then one day they told me, well if you thing that you can do this, you take there calculus test and these test, blah, blah, blah, which they figured I couldn't do, then we'll give you this position. I took them and passed them. I didn't get that position. There are a lot of things on the airplane that are closed, and they put what they called goop on it, and you would put your stamp on it. Well if that door ever opened after you put your stamp on it, well we had our own stamp that they kept for seven years even after we left Boeing, and that was broken, and somebody else would have to inspect it and reseal it. Well now some of these panels that were closed, and not opened again, not only did we have to inspect t it and say it was okay, we had to go get the Air Force inspector down, and he would look it over, and then we'd put this sealant on it, then stamp it. Well after I go t them over and over again for the same jobs, they'd give me their stamp to stamp it. So some men did respect your ability, you proved it and that's fine. I don't care if you man or woman when you prove your ability. And as I worked there, I thought there should be no limitation on how high I could go just because I was a woman. What did sex have to do with my ability? And that's how I feel about that. I feel very strongly about that.

SK: Did your husband respect you and support you in working?

BE: He did. Didn't really want me to work. He did, and he didn't resent it until I made more money than he did, then he resented it. So, my husband was very easy going, maybe too

easy going in most respect, but he did resent me for making more money than he did, and that's too bad. We both had to make money. I had to work, so why would you resent that I made more money? That always kind of bothered me.