

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

# Kenneth Boyd – Life During The Depression

By Kenneth Boyd

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## Box 1 Folder 15

Oral Interview conducted by Greg Hoskins

Transcribed by Victor Ukorebi      January 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

Greg Hoskins: Now we are interviewing Brother Kenneth Boyd, and your birthday is?

Mr. Boyd: August the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

GH: I might start just a little bit before the depression. Of course, the main part of the depression started in when I was about 23 years old, but I have always more or less enjoyed a depression from my childhood. I come from a family of ten children, and my father was a good man, but he had a bad habit of drinking, and often times I remember when he would go to a store downtown to buy some groceries. We lived in a little country community, and if they could ever get him into a bar, he was done. He spent every penny he had, and when he come home, we had no food. And when we'd be broke, and we didn't have welfare in those days. We had to either get it or go without. So I remember many a time when I went to be wun after Dad would com home drunk, spent all the money. Mother used to make what we'd all "Poor Man's Soup.": It was made out of hot water, lard, and salt and pepper; and if we had some bread to go with it, we had it made! Of course, if you went to bed on that, your stomach would growl quite a bit, but I went through quite a bit of that. We were raised on a farm, a truck gardening farm, and from my early childhood I was taught to go work hard and get along on a very meager existence. After we left the farm and went into twon in Battle Creek, Michigan, where we lived for several years, my father finally died when I was 15, and tha, course, that put a burden on my mother, and we still had it pretty tough, and then, course, during the depression when I got a little older, it didn't bother me too much cause I was used to going without. And during the depression why things got pretty tough; course, I didn't have too much money to begin with so I didn't have too much to lose, but they had plenty tf materials, but we had no money to buy anything with; and I used to work in a machine shop as a machinist. My wages at that time was 35 cents an hour. You could see nowadays that that would be a quite an insult to a man to offer him that now. So then during the depression when Hoover was in, or course, they blamed Hoover. Hoover was quite an economist, and he tried to do the best he can to run the government and keep things straight but seem like there was so much gambling in the stock market and some of these brethren there made a big investment, and they finally over-purchased and they got scared, and they all sold our and "bam" the stock market went out, and these people lost everything they had, and course, at that time money was really hard to get. And at that time, I went down to, shortly after, I moved from Battle Creek, Michigan, to Miami, Florida, and things, after I got there I went down there to get away from a gang that I was running with, and I see I was going to get in trouble, so I went down there to get away from everybody, so I could start a good life, but things was pretty tough in Miami, and when I frist went down there, jobs was hard to get. You couldn't get work no where. Now you take a home like this home here which I would say this home is worth maybe worth \$25,000. Down there in Miami at that time, you could buy a house like this here as good as this for about \$2,500. So you can see the tremendous difference in the price. And I didn't have any place to go so I'd work at the filling station, and for a little while I made 25 cents a day. And out of that 25 cents for something to eat, I'd buy a bar of candy or something like that and that would last me the whole day. Course, I finally worked on up a little bit. I got to be a night clerk at a hotel for my board. I get a breakfast and a room that night, and then as I kept on working up things got a little better. They were pretty tough. In order to bring the price of fam goods up and so on like that, Roosevelt had the idea that if we would destroy or kill off the cattle or a large group of them, the cattle and sheep and hogs, that would create a shortage and creating a shortage that would raise the price of the goods. Well, that was who had to buy it. Now if they

would have taken all the animals and instead of killing them and wasting them and given them to the poor people so the poor people could eat, and also they could still have been so bad, but the people was very much put out with this program. It was just absolutely destructive, and then at the same time they had what they called the W.P.A. which my wife has already mentioned, and it was a small wage, but it was good. I mean it helped a lot of people out, and I know down in Florida, they had several of the W.P.A. work lines, and it did do a lot of good. Course, it did get misused like everything else does, but a lot of people got a lot of good out of it. So Roosevelt got a lot of good in his way and of the big things he thought too that, in those days you couldn't buy whiskey over the stands. You bring in to buy whiskey, you could take the money that we get from taxes and so on and that would help solve