

NARRATOR: Keeney, Jennette
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: August 2, 2004
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
PROJECT: Women in WWII/Veterans History Project

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Minutes No. Summary

TAPE ONE

00:00	1	Introduction.
01:15	1	Keeney began by describing her experiences growing up in Haigler, Nebraska. She was born in the farmhouse she would grow up in. Keeney described the house. Keeney attended schools in and around Haigler as she grew up. She started out in a one-room schoolhouse where each of the grades studied together. She described this experience as mostly positive and felt like they all received a well-rounded education. They also benefited from the close relationships they developed as a result of the small number of students studying together. The winters in Haigler presented many challenges to getting to school. Usually her father would drive them with the children of the neighbor two miles up the road during bad weather days. When the weather was particularly terrible, he would hook up horses to their wagon to get them to school.
05:15	3	Keeney described her family's lifestyle living on a farm. Her chores included feeding the chickens, gathering their eggs, caring for the dogs and cats, slopping the pigs, and occasionally helping to bring the cattle in from the fields. They attended the county fair each year and Keeney entered items in 4-H competitions. Her father's work as a farmer occupied him from morning until after dark every day. Their life was tied to the milk cows, which needed to be milked twice a day, every day without fail. Her father had been trained as an electrician before he married so her family had electric lights powered by battery before other homes in the area. In Keeney's opinion the positive side of growing up on a farm was the industriousness that farm kids develop and the close ties with the neighbors that shared the farming life. However, Keeney always said as a teenager that she would never marry a farmer because of the long days the life demanded.
11:00	6	When asked by the interviewer, Keeney could not recall any specific rural electrification project because it came after she left the farm.

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15:00	7	<p>Most people only had electricity generated by wind chargers. Living four and a half miles from Haigler meant the men and women looked forward to the weekly trip to town each Saturday. They traveled there to shop for groceries and then stayed in town visiting with neighbors. Keeney's mother did not work outside of the farm. She sewed most of the kids clothing, often using the colorful material from the sacks of flour or chicken mash. In 1937 or 1938 Keeney began high school at Haigler High School. She drove the Model A Ford that her parents purchased for her older sister to drive to her job as a schoolteacher in another town. When her sister married Keeney was given the car to drive to school.</p>
15:00	7	<p>Keeney discussed the effects the Great Depression era had on her family. They had no extra money for anything but putting in crops and taking care of the cattle. However, they had plenty of food because of living on a farm. Her parents were buying the farm before the stock market crash but afterward leased the farm for five years at a time. They mainly raised corn, wheat, and millet on their farm of 1440 acres. Keeney discussed some of the problems that came with farming. She did not recall any specific financial hardships of her neighbors but her father would often go into town to hire day laborers from the men that needed employment. They did not have much contact with hobos because of living so far from the cities where Keeney thought most of the hobos stayed.</p>
22:00	11	<p>When Keeney started at Haigler High School, she felt apprehensive about the change from a one room school to the bigger program. She planned to just make it through her freshman year and then possibly quit. Once there she did well, getting good grades and making new friends, so she decided to continue. The school had only three teachers who taught the various subjects. This limited their class choices. She graduated as valedictorian of her class of twelve students. She talked about the subjects she enjoyed and disliked, especially recalling the work it took for her to perfect the papers for her typing class. High school was primarily academic for Keeney but there were other elements she enjoyed. She played on the girls' basketball team and socialized at lunch. She dated some during the first two years of high school and had her first steady boyfriend, Stanley Zuege, when she was a junior.</p>
31:00	15	<p>Keeney talked about the impact the start of World War II had on her life. While her boyfriend did not have to go to war, many of her classmates ended up drafted into the military after graduation. She did not connect her geography studies to the developing war; much of her life was wrapped up in the area around her. They attended</p>

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		church at the Methodist church in Haigler almost every week. On Sunday afternoons they regularly went to movies in the neighboring towns of Wray, Colorado, and Benkelman, Nebraska. At the movies they saw newsreels that served as their primary source of news about the war. Occasionally her father would put their hired man in charge of the farm and take the family Denver, Colorado, or Lincoln, Nebraska. These trips were exciting and fun and were their only adventure outside their rural community. [At 31:45 side one ends and side two begins.]
36:45	17	Keeney described finding out about becoming the valedictorian. She did give an address, but she just read a speech that was ordered. She was fine getting up in front of the people because she had performed in piano recitals, church and school choirs, and band concerts. She also spoke in her 4-H presentations. These experiences benefited her as she gave this address. Keeney explained that she did not remember how she found out about Pearl Harbor, but when she did, she felt very sad. It did not disrupt her life, however. She still had a year of school to finish, and she did not know anyone directly impacted by the attack. For Keeney's family, Christmas 1941 was not impacted by the war. Like in other years their grandparents from Northwest Nebraska came. They opened packages in the morning with just the family and had dinner with neighbors later in the day.
41:45	20	As Keeney approached graduation, she knew she wanted to become a nurse. It was the only thing she ever considered as she grew up. In August of 1942, her father took her to Denver, and she enrolled in a nursing program at a hospital there. She did well until she took chemistry, which she could not pass. Because of this she dropped out of the program and went home around Thanksgiving of that year. She could not get back the \$150 fee her father paid to enroll her. She worked in a dime store for a while. Then she found a job at a hospital in Colorado until September of 1943. At that time she went to school at Nebraska Wesleyan University but did not know what she would be studying. She had to take the train because gas was rationed due to the war. Looking back Keeney says she would have stayed in the nursing program and retaken Chemistry if she could do it over.
45:45	21	Kenney's father was able to get her a job at the dime store in Benkelman, Colorado, because he knew the owner from his part-time work with the Soil Conservation Office there. While in Benkelman, she lived with another girl that worked at the store in a room they rented from a local family. While working at the hospital in Wray, Colorado, she lived in one of the rooms in the hospital. She

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		worked from 7:00am to 7:00 pm seven days a week for \$1 a day in addition to her room and board. The only break she got was when she went home for a week after catching the mumps.
50:00	21	Keeney talked about going to college at Nebraska Wesleyan University. The people she met were mostly from farm families, which aided her adjustment. She lived in a sorority house. Starting out she studied business but realized quickly that it was not for her so she switched to a primary education major. In addition to her general education classes she took courses in teaching methods, and children's literature. After two semesters she stayed for the summer to take more classes in primary education because she knew that her family could not afford to pay for school the next year. Teachers were scarce because so many male teachers had gone to war. Because of this problem, Keeney was able to obtain a temporary teaching certification and went back to Haigler to teach the 1st and 2nd grade class for the 1944-1945 school year. During this time she lived with her sister and brother-in-law in town.
56:00	26	Coming back to Haigler in 1944, Keeney already planned to join the service in a year. Her father had been in France during World War I, and she had learned about the army from him. He wore his uniform each 4 th of July and talked about his experiences frequently. Keeney chose to join the Women's Army Corps because of her dad's influence. Keeney did not have much to add to clarify anything she had discussed about her early life. She did mention again that she was active in music, 4-H, and church but did not elaborate. She also recalled that in her family when a girl turned five her grandparents bought them a special doll on the occasion.
59:45	28	END OF RECORDING

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Benkelman, Nebraska
Denver, Colorado
Haigler High School
Haigler, Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska
Nebraska Wesleyan College
Wray, Colorado
Zuege, Stanley