

**Leveta Scott
Narrator**

**Helen Thompson
Interviewer**

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Heritage Education Commission Oral History Project
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HT: This interview is with Leveta Scott, a homemaker living at 1020 Sixteenth Street North in Moorhead. Mrs. Scott has lived in this area since 1920. This interview was held at Moorhead State University's Recording Studio on January 28, 1986. The interviewer is Helen Thompson, representing the Heritage Education Commission.

Leveta, we shall begin. Ah, as a child, where did you live?

LS: Well, I was born in Illinois in 1913, but at the age of seven and in 1920 we came to Minnesota. And I've been in Minnesota most of that time, except for a few years when I got married, we lived in Chicago.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And then we returned to Minnesota.

HT: And when you came to this area then, did you live on a farm?

LS: Yes, we lived on a farm south of Moorhead near Sabin.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm. Could you give us a little information as to what your mother's life was like?

LS: Well, my mother worked very, very hard. Farming in those days, you know, was very difficult, had very little conveniences. So her life was one of very hard work. However, at one time or another, she had said to us, "I wanted to be a missionary." But because of education and other kinds of reasons, it wasn't possible. So she became a farmer's wife.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. And she...her yearning was then to be a missionary?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Which she wasn't able to do.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Could you describe a typical day in your home, as you remember, it as a child?

LS: Well, you mean a very small child, or as after I would go to school?

HT: Well, maybe both. Start with the small child.

LS: As a very small child, I can remember my grandmother coming to the house quite often, because my mother was quite ill. And so I spent a lot of time with her. And she would have me go along with her, and help her scrub the floors, and help her wash the dishes, and so on, and so forth. Then as an older child, after we moved to Minnesota, I can remember us getting up around three, four in the morning and going out to the milk...to the barn to milk the cows in the light of the moon, and carrying our ten-gallon milk can along with us.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: My father had a dairy where he delivered milk by the bottles into Moorhead from house to house. And it was our job to go out and help him milk these cows, and separate the milk, and bottle the milk. And feed the cattle, and the horses, and the pigs, and the sheep, and the cows, and the chickens, which we had all of those. Then we would get ready and go to school.

Then we would come home and help wash these milk bottles, and go about our day with these same chores that we did in the morning. Plus, quite often, we had to wash lamp chimneys and lantern chimneys, and get the kerosene in so that we could have lights, and chopped wood, and carried that in, and put it into the wood box by the stove, so that we could keep the stove going. And then we took our turns at pumping water for the stock. Because we didn't have...hmmm...any conveniences to do it with, except our hands, so we pumped water. And part of the time the windmill did the job.

HT: My goodness. Did you have brothers and sisters?

LS: I had two brothers, both younger than I.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. So they were doing the same types of things that you were?

LS: They helped. They helped, too. My brother next to me was sick part of the time, but my youngest brother helped, too. Although he did more helping in the house and I did more helping outside.

HT: Mmmm. A reversal of roles. [Chuckles]

LS: [Chuckles]

HT: What holidays were especially important to you?

LS: Well, we always thought that Christmas was special, Easter was special, and Fourth of July. Those were the three that kind of stand out in my mind as a child.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. How about birthdays?

LS: We always celebrated birthdays, but not...we didn't invite a lot of people in, like a lot of people do now, we just had a birthday cake and had our family birthday there. That was mainly our birthdays.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Can you remember at all how you celebrated Christmas, for instance?

LS: Well, it was quite an exciting time. We didn't put the Christmas tree up long ahead like people do now. It would be the night before Christmas when Dad would come in with a Christmas tree and set it up, and then that was a very delightful evening. And then we didn't get our gifts until Christmas morning, because everybody was busy, or my folks were busy rather, getting the Christmas tree, and the presents, and everything lined up while we went to sleep.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: So it was exciting Christmas morning.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. And early church then, too?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. And Christmas dinner. Well, we didn't always go to church then...out...and out in the country because we had mud roads and snowbanks to go through with horses.

HT: Mmmm.

LS: So sometimes we didn't always make it into Moorhead to church. A lot of the things that happened out there were done with the families together in the neighborhood. There was one lady who decided she'd teach Sunday School, and so all of the neighbors went to her house. And then sometimes a minister would come out to one of the family's homes, and we would get in our sleds and go to their house and listen to the minister.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It was quite a few years before all of our neighborhood made regular trips into town to a church.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm, was there anything special in the way that you observed Easter, for instance?

LS: A minister used to come out to the schoolhouse quite often, I remember. And then as we got older, we went into a church.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. How about the Fourth of July?

LS: That was quite a celebration. We had...Dad would always get firecrackers from someplace and so we could, you know, shoot firecrackers. And that was a delightful event.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: There weren't many activities that we could do, so you know, we...we made our own fun most of the time, you know. And sleds, and the pony, and the wagons, and so on that were kind of fixed up from our own home, not that was gotten from anyplace. So, you know, when it was a special day, it was *really* a special day because it was very different from any of the other days.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmm. Thinking of or recalling an average day, how did your mother spend her time as a homemaker?

LS: She was very busy washing clothes, and baking bread, and doing all the things that it took to make it so we could go to school and...and live.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It was...no conveniences whatsoever, you know. So...

HT: Yeah.

LS: The boiler, the old copper boiler had to be put on the stove the night before. And of course you were very busy feeding the stove with the wood or the coal that was behind the stove in the wood box, and when it wasn't there you went out and got it. And so it took all day, really, to make all...and to cook. Cooking was not easy either.

HT: No.

LS: So...hmmm...and washing dishes was not easy. You were very busy emptying water and carrying it in, both.

HT: [Chuckles] Yeah. That's...that's right.

LS: No plumbing. Outdoor toilets. You know, you were busy with all those kinds of things.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Now could you compare this to your day as a young homemaker?

LS: But...when I got married, you mean?

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Well, my...when I got married, it was quite simple, because I went from Minnesota to Chicago for about four years.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I know we just had a small apartment. I had been teaching, and so then I quit teaching in Minnesota and went to Chicago. And a small apartment. So I was sort of bored for a while. There wasn't too much to keep me busy. I had electricity, I had plumbing, I had...I could do my housework in an hour or so and be done.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: So I spent some time traveling around Chicago, trying to see what it was all made up of, and took care of some things that way.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm. Could you share what one day in your life was like when the children were small?

LS: Well, we came...when...hmmm...I just have one daughter.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And we moved back to the farm then. But we moved onto a farm that was quite badly run down. And as at that time REA [Rural Electric Association] had not come through, so we were back to my childhood days of lights, and lamps, and lanterns, and pumps, and going to the outdoor toilet again. And...but it was in the process of being run through, we just hadn't made connections yet. But of course when it did come, you had to rewire everything, and...and do things.

HT: Right.

LS: So it took you a while to even get ready for that. So my first typical days back there were very much the same as my childhood. All back to scrubbing on the scrub board for washing clothes, and pumping water...

HT: [Chuckles]

LS: And lighting the lamps and...

HT: [Chuckles] How did you react to this?

LS: Wondered why I ever moved back! [Laughs]

HT: [Laughs] I'm sure you did. Yes. And then when your child, when your daughter left then, how was it different?

LS: Well, I was...it was...of course, all that time, I was back into teaching again. When the war came on and we moved back to Minnesota, hmmm, I went back into teaching. They were calling for teachers then to...you know, to go.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: So I went back into teaching. And so I was teaching all this time at Borup, where moved back to the farm.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And my daughter grew up there, going to school there, and she had to help with the various kinds of activities, because we were still very busy farming, too. We had six, seven men to cook for and...all the other activities that go along with the farm. So she had to take her turn at doing all these kinds of things.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm, I forgot to ask you, or maybe it wasn't on here, where did you get your education, Leveta?

LS: At Moorhead State.

HT: I thought so. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Yeah. Ah, did you have time for volunteer activities?

LS: When I was in Chicago. I did a lot of it when I first went down there.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I got in with a church, and I did social work with them, and went around to various shut-ins that we would go to that the church had set up for...it was a large church, many thousands of people, and they had lots of activities going. And I took part in those activities.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. After...when you were teaching and had all the responsibilities on the farm, did you have time for volunteerism?

LS: No. No, I had all that I could do to take care of that and keep up going to church. [Chuckles]

HT: Yes, I'm sure you did. So you didn't belong to any particular clubs or anything?

LS: Oh, yes. I belonged to the Homemaker's Club out there, and then they had a group called...forgot what the name of it was. But they did various things for people in the community who needed help and that sort of thing.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It was...it wasn't called a service club, it was a women's organization of some kind. And then I belonged to my school activities that were MEA [Minnesota Education Association] and all those activities that were going on. Reading groups, and went to meetings, and so on, and so forth.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I took part in all those things.

HT: Yeah, that would keep you very busy. Ah, did you have any hobbies?

LS: Yes, I had gardening...all kinds of gardening. [Sighs] And...knitting, sewing, reading. I guess that was most of it.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. You were busy.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Hmmm, well, the next question...you obviously did work outside the home.

LS: All my life.

HT: [Chuckles] As...yes. As a teacher, and probably did some help working on the farm, too.

LS: Oh, yes. I worked on the farm from the...I drove the...a car delivering milk in town in Moorhead with my father at nine years old.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And at seventh and eighth grade I did it by myself in the summertime.

HT: Oh, my goodness.

LS: And I worked with all the...worked with horses first, drove seven, eight...six, seven, eight horses on a gang plow, however many plows they put behind it, and cultivated with them, four horses. Shocked, and then the binder, and then...and we got tractors; I drove tractors, and trucks, and combines, and swathers.

HT: Not much you can't do.

LS: All my life.

HT: [Chuckles] Not much you can't do.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Okay. Did you have help in the home such as an extended family?

LS: Yes, I took care of...well, I didn't have help when...oh, my mother used to come and help me during the school year sometimes. When she'd think I was so busy I couldn't get things going, she'd have my dad bring her out in the car.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And she'd kind of wash up my dishes and do a few things. It was kind of nice to come home and have it all done!

HT: Yeah, I would say! [Chuckles]

LS: But otherwise when I...[sighs] I took care of my parents when they...when my dad went blind, and then my mother became ill. But I also took care of my husband's parents, too, during those times. And I had...though I had them with me part of the time.

HT: Was this out at the farm then?

LS: Part of...Mmmm-hmmm. Uh huh, and part of the time and here when I went to teaching in Moorhead, then I came in and stayed with my folks in town and taught.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Went back and forth...

HT: Oh, boy. [Sighs] [Chuckles]

LS: Divided my time and made it work. When...when my dad got real bad, then I found a neighbor lady close that would come in days while I was in school, and then sit with him until I would come home.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Now did your daughter have specific responsibilities at home?

LS: Yes, I made a list.

HT: [Chuckles]

LS: I also kept my nieces and nephews while they went to college, when I was at...also taking care of...and I made a list out of all the things that needed to be done. And I said, "Each of you write your name beside, and be sure you do it, because I will not have time to check you." And they all did.

HT: [Isn't] that great.

LS: And so that's...she did it, too. Sometimes I would have three at the house at the same time.

HT: You had a big house, I take it.

LS: Yes. Mmmm-hmmm. My folks' house.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And they all went through college. Some of them went to NDSU [North Dakota State University], some of them went to MS [Moorhead State], some of them went to...one of them went to beauty school. But they all took their turns helping me, and they all stayed there.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Oh, that's great. So you didn't actually have any hired help for housework or anything then?

LS: Mmmm-mmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Except the lady who came.

LS: Came to sit with my father.

HT: Sit with your father. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And she was an elderly lady, so she just sat with him.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm, what did you do for fun or entertainment?
[Chuckles]

LS: For fun or entertainment...well, when we were a child, we made our own. Many were the hours that we pumped water and poured it down the snow hill to make an icy slide.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And then we skated in the ditches around, because they had deep ditches out there. And it usually rained in the fall. So we got our shovels out and we scooped the snow off the ditch. We maybe had...maybe were so all in scooping shovel...ah...shoveling snow that we didn't have time to skate much, but we...

HT: [Chuckles]

LS: ...we went through the effort anyway, and had fun.

HT: [Laughing] Yeah. Oh...

LS: We had a pony. And of course my dad had made a...what he called a stone boat, and it was a big box with runners under it, so we could sit down inside and then we could make the pony go.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: and he'd have...he would go.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And we'd have fun that way. Yeah.

HT: During your married life then, what were the entertaining things that you were able to do?

LS: Well, I think by that time we had a radio, so of course we listened to the radio.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And we had...oh, we'd go to the shows once in a while. They weren't so expensive at that time.

HT: No, they weren't.

LS: And we could go to a show, we could go to movies. And we went to our church. Our church had lots of activities going on. That was very entertaining. And we had...hmmm...oh, we'd have friends come over, or we'd go to the friend's house, play cards.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Games. Chat. Eat.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. [Chuckles]

LS: Make our own fun.

HT: Good. How were your Sundays different from other days, if they were?

LS: Well, on the farm, they were almost the same, except you didn't go out in the field to go to work because you still had chores to do morning and night regardless of whether it was Sunday or what day it was.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But you usually had a special dinner that day. That was kind of different. Didn't rush to eat it or anything else, we just kind of fiddled around, you know.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And that was in childhood. As we grew older, we didn't always eat at home, we ate someplace else part of the time. [Chuckles]

HT: Good! [Chuckles] That's the way to do it. [Laughs] Oh... Tell me, do the meal patterns of your early days as a homemaker differ very much from the meals that you eat now?

LS: Well, I suppose they are...what we eat is somewhat similar, but the process of getting it is certainly different.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It was very difficult work, you know, getting meals when we were younger without all the conveniences, but the electricity brought in many, many kinds of convenient ways to do things. The supermarkets brought in packages already prepared and that sort of thing, so that was easier.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But at the same time, when we were younger we did all our own canning, and drying, and butchering, and so on, and so forth...baking bread. There wasn't too many things you went to town to get.

HT: That's right.

LS: We made our own butter, too, so...

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Just the staple things like flour.

LS: Flour is about...flour and...

HT: Sugar.

LS: ...sugar, those kinds of things we might have to, but we had our own eggs, and butter, and meat, and bread, and...food and...

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. You were very self-sufficient then.

LS: Yeah.

HT: Yeah.

LS: Now I go buy butter, I go buy flour, and sugar, and bread. I don't bake all the time, or any of those kinds of things. So it's...it's different, yes.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Do you recall when you were out at...on the farm, either as a child or when you were a homemaker yourself, traveling peddlers that came around like the Raleigh Man, and the [J.R.] Watkins man, and so on?

LS: Oh, yes. Yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Yes, hmmm, they came, both of them. And we used to buy fly spray from them, so we could spray the flies in the barn so they could...[chuckles] you could get them milked.

HT: [Laughing] Right.

LS: Even sprayed flies in the house.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: With those things. And yes then there were even peddlers that came with cloth. I remember from Fergus Falls and...let's see...New York Mills, was it? They came. There was a peddler that came through with woolen goods.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm, some of it was ready-made, too, wasn't it? Like jackets?

LS: Well, no, we didn't ever...I didn't ever see that.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: We had yard goods.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Because my mother sewed all the time.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I don't ever remember having anything boughten until I...ah...went teaching on my own. She made all my clothes.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Either from leftover, or from new. Mostly leftovers, but...or remodeled old clothes that other people had handed to us.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah. Do you recall any prices of any food from way back?

LS: Well, let's see. We delivered milk for six cents a quart in town when we were delivering milk. And before I quit working on it, I believe it got up to ten cents a quart that they paid for it. Mmmm...I can't remember...butter, I don't remember what we sold it for. We...we churned butter and sold it in these crocks.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Five-pound crocks. But I don't remember what we got for it.

HT: Yeah, well, a far cry from what we pay for things now.

LS: Oh my, yes. Yeah. Yeah.

HT: And you more or less answered the next. You did produce most of the food that you...

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Yeah.

HT: Do you remember, how did you keep this food safe before refrigeration?

LS: Well, we had a little...in the summertime, we had a bucket in the well.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And you dropped the butter and...down in there to keep it and so on.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But we also were, you know, doing this selling of milk by the quart, and so the state had regulations that you had to have certain specifications for this, you know.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: So we had big cement tanks and what we called a well house. And we had...by that, we either pumped this water through there, but we also had gotten a gas engine by this time. And the windmill, of course.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And so when the windmill didn't work, and the gas engine didn't work, we pumped it. But when either of those worked, then you had continuous cold water circulating through this tank.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And so then food could be put in containers and dropped in this cold water, which from the [unclear] on the well which is two, three hundred feet deep, it was just like ice.

HT: Very cold, yes.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Then later we had what we called icebox. My father built a tremendous, big icebox. And went into town and got cakes of ice and brought them out every other day, and then it was kept on ice.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And as a child, you know, we'd...and we didn't have electricity until REA came through, so...

HT: Yeah, right. Do you remember your first refrigerator?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: How nice it was?

LS: Yes. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: And your first electric stove?

LS: Yeah, it was great.

HT: Did you use kerosene or gas stoves before the electricity?

LS: Yeah, we...my mother had gotten a gas stove that was run by this...where you put it in a tank outside the house.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And she had that before we had running water, and before we had plumbing or any of that, because that had come in, too...I don't remember what dates it came through, but you could fill the tank and keep it for two, three months, as I remember.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And then you'd have to refill the tank again.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm. I guess...

LS: We got what we called a hard coal furnace, which was a great big square type of furnace with isinglass in it, and you could use hard coal in it, and it would stay burning all *night*.

HT: So you didn't have to get up...

LS: Didn't have to get up and...

HT: With frozen toes in the morning.

LS: That was *really* something when we got that.

HT: Yeah. I think we've probably answered some of these other questions. Ah...the time required for food preparation has obviously changed. And...hmmm...

LS: Oh, yes.

HT: I think you more or less answered that, don't you?

LS: I still can, we still have a garden. My mother had a garden, we had a garden, I had a garden, and you know, we're still gardening, and canning, and drying...

HT: And freezing?

LS: And freezing.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: So we still have all of our own vegetables, but we don't always bake, and those kinds of things, we don't have all that...

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I think one thing that came in a lot more after we were older than when we were children was fruit. The only thing I can remember about as fruit, even when my dad would go to town to get it, would be maybe apples, and oranges, and bananas.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: All these other kinds of fruit that were on the market, now that you can get any time of the year, was not on the market then.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: You really hunted in the summertime to buy a bushel of pears, and a bushel of peaches, and bunch of those things like that.

HT: Oh, you did? Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Then you could can it up.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But to get it all winter long, it wasn't in the stores. I don't think it came in until the supermarkets came in.

HT: No, until methods of transportation improved.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: The refrigerated cars and so on. You mentioned how your source of water, of course, had changed. Hmmm...and after you were married, were Sunday dinners still a little different from other days?

LS: Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Made it a little bit more special?

LS: They were more special. Mmmm-hmmm. We always had dinner with some of our relatives always, you know.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Either at their house or at ours.

HT: Yeah. Then going to clothing. Hmmm, when you were married then, and had your daughter at home with you, did you purchase most of your clothes then?

LS: No. No, my mother was still sewing, and she was making clothes for both of us. [Chuckles]

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. That's great. Hmmm, did you ever buy anything out of a catalog?

LS: Oh, yes. Mmmm-hmmm. Not too many clothes except...hmmm...but blankets, and sheets, and pillowcases.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And hmmm...Mmmm...oh, you might have...we might have bought underwear and that kind of thing. I don't...otherwise I don't remember buying an awful lot out of a catalog.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Still were doing made-overs, and hand-me-downs, and that kind of thing, yeah.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: You didn't do any spinning?

LS: Many people did, I think, though.

HT: Oh, yes.

LS: Hmmm...but just that we were fortunate to have Mother, who liked to sew.

HT: And actually close enough to a larger town where you could buy things.

LS: Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm. What...how about the fibers that were used in clothing?

LS: They were mostly cotton, wool, and linen.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: That's the only three I can remember.

HT: Uh huh. You remember using rayon for anything?

LS: No, I can't remember it until we got older.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm. During...

LS: I can remember buying linen at ten cents a yard.

HT: Just think. Yeah...unheard of. [Chuckles]

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Hmmm, do you remember when nylon first came in?

LS: Oh, when I was older.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Not as a child, that I...

HT: No. I don't think...

LS: That I remember those...those kinds of things coming in. Well, I was quite a bit older though. I don't remember them too much for when I first went teaching in 1933, along in there.

HT: No, no, no. I think it was probably around 1940.

LS: Yes, somewheres in there.

HT: 1941, something like that.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: And the difference it did make in taking care of our clothes and so on.

LS: Much easier ironing. [Chuckles]

HT: Oh, boy. You bet! [Chuckles]

LS: That ironing was something else, too, you know.

HT: Yes, it was. What changes have you seen in the kinds of clothing that are acceptable for church, for instance?

LS: Well, very casual. When I was a child, we really had to dress up in our very best when we went to church. But now people come in with jeans, and slacks, and very casual wear.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. No hats. [Unclear] coming back, the hats.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: How about for school?

LS: It's very casual for school, too.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. And do you remember, when you went shopping, you had to be all dressed up?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I can remember when I was even going to college, and my father would have to come in and pick me up at school, because I went back to help with the work out there always. He would never come in unless he'd changed into what he had...hmmm...medium-dressed clothes. He always had a pair of trousers, and shirt that was kind of in the middle, not...not necktie, and that sort of thing.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But he would go in there, and he'd change into this outfit, then he'd come to town and pick me up. And then we'd go home, and then he'd back into his work clothes, his overalls again.

HT: Yes. Isn't that something?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Yeah. Well, hmmm...has the size...can you remember the differences in the size of our wardrobes? Have they changed?

LS: Oh, yes. Hmmm, we have many clothes now, really.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And when we were younger...I can remember Mother getting me ready for school, and making these dresses and so on. And she'd line them up, and hang them on the wall, and she'd say, "Now these are your dresses for school, and they must last you until such and such a time." And maybe I would have, oh, three dresses or four dresses that she had made.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And they were specifically school, and I had to get out of them immediately when I came home.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And I had to take care of them, I had to be careful. Sometimes we had to wear aprons over the top, so that we wouldn't get them so soiled. You could wear them a couple of days in a row that way, and they would last a little longer.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah. Hmmm, something that occurred to me. Do you remember the...oh, the comfort, the warmth of our homes in the wintertime? Has there been a change?

LS: Yes, because this heating was not furnaces in our home, it was just a little old potbellied stove that sat in the middle of the living room floor for one stove, and the other was the kitchen range.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And so if you wanted to get warm, you know, you huddled up around this stove in the living room after you were done with supper, or dinner, or whatever. And when you went to bed you just really covered up real nice and warm. It was cold in the bedroom.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: See, the floor was cold, and the walls were cold, and everything was cold.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm, you went to a country school then, I'm assuming?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Well, we went...yeah. It was consolidated school.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: That was very interesting, because nobody had electricity, or plumbing, or anything around, but for the school that they built, it had a furnace, and it had plumbing.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: They had a kind of a heater, a kind of a deal set up, built into their school that was run by batteries, and the school board kept it going. And so when we went to school we were always warm. It was a steam...steam-heated boiler in that school.

HT: Was that [unclear]?

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Yeah. That's what I thought.

LS: Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Very nice.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Oh...

LS: The people around didn't have it in their homes.

HT: No. No, I...I kind of lived in that area, too, so...

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Hmmm. Well, we know that you had to do a lot of laundry and that sort of thing. And hmmm...dry cleaning?

LS: That... the dry cleaning, yeah, we...well, our laundry was this copper boiler that I told you about.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And the scrub board.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And a stopper. And then we finally got a washing machine that you turned by hand. Then we finally got one that had a motor on the bottom, you know.

HT: Gas motor. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Little by little, we grew.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It got better and better as time went on.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But the cleaning...we had...I remember we had what we called...hmmm...well, we used gasoline. We'd go out and get gasoline out of the barrel, and my mother would take it outside and she'd swish these clothes, wool clothes and so on, up and down in this gas. And...then they'd have to get aired out afterwards.

HT: Take a long time to get the smell out of them?

LS: Yes. Yeah.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And then we had to...hmmm...you know, press them, and so on, and so forth, after that.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Then...then later they had something they called Energine, and that wasn't quite so smelly.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But you still had to dip it and do your own.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Seldom did we ever take it to a cleaner...until I was *quite* a bit older, before we ever took clothes to the cleaner.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. And then wintertime drying of clothes when you were at the farm, either as a child or otherwise, when you didn't have...

LS: Well, we had clotheslines outside, and when we could stand it, we'd hang them out on the line and let them freeze stiff. And then we'd bring them in and hang them on clotheslines that we had strung through the house that we would put up and take down as the occasion arose.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And then we'd finish drying them in there. And they really smelled good, but it was a lot of work.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: But you know, I've often said, I don't think we had as many colds....

[Recording interruption]

[Hissing static for several seconds]

LS: ...help with this and I always took the other. I never took the...My brother always says, my youngest brother, that he got hooked with helping Mother with the cooking, because *I* didn't want to do it! [Laughs]

HT: [Laughs] Oh, boy. Then when you had family of your own, and you had hired help and so on, then that was a big job.

LS: Ah...I really taught my daughter then how to cook, so that she could make that choice. And quite often now she would take the choice of cooking the breakfast, or the supper, or something, and I would go to something else.

HT: Good. [Chuckles] You know how to do it.

LS: [Chuckles]

HT: [Chuckles] Ah, has your attitude toward housecleaning changed at all?

LS: No, not too much. I've...I didn't mind the cleaning too much.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: That was...it was, as I said, the cooking that I objected to. Of course, it's so much easier to do it now than it was then, you know.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Hmmm. You had to scrub floors nearly every day and so on, when you were...when you had all these people running in and out.

HT: Right.

LS: And...hmmm...so it was much more difficult to keep the house in order. And you didn't have nice floors. We just had old wood floors that were splintery and so on. It was quite a while before we got a linoleum on the kitchen floor.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And that was really a treat!

HT: And that floor required a lot of scrubbing, didn't it?

LS: Oh, yes. Yes.

HT: Yeah. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: We had to scrub it...we scrubbed it every day.

HT: Yeah.

LS: We always scrubbed that, the wood floor, every day.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Because there was no other way to take care of it, really. And then we did have...they did have what they called carpets in the living room. But you...there was no vacuum cleaner to take care of them. You had to sweep them with a broom.

HT: I know it.

LS: And then you raised dust, and so then you'd wet newspaper or catalog papers and throw it around on the floor, and then sweep that so it would collect the dust. And it wasn't easy to keep house.

HT: No, no. And I suppose you remember the annual spring housecleaning and fall housecleaning.

LS: [Sighs] Everything went outdoors.

HT: Yeah.

LS: Yeah, twice a year.

HT: Yep.

LS: Wallpaper and paint.

HT: You do that anymore?

LS: No, I don't! [Chuckles]

HT: Not too many people do. Hmmm, were there any chores as far as housekeeping is concerned that you considered to be weekly chores?

LS: Well, always clothes washing.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And always a special cleaning in the bedrooms.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Kitchen got it every day.

HT: Changing the bedding and...

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And the living room always got a special one on Saturday, too. It got a sweep up every day a little bit, but it always got a little bit...the dining room, too, we had a dining room.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And that was a wood floor though. But after we got the linoleums in, that helped.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Then you had to wax them.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Hmmm.

LS: I think the bedroom floors were painted. We used to paint them, so they swept...they kind of cleaned up easier.

HT: Yeah. Yeah.

LS: But the kitchen wasn't, because it didn't stay on the kitchen floor—too much traffic there.

HT: What...well, what has changed your housekeeping responsibilities?

LS: Well, I suppose in the amount of people you cook for. See, as a child, when we had all of these...when we had the milk route, and we had the sugar beets, and we had potatoes, and we had beef cattle, and we had hogs, and sheep, and so on, we had many men, some...up to fourteen of them. And we cooked, and washed, and cleaned for them, and fixed beds someplace. Part of them slept in the barn, part of them slept some...wherever you could find a place to put them.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Mother made what they called bed...now you call them bedrolls, but they were...they were kind of a tick that was made out of mattress covering or something that was really heavy cloth. And the men would go the barn and fill it with straw.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And then they would sleep on those until it was packed down too tight. And then they'd go dump it out, and she'd wash their ticks, and they'd go have a fresh batch of straw again. That was their beds.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And that took time to do those, and to cook for all these men, and to wash for them, and iron for them, and feed them, and so on, and have them running in and out of your house. So it was a real...very difficult, much more difficult than what it is now.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: We don't have all that kind of help. We have big machinery where you run it yourself. You can farm acres with...one big machine now, you know. [Chuckles]

HT: Yeah, that's right. Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: So you don't have to have all those people to cook for. You don't have the...we still have beets and all those things, but we don't cook for them.

HT: No, and it...yeah, you just don't need all the men working for you anymore.

LS: No.

HT: Ah, who kept the money records?

LS: Well, when we were married, Bob and I did it together. My dad and mother did it together, as I remember, when we were children.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. That's great. How were money management decisions made relative to homemaking?

LS: You mean...hmmm...?

HT: When you were...?

LS: Where the money was to go?

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Well, I guess we always said it had to go outside first, because that's what made it for everything else. So...[Chuckles]

HT: Right. [Chuckling] Sounds typical.

LS: [Chuckles] Then you took over...took, you know, you made do what was...well, if there was some extra left, you got some extra things for the house.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Did your daughter have an allowance?

LS: Yeah, for a little while. And then when she started babysitting, I said, "Now you're getting your own, so we won't do any more allowance."

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Okay. What were some of the problems that you remember during the Depression of the 1930s?

LS: Well, we were just very, very poor. There was just so little to do with.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Guess we were thankful that we had cows, and chickens, and all these things, so we had something to eat.

HT: Yes.

LS: A lot of people had trouble.

HT: Yeah, that's right.

LS: But hmmm...crops weren't good. So it's a good thing the cows gave milk. [Chuckles]

HT: Yeah. Yeah. And you raised...

LS: Chickens.

HT: ...I'm sure, most of the feed for your cows then, too, whatever amount...

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah. Except you had...when we had to herd them along the ditches, and so on, and so forth, you know, they would...the dry years, there wasn't much hay either.

HT: Yeah.

LS: So it was slim going that way, too.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Remember the terribly dry and horrible dust storms?

LS: Yeah, that was it. You know, it drew so much...

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And it was harder cleaning your house. It blew the dirt right in the house. You swept dirt out of your house every day.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. What were some of the problems encountered during World War II as far as, for instance, food rationing?

LS: That was kind of a problem, I think, for...I wonder if it wasn't more of a problem for people who had to travel and so on, because of the gas rationing?

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: They did leave the farmers, you know, a certain amount so they could do their crops.

HT: Right.

LS: Which was almost necessary and a must. But, hmmm...you know, we didn't go on as many trips and that kind of thing. You just stayed home. You didn't go up to the lake so often. We used to go to the lakes every once in a while, Dad would take us down there. But you just didn't do those things.

HT: Mmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. And did it affect the amount of clothing that you had?

LS: Not too bad for us, since it was made, but it did...it did affect.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: You didn't buy...you didn't buy as many things, of course.

HT: No.

LS: It wasn't fun. It was bad years, but...

HT: Were you ever affected by things like the flood?

LS: Oh, yes.

HT: Were you?

LS: Oh, yes. Lots of times.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Lots of times. Both...

HT: You were near the river?

LS: Both at Borup and...ah, no, we weren't near the river at Borup, but the flood came in from the hills.

HT: Oh, yeah.

LS: And the ditches weren't...the ditches at that time were not many, and not very deep, and not... as the years went by, they got more ditches. They held up...they also put things out east to hold it back, so it couldn't come through so fast.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And the land out south by Sabin got flooded lots of times.

HT: Oh, yes. And that would probably affect the amount of a crop.

LS: Wash out part of your crop, yeah.

HT: If it was already in, or slow you up so you couldn't get a crop in, probably.

LS: Yeah, that's right.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Or wash it out. Yeah.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It did. There was...

HT: Well, we probably have touched on some these things, too, but what was the impact of electrical appliances on your role as a homemaker?

LS: Oh, I think probably that was one of the best things that ever happened.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Because it affected everything, really, you know.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: You could run the...you could put in plumbing, and put in the pump, and you could put in the cesspool, and pump out the cesspool...

HT: [Unclear] water.

LS: And you could...you could run your water through, and have water, and you could have appliances, you could have a washing machine now that would be run by electricity.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. And better...

LS: And electric irons and oh, it...it just really...was quite a deal.

HT: Oh, marvelous...that we got it out in the country.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Made big, big change.

LS: It was...it certainly did.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: It just in...made life a *lot*, lot easier.

HT: Yeah. [Unclear] heating systems, too, that...

LS: Furnaces.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm.

HT: Automatic, so that they'd come on with a thermostat.

LS: That's right.

HT: What have been some of your greatest satisfactions as a homemaker?

LS: Oh, I suppose since we started with actually nothing, it's...it's been kind of interesting to look back through the years and see the gradual improvements that have stepped up the ease of living.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: We really have an easy living now, I think.

HT: Oh, yes.

LS: It...you know, it's...

HT: [Chuckles]

LS: In comparison to back in 1920, and 1930, and even 1940...

HT: Yes.

LS: ...it's...hmmm...a lot, lot easier.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. What were some of your frustrations as a homemaker, if there were any?

LS: Oh, I don't know. You know, I guess I was so busy working, that I...I really don't remember an awful lot, except that once in a while I can remember walking with my father out to the cow barn. And he's holding one side of the can, and I'm holding the other, and we're carrying this can of milk. And I say, "Well, if I just get over this problem, now I'll be alright." And he would say, "No, sister, you're only getting ready for the next one. So don't start thinking that way."

HT: [Chuckles]

LS: [Chuckles]

HT: That's great. [Chuckles]

LS: So, you know, that...he was never one to...hmmm...to let problems be problems. He would say, "You know, this is just a learning lesson now. You just find out what's the matter with it, and get over that hump, and then be ready for the next one, which will be a little higher. And you will be a little bit better ready to take care of it, and that's the way life will be for you."

HT: What a great philosophy. How true.

LS: And, hmmm, he would say, "You know, any man can fall down, but it's only a fool what'll stay there." And it's...so all through the 1930s...I can never remember him being one of the people...and I heard many of them, who would, you know...you know, fall apart, or...or, hmmm, well, one fellow hung himself in the barn, and do all those kinds of things which would...I can never remember that. He would say, "Well, now we've just got to find another way to take care of this problem." And then that's what we'd start out to do.

HT: Oh, he was more like that.

LS: And ah...

HT: Obviously, you have no objections to women working outside the home.

LS: No. None.

HT: If you can handle it.

LS: I'm not sure that everyone can handle it.

HT: No.

LS: But I have no objections to them doing it. I guess I had to do it all my life, so...

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm, what was your impression of such women as Eleanor Roosevelt, Amelia Earhart, Barbara Walters, Jane Fonda, and so on?

LS: Well, I kind of admired Eleanor Roosevelt. I think she had kind of a tough life.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And I think that she took care of it.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: I don't...I don't have anything against Amelia Earhart either. I think at the time people were kind of up...about it, but I wasn't. I thought, well, more power to you. You've got something that's working for you.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: The other two, hmmm, don't strike me as too...you know...I guess I have no...no...I really don't have anything one way or another against them.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. No great impact on...on anything?

LS: No.

HT: No. Hmmm, in what ways do you think radio, TV, movies, and so on have impacted our role as homemakers?

LS: I think it improved it a lot. There were a lot of things in it we need to sort out, but then I think that's part of our life anyway, is to be able to sort.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: And so when it came, it's just another...it brought a lot of good things with it. It brought a way of communication that we had never had before, which made the world a smaller place in which to live, and I think that's good.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: There were things on it that...or now there are things on it, anyway, that need taking care of, but I think you have to teach your own families, that that's part of your life and role, is to know how to sort.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Hmmm. Will there be any changes that you would have liked to see in your life as a homemaker?

LS: Not really. I think it was a real teaching deal all the way through.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm.

LS: Without...without it, I would have never...I would have never seen all the things that have happened.

HT: No. Right. You'd never be the kind of person you are without it. [Chuckles]

LS: No. No, that...

HT: Yeah.

LS: You know, you can read about it, and you can hear about it, but when you wear the moccasins, it's a little different story.

HT: Yeah. Right. Very good. Hmm. What would you wish for your granddaughters, if you...? You have a granddaughter.

LS: Mmmm-hmmm. Well...

HT: As they become homemakers.

LS: I would wish that she could have had some of the same experiences that I had. I think she...that it would have made...I think it makes them grow. But that...you can't go back, so you have to go forward, and you can only hope that...and wish that the new experiences will be growing kinds of things, the same as what you had, only in a different era.

HT: Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah.

LS: You hope they'll have the same kinds of outlooks to say that...I need to sort, and I must go forward and make the correct decisions. That's the hope.

HT: Yeah. Would you have anything else to add, Leveta, that weren't included in some of these questions?

LS: Not really. I think from 1920 'til now there's an awful lot of history.

HT: Many changes.

LS: The airplane came in. [Chuckles]

HT: [Chuckles] Right.

LS: The electricity came in.

HT: And space shuttles, and...

LS: Yes, it's just been a...a real historical growth, really.

HT: So many changes in these few years.

LS: There really has, when you look back.

HT: Yeah.

LS: And I always think, you know, when we first started teaching, they said, "Now...ten years, textbooks will be good for ten years. You must not spend any more money on that." And now when I think about textbooks, they're hardly...they're hardly right 'til you get them written for the next year! [Chuckles]

HT: Right. That's true. That's true. There are so many things happening all over.

LS: Oh, yes. It's such a fast change.

HT: Yeah. Well, I thank you very much, Leveta.

LS: You are welcome.

HT: This has been very interesting. Thank you.

LS: I hope it was what they wanted.

[End of interview]