HIS 330: Family History
Professor Ann Malone

April 27, 1993

ORAL HISTORY OF ELAINE THIRLWALL HELMS
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

On Saturday March 27, 1993 I interviewed Elaine Thirlwall Helms, my great-aunt, at her residence located at 219 South 5th Street, Auburn.

When I arrived at her home about 9:45 a.m. that day, I found her outside working in her flower garden. After sharing a big hug, she took a few minutes to show me her blossoming flowers, especially her pride and joy: a portion of her grandmother Beauchamp's bleeding heart plant brought over by her mother from England.

My great-aunt Elaine was one of six children, the first generation of Thirlwalls, born in the United States. Her parents, Henry Thomas Thirlwall and Susan Elizabeth Beauchamp, immigrated from England to Virden, Illinois at different times and for two different reasons stated during our interview. They met and were wed in Virden. They had only six children and sadly, Elaine's oldest sister, Jennie, the one she always called her twin because they were born eight years apart, died in February. Now she is the last surviving sibling.

We went inside her house and settled down comfortably upon the sofa in her living room. It was a beautiful sunny day and we could hear the birds chirping outside. We chatted briefly about the usual amenities before beginning.

This was my first oral history interview, my great-aunt's second. So although we did not cover all of the subject matter, included in the Family in History course, we covered some
important family history and as a history and journalism major, not to mention an amateur genealogist, that meant a great deal to me.
INTERVIEW

Interviewer:  Rochelle T. Morgan
Interviewee:  Elaine Thirlwall Helms

RTM: What is your full name?
ETH: Elaine Thirlwall Helms.

RTM: When were you born?
ETH: February 9th, 1916.

RTM: Where was your place of birth?
ETH: I was born down in a mining camp called number two. There were four mining camps: one, two, three and four. My dad was a coal miner and that's how I was born down in camp number two. I was three years old when we left there and came to Virden. I was the only one in the family that was born outside of Virden. The rest of the family were all born in Virden.

RTM: Oh, that's very interesting and how long was your dad a coal miner?
ETH: My dad was a coal miner from age 13. He was a coal miner in England. They came to the school in England when the boys were 13. They took my dad out of school and put him in the mines. He came to this country in 1904 from England and worked in the coal mines in Virden which was the oldest mine in the United States.

RTM: What was your father's full name?
ETH: Henry Thomas Thirlwall.

RTM: And your mother's full name?
ETH: Susan Elizabeth Beauchamp Thirlwall.

RTM: Okay. How many brothers and sisters did you have?
ETH: I had two brothers and three sisters. The oldest sister and I, which I am the last of the children alive, were born on the same day eight years apart.

RTM: Oh, that's interesting!

ETH: We always called ourselves twins but we were eight years apart.
RTM: What were the physical differences between you? I know you have blonde hair and blue eyes....

ETH: She was dark headed and dark eyed and I have blue eyes and blonde hair.

RTM: You said before that you were the only one with blonde hair and blue eyes in your family?

ETH: Yes, I was the only one.

RTM: Okay, and...

ETH: My mother had these children in eight years. She had six children in eight years.

RTM: What were your parents like?

ETH: My mother, oh, she was an angel! [ETH's eyes glowed while remembering her mother]. Oh, she was wonderful! She really was. She was such a good person. She was small. She had a little small frame and was a good home body. She was well liked and everybody loved to hear her talk because she was English. She came from England. Do you want to know where she was born?

RTM: Yes.

ETH: She was born on the Isle of Jersey. She lived on the Isle of Guernsey then went to London to live with her sister before she came to the United States. She left London and sailed over here to meet her mother's sister and her aunt. Her aunt had no children. Her aunt lived over here in Virden and her and her husband had no children so when she went over to visit the family in England she wanted to bring back my mother as a companion or a child because she didn't have anybody. Mother was to inherit what her aunt had, such as a business and homes plus a few other things.

My mother came to this country but she never ever got to go back to England to see her parents or nothing. She never got to go back and see them. They all died after she was here.

RTM: And who was it....what was the name of the aunt your mother stayed with?

ETH: Her name? Oh, here?

RTM: Yes.
ETH: Her name was Jane. Jane James. It was Aunt Jane James. That's who my mother came to live with. Then, when she came, her aunt was always saying that so and so's got a job doing this and so and so's got a job doing that so my mother left and went to Chicago and became a nanny to Dr. Black's son. He was a big dentist. She was a nanny to his son for about six months, I think, because then she came back and she married my dad.

RTM: How did she meet your father?

ETH: Well, my father came from England, like I say, and he came to his sister's. His sister was living here. He also had a brother here. There were the two brothers and one sister and that's all of their family that came to the United States. His sister said: "If you come here we can get you a job in the mines". So he came. I think his other brother, Edward, came with his wife. They have one daughter who is still living. She lives in California and her name is, [pause] Smith? Oh gosh now! Bella [giggled]. I knew I'd think of it if I could bring it back out of my memory. She lives in California, but her husband's dead now. I think she had three children. Anyway, we have very few family people here. We don't have hardly any kinfolk here at all. We never had a grandmother or grandfather in this country. We only had this one uncle and one aunt and that was on my dad's side.

RTM: Did your uncle and aunt on your dad's side have a lot to do with your family when you were growing up?

ETH: Well, yes they did. They used to come to our house on holidays. Mother would have them through Thanksgiving, then we'd have Christmas at home and then we'd go out to dad's brother's home on New Year's. We always called him Uncle Ned. He'd make the best wine, all kinds of wine, [laughed] that you'd ever had in your life. We'd go out there to his place though, I remember that. The sister, well she was a little uppity. She felt she was too good for most everybody.

RTM: What was your dad's sister's name?

ETH: Hmmm, I have to think a second. Jenny. She lived on Springfield Street in Virden and I used to think that she was my grandmother. She was old. Much older than my dad and she had children when he was born. So you see that when I was little, I heard everybody talking about grandparents. I have had no grandparents. I didn't have anybody. So I always used to go by there and, Jenny grew strawberries along the garden, you know, she'd give us a
few strawberries. There's still some, but not very many, of her great-great-grandchildren. Let's see, none of her children are living. I mean they're all gone. There's just nobody hardly living.

RTM: Did not having a grandparent kind of make you feel....

ETH: Never ever knew what a grandparent was, but I'd see other children around their grandparents and, well, I just never thought about it because I never had any and I was little. Of course, after I got older I thought "Well gee, that's awful not to have a grandma and grandpa". Yes, as I got older, then I realized how much I'd missed by not having grandparents. But I had pictures of them and my grandfather on my mother's side, Charles Joseph Beauchamp, was a tall man. His family went back to the 1600s and came from Belgium. My nephew Carl Seabolt's wife, Arlene, is taking genealogy and she's doing all of this and she found out that they came from there (Belgium). This family moved to Normandy, France and then, I guess, they must have came over to the Isle of Jersey because that's where my grandmother, Mary Louisa, was married and that's where she had met him (Charles). My grandmother's maiden name was Earle.

Now, I'm a good grandma and grandpa! My kids think I'm just the most perfect grandma and grandpa there ever was!

[We both laughed.]

RTM: Your mother's mother was Mary Louisa Earle?

ETH: Yes. My grandmother's maiden name was Earle and she married Charles Joseph Beauchamp. My mother's sister's name, her son (Frank Edward Stroobant) was the one that you went over to see, was Mary Louisa Beauchamp Stroobant. That's the one my mother went to live with on the Isle of Guernsey. Frank's six months older than my older sister, Jennie. So aunt Mary used to send baby clothes over - all the christening clothes and things over.

RTM: Oh, how wonderful!

ETH: Beautiful pongee silk christening gowns. Even the boys wore those at that time. They didn't dress them in rompers at that time, they were dressed in dresses. Hah, hah! But now they don't, yea...[pause].

I had a great life but there were bad times and good times when you lived with a coal miner, you know, because in the summertime the mines would close, then you wouldn't have that income. Then you'd buy on credit. Then when the
mines started working you would pay that off and live. But in the summertime you always owed somebody something for something. Everybody lived that way, that's just the way it was.

RTM: What was the mining summer, 2 or 3 months?
ETH: Yea, about 3 months.

RTM: What type of house did you live in as a child?
ETH: Uh...

RTM: Was it a two story? a one story?
ETH: Well, we lived in a two-story house when we moved to Virden. It belonged to Aunt Jane and it was a reddish two story with a picket fence around it. It was just about [pause] from the square of the town business district and the railroad ran through there. It was enclosed with railroads. The ITS had a railroad that ran through on the west side of the house, which was the front of the house, and the great big black steam engines used to go through there too. Those great big monstrous things and they had that steam and that black smoke and being little it was like a mountain coming at you when they were coming! Those engineers would always wave at us because we were little. Then on the south side of us there was what they called a spur. Across the road to the south the CIPS had a great big brick substation that took in, well, they made the power there and it scared the wits out of me. That thing made, ooooh, when you go by there, it just had some bars up there and you could see all these awful big... Oh, what would you call the things that make the power? Well anyway, whatever it was they'd make....

RTM: Were they conduits or transformers?
ETH: Transformers, that's it. Great big ones! I mean great big ones. Those flames would fly out of them in there. When I was little and had to go to town and stay on that side of the street, I tell you, I'd run by those places so fast it was terrible. Sometimes the wires in the ice storms would break and, boy, throughout the whole house, you could feel electricity. You daren't go outside and walk because it would kill you with the ground being wet. And I remember when it came down one time and John, my brother, was out. My dad went out to hunt for him to tell him that the wire was down but I tell you, I was scared to death of that thing. But I've lived by electric stuff all my life. I've got it next door here and whenever they say it causes
cancer I can't believe it [laughed] 'cause I've lived so close to it.

RTM: That's interesting.

ETH: I've been here for, it'll be 51 years in July. Sherwood was six months old when we came here.

RTM: Now going back to your family's house, did you and your brothers and sisters have to share a lot? Did they have the girls in one room and the boys in another room?

ETH: Well, there was a big upstairs. The stairs went up through the center of the house. There was a living room and a kitchen with a dining area. There was a pantry, another bedroom and another big bedroom. There were two bedrooms, the living room, the kitchen and the pantry downstairs. There were no bathrooms. You had outhouses [laughed]. That was all you had! For years everybody had outhouses but you took a bath in a big galvanized #3 tub. At our house you'd get in that hallway between the bedroom and the pantry and that's where they'd put you. There's where you'd take a bath because you'd close the doors. Yea, when you stop and think back to how things have changed, I've lived through a lot. I've lived through the best times because I've seen everything since the horse and buggy up through going to outer space.

RTM: How have those technological advances changed your life?

ETH: Changed my life? Well...

RTM: Like automobiles, TVs and VCRs...

ETH: Oh, yes. Oh this is the best time now! I don't think that they can do much more in life because we've already gone to the moon, got men up there in outer space and brought them back and now they're thinking of a space station. If I live a few years, I'll probably see that too. But, like I say, I don't think anybody'll live to see the things that I have lived and seen from the horse and buggy, like I say, where you didn't have no paved streets; they were mud holes. When I went to school the buildings, a lot of them, were wood. You can see them in the old western pictures where they have the wood awning which they used like a porch. The boards where you walked were just boards to go in to buildings and to keep you out of the mud and the mud out of school. I remember the penny candy stores and the cigar stores. They always called the cigar stores, where they kept tobacco and stuff, wooden. You'd go in with your penny and get a whole sack of candy for a penny. But a
penny was hard to get, you know. Then, like I say, I lived through the worst depression we ever had. There's nothing that can compare to it. Now when they say depression, they don't know what it means. The depression is where you didn't have anything.

RTM: How did the depression, I mean, how old were you when the depression hit?

ETH: In '29? I was born in 1916, so I was 13 years old in '29. I remember the crash very well. I remember the banks closing and standing outside the bank because mother had had money in the bank. The bankers all took their money out and they got their money because they knew it was going to close, but the people didn't get their money. They hardly got anything, very few cents on the dollar. My mother lost a lot of money in there. I remember the people crying. I remember talking about the people jumping out of the windows up in the big buildings with lots of stories in the cities. They'd lost their money. The big bankers and people lost everything and couldn't take it so they committed suicide. That was a terrible era. I worked for the WPA (Works Progress, later Works Projects, Administrative) in sewing and we made clothes.

The WPA was what Roosevelt started. It's just like your WPA the men worked on by putting in sewers and water and that kind of work. The men made $48 a month. But the women could make $50 a month. So I was, oh, I guess I was probably 17 when I started. I took the job for women because I could make $2 more a month.

We made clothing. We made everything for homes. We made curtains and sheets, pillow cases, layettes for babies. The first thing they gave me to do was to cut baby covers alls out of bed ticking. Oh, if you don't think bed ticking... That's what they made their mattresses out of and it was real heavy stuff. My God, I thought. I could sew and I knew about sewing but, my lord! I thought making bed ticking was... We made pants and shirts. I can make anything. I could make anything and of course I got up bigger because I could do it. We would fold the material 12 times then we'd cut out 12 articles at once with these big scissors. Everything about the pattern had to be laid just right or you just couldn't lay it anyway. You know that yourself from quilting. I always kind of got the hard work of putting the bands around the men's pants [laughed]. That was hard work. The rest of them were all straight sewing like putting in pockets or something. I worked at the WPA for about 2 years. I used to work when there were really no wages. I worked
for 25 cents a day from 7 o'clock until 7 o'clock at night, housecleaning and taking care of children. I used to baby-sit about 12 children and I got a dollar a day. That was when the State Fair was on, parents had stands at the fair and I would have all of their kids, all at one place. I had to feed them. I'd go to their one home, these people were all kind of related, take these kids and get them ready to put them to bed at night. Then I worked with school teachers and I got $2 a week. Then I worked one time for a couple of years for nothing but my food and my clothing. There were three school teachers in that home. I had quit school at 16, so I got a very good education. If I used the wrong word... You don't say something's awfully good. Nothing can be awful and good at the same time. I've never ever forgot that as old as I am. When I hear people say "Oh, it's awfully good, isn't it wonderful?" and "Doesn't that taste awfully good?" I'd think, "My goodness! How can things taste awful and good." Even teachers do it! Hah! Hah! You'll hear it, you'll hear them. But it's really uh... But that depression was terrible.

RTM: So did your other brothers and sisters help with the family finances?

ETH: No.

RTM: Did they try to go out and help ends meet at home?

ETH: Well, my one brother would go out with Mr. P.J. Ronk. He had a tent where he served food. He went to all the fairs and things and he didn't have any boys. Mr. and Mrs. Ronk had 12 children: 7 girls and 5 boys. The 7 girls lived and all 5 boys died when they were born.

[Interruption.]

RTM: We were talking about the depression.

ETH: Everybody was merely on relief because there wasn't money. You would go to the relief office and you would get a check, I mean a piece of paper, and then you could go to the store and get groceries and things like that. If you needed a pair of shoes you got a slip of paper. If you needed say underwear or clothing or something like that they would give you a piece of paper with your name written on it and what you were to have. Then they'd turn those papers back into the relief office which paid for those things. I lot of people couldn't afford electric lights, which we couldn't, so you used lamps.
RTM: Were they kerosene?

ETH: [Nodded her head yes.] Kerosene. Just regular old-fashioned kerosene lamps. It was hard to even get the money to have them. There was no refrigeration, either. There were ice boxes but a lot of people couldn't afford ice so you would have a dumbwaiter down in your well. You had a well with a pump with a big handle on it and they would make a little box about 3 feet high by 1½ feet wide, screen it all in and put little shelves in it. Then they'd put it on a wheel and call it a dumbwaiter. They'd put your butter, milk and anything else that you had that might spoil. You placed a lid over the well which you'd take off to bring up the dumbwaiter then you'd put your things in there, put it down in the well, close it up and it kept your food.

RTM: Oh, that is really neat!

ETH: Now that is really what happened. My dad used to make, well, we used to make beer. [We both laughed.] My parents always had money to get some malt so they could make beer. They'd even make root beer for us kids and had 5 gallons of root beer many a time. Oh boy! Let me tell you about canning the beer! But anyway [laughed] they'd make the root beer then they'd take it and lay it on its side in a dugout down under the house so it wouldn't blow up. They'd lay it down there for a few days, but boy, talk about good Hiers' root beer! That was sooo good!

RTM: It must have been powerful stuff if they had to lay it on its side!

ETH: Well the root beer...

RTM: The carbonation probably.

ETH: Yea, so it wouldn't blow the tops off the barrels, you see. You daren't shake it! But sometimes it would blow up. Anyway it sure was good and they'd take and hang it down the well sometimes. They'd tie a string around the top then let it go down and that's the way they kept it cool. But the beer...

My dad made good beer and wine. God, I guess I was only... I couldn't maybe have been 7 years old. My dad was on mine rescue. One day when he was bottling his beer they called him and said he had to go. He said "Mom", my dad called my mom, he says "Mom, you're going to have to do this beer." She says "I can't do it. I don't know a thing about it, not a thing." I was the only one there. So he says to me
"Come here." He said "Now you see this." It was a rubber tube, like a hose, that they put in a thing there and it had an end that you put into your mouth. You sucked on it and then you squeezed it like that [pinched her forefinger and thumb together]. Then you put it over in the bottle your were going to fill, unsqueezed it until the bottle gets full then you supposed to squeeze it again so that the beer don't go back out. Well me, I didn't know enough to do it! I think I must have got drunk! But anyway, I think I drunk half of it! [We both laughed heartily.]

I have never liked nothing with malt in it to this day. I can't drink beer. I can't drink anything to this day because it was sooo terrible! But anyway, I got that beer thing done and I never will forget it. Every time I filled a bottle I'd have to sip on that tube again. I had to do it that way. I couldn't remember to keep that tube pinched because I was little and, I'd get the bottle filled and I didn't want to run it over. Then I had to cap the bottle. I still have the bottle capper someplace, I think. It was on a big 2 x 4 or 2 x 6. You bought the bottle caps, put them on the bottle, pulled down on the handle which clamped the cap and sealed the beer. My God, I will never forget about bottling that damn beer. Oh my God! Like I say, I don't like nothing with malt in it. Maybe it's a good thing. Of course, we [referring to her husband] don't drink or smoke; never did neither one of us.

My dad smoke and drank. He'd go out in the country, out along the roads, get elderberries and grapes then he'd make elderberry and grape wine. The ITS that ran in front of our house went from Joliet to St. Louis. The conductors would get off, the station was just half a block from our house on this track, they would come over to our house, buy that wine by the gallon and take it to St. Louis because people wanted the wine. That was during the prohibition.

Then I remember that there was a big two story house in back of ours. A big lady lived in there called Big Min, she was a real nice person as far as that goes. She run a house, if you know what I mean [looked at me very pointedly]. She had girls and at 12 o'clock the doors were closed. But, I remember this very well, guys would come to that house and they'd want in after 12 o'clock. They weren't going to get in. Well they thought they'd get in anyway, so they were going to break down the door. Big Min just took her gun and just [made a pooot sound] killed them. She killed a guy coming in the south side of her house and, there was another door on the front to the east, she killed one out of that door too. I remember, when she was getting ready to go to jail, that she had chickens.
She would go down the yard and sing "I'll build a little house somewhere in the west and let the rest of the world go by." Then she'd kill a chicken. When they were going to sell the house, she had a big beautiful china cabinet and this big beautiful doll made, oh I wish I had that doll now it would be worth a million dollars, of china. It was just delicate. It had a leather body. Its hands and feet were made of china and it had sleepy eyes and real hair. It was a beeeeautiful doll. She gave me that doll before she had to go to jail.

I also remember there was a big warehouse to the south of her house across the road and they'd come with railroad cars to unload things at that warehouse, like produce, different canned goods and stuff for the stores. I remember when the feds raided there one time, they took all the beer and all the stuff out then took it over there and busted them all against those metal railroad cars. Those was funny times!

RTM: Sounded like you had a very colorful neighborhood!

ETH: Yes. At the end of our lot they built a soda pop factory in back and bottled sodie there. I remember that too.

RTM: Getting back to your family, how was discipline handled?

ETH: It wasn't very good either. I don't remember my mother ever doing much of anything, like slapping us or anything. Mom would say "I'll tell your father when he comes home." Because my dad... [ETH shuddered]. He had what they called a cat-nine tail. It was a leather belt about 2 inches wide with a hole cut in the top of it to hang it on a nail. Then they'd cut the leather belt into strips, and I mean in strips. They cut it I guess in 9 strips, that's where it got the cat-nine tail. If you weren't good you'd get that across your legs and across your behind. That was horrible because it really stung. It was terrible. I think I got a few whippings with it but the boys they got it often because there was 13 months between them and they were always fighting at that age. But mama had all these babies: Jennie was 18 months old when Phil (Phyllis Marie Thirlwall Morgan, my grandmother) was born, Phil wasn't too old when Sara Elizabeth was born, then she had the two boys 13 months apart and then 15 months later I was born. She was 31 when she started having her children and she was 39 when I was born. She had no more children after that.

RTM: How old was your father?

ETH: My father was 5 years younger than my mother. She didn't
know it because at that time, she thought she was 26 when she came to the country. When she got her birth certificate from England for her social security number, she found out that she was 5 years older. She was really 29 or 30 when she came to this country. She was 31 when she had her first baby.

RTM: Was she 29 or 30 when your parents were married?

ETH: She got married in the first part of March in 1907. Jennie was born February of 1908. I think she was married for 11 months before Jennie was born.

RTM: How did your father and mother actually meet?

ETH: My mother was a very beautiful woman. When she came here she had kind of gold hair, like your little niece (Brittany Morgan Kincheloe) has. She had that beautiful strawberry blonde gold hair. The color of a wedding ring. That was the color of her hair. She was real trim and very well educated. My mother never used slang at all and could hardly understand my dad because he came from the north of England and had a brogue. She couldn't hardly understand a lot of words he'd say like spoot for spout. He'd say "The spoot blew down." It had rained and was windy when he come in the house and said, "Oh, the spoot's down." She wondered what in the world he was saying. He got mad at her and said "Come here and I'll show you." She went out with him and said, "Oh, that's the rain spout." Mother was very well educated but my dad wasn't because he was taken out of school at age 13 to work. He wasn't dumb, though.

RTM: Did your mother get to finish school? Was that why she was so...

ETH: I don't think that they went to school very long. I think they only went to about the 8th grade at that time. She could read and write. My dad could read and write, too.

RTM: How about your first day of school?

ETH: Well, I liked to play hooky!

[We both laughed.]

ETH: I was kind of a bashful kid. My hair was so white that they used to call me cotton top. I had pretty blue eyes. My first grade teacher Sara Thomas told my husband years later when we met her at the cemetery on decoration day, she had taught for years and years, she said "I've taught for years and if ever there was an angel on earth it was...
her. She had hair like white gold, the bluest eyes and a voice like an angel. I couldn't sing and I always let her lead the singing. Oh, she sure could sing. Of all the pupils that I had she reminded me of an angel. But, you see, mom didn't really get us up early enough sometimes to get to school and it was kind of late. If I knew I was going to be late for school, I wouldn't go. I'd go home. But, like I say, I didn't graduate for nothing.

RTM: What was your school room like?

ETH: Oh, the school was a big brick building. It's still standing and it's a newspaper office now. They had coal furnaces and no indoor plumbing. They had water with a pump outside that you could wash your hands with outside and the rest rooms were great big wooden buildings with boards along one side and along the other side. The girls had one place and the boys had another place. They were separated but the building was together. There were holes for the bigger kids up to 8th grade, then little and lower ones for the little kids. You used Sears & Roebuck catalogs; they didn't have toilet paper, or they'd go to the stores and get tissue paper, oranges and apples and things would come wrapped in tissue paper. People would go crazy to get that tissue paper to use as toilet tissue. I guess that's where they got it because it was tissue paper they wrapped all this stuff in. [Laughed.]

RTM: That's really interesting. I didn't know they did that!

ETH: Yeah. The school had a program where, I was always a thin child and they always thought I needed a lot to eat or milk to drink, they'd come in the morning and in the afternoon with a half pint of milk in a little glass bottle. At recess they would make you drink that half pint of milk. I don't like milk much to this day because it would get kind of warm. See, you'd have some left from the morning, it would get warm and then they'd go and make me drink that damn milk, just because I was thin. I just can't hardly drink milk. It just turned me against milk. I wasn't the only one, but maybe they'd have half a dozen of them left and they'd make you stay after school and I'd have to drink that damn milk. Oh God! Bone (her husband) will tell you, I can hardly drink milk only if it's ice cold. I'll eat a little bit with chili because it cuts the grease and a little bit on my cereal. But to just go and get a glass of milk and drink down a glass of milk, no way. Sometimes I'll get a little bit in my glass and I'll dunk my cookies in it. I like dunking sandwich cookies! But it has to be something to mask the milk. If somebody offered me a warm glass of milk before I went to bed, I'd say "No way."
RTM: Did your brothers and sisters go all the way through school?

ETH: No, nobody graduated. Jennie didn't graduate. Phil went through grade school but quit in the second grade of high school. They both graduated out of the 8th grade but I didn't. I'm not dumb. I can read and I can spell and I can read the biggest words and know what they mean. I can spell them. But as far as doing anything, people think that I have been through college.

RTM: You sound well educated.

ETH: I have friends that went through college and they'd say to me, when I'd be talking to them I'd use certain words or something, "How come you use those kinds of words? You didn't go very far in school." Well I told them that you didn't have to go to school to learn. As far as writing or anything, I'm right up there with the best of them. I've got friends, even principals, who couldn't spell certain words. To me they all just come out. If you stop and think, all a big word is is little words put together. If they'd teach children that then illiteracy wouldn't be a problem. Did you ever stop to think about that?

RTM: Yes.

ETH: That's all big words are. But when you look at a big word, boy, you're stumped right now. But I always tell children, like the little girl next door who comes over and isn't learning to read, "See this word?" Then I tell her how to sound it out and then I show her. I say, "See, what's that little word and what's that little word next to it? Just put them all together and you've got your word." If they'd teach children that I think children would learn a lot faster. But when they took phonics and the Palmer method out of school, they took away the foundation for children to learn to read and write. The Palmer method taught them how to get their hands to write. So many of the kids today cannot write, cannot spell and cannot add. They don't know a thing and they're graduating high school.

Some of the parents today help the children too much. They do the work for them then send them back to school with the work already done but the kids haven't done it. Very poor example. I know that the parents were doing all of the projects because my beauty operator has a boy, he's 20 now, who graduated high school. That kid wanted to join the army so he went to take his test and he couldn't even answer 25 of the questions. Yet he had graduated high school. He didn't get in the army either, I guess. The
kids just don't know anything. They can't write, they can't spell. They just don't know anything.

RTM: Growing up, did your mother and father try to really stress a few family values? It sounds to me like with education you really firmly believe in being able to....

ETH: My mother never helped us with the school work. My dad, of course, never helped. You see, kids bring home school work and sit down to do it. When it's arithmetic, the parents sit down and help. I helped Sherwood when he was in school and brought homework or something. I always tried to help him like when he read their little books. But my mother couldn't help us at all because teaching in England and teaching here were two different ways of teaching and she knew nothing at all about teaching here. So I never ever remember my mother ever sitting down and teaching us anything for school. I think that is really kind of a handicap. I think parents should help children with school work but I don't think they should do the work for them. The children have to do the work themselves. They have to sit down and figure it out themselves. If they need some help then you sit down and explain it to them.

Jennie only went through the 8th grade then she went to work.

Phil did housework for people. When she married Harold Morgan (my grandfather), he wouldn't go look for a new place so she was always hunting a house to live in. They didn't have nothing. It was bad. But he would go out and work in the fields or something like that or sack potatoes. But as far as going out, a lot of times they couldn't pay their rent and they were put out. They'd have to find a place. It was always up to Phil to have to do it. Phil worked hard. One time, Harold broke his foot and she wouldn't even speak to my mother. She'd go as close as you and I are and she'd pass my mother by. That's when he got some money for having his foot broke and that.

RTM: Sounded like grandma was a little bit of a rebel. Out of your brothers and sisters were you closest to Phyllis? You ended up living the closest together, between Virden and Auburn.

ETH: Well, when we were little Phil used to make clothes. Phil was a good seamstress and she made clothes for me when I was little. Phil was a good person as far as that goes. There was eight years difference between Jennie and I and there were so many of us kids. I was the baby. But by the time I started school my brothers and sisters were getting
finished with school. After we got grown, more or less, I would think that we got closer. I can't hardly remember too much when I was little of being with them. They had their friends. I remember some of their friends.

Mom would send me with Jennie and Geraldine's mom would send her with her sister, Essie. They'd take us and lay us on a blanket in anybody's yard where we'd go to sleep. Then they'd get up and go off with their boyfriends and leave us sleeping there. It's a wonder we weren't killed! They had their boyfriends, you know.

RTM: What was dating like when you were growing up?

ETH: Dating for them or for me?

RTM: For both?

ETH: For me? Well I was kind of particular when I was growing up. I didn't want to go with just anybody. Of course, as I got older, I found out that a lot of guys who were friends of my brothers had wanted to ask me for a date but were afraid to ask me because I was considered to damn good looking. I'm not bragging. I always was. I was dressed nice. These guys told me themselves since then: "I would have married her." Like Ernie Barr. He used to own horses. Well, he wanted to marry me. He told Harold: "You know, I could have been your brother-in-law cause I sure did love her. I wanted to go with her in the worst way." I just didn't want to go out with him. He was nice enough. I went with a few but I never went with anybody very long.

There was a professor in high school. He was older than I was. He was trying to go with me in the worst way. Fact is I was a conversation with all the teachers when they had their meeting because I hadn't had the education they did. He belonged to our church and sang in the choir. I did too. I went with some older guys who were practically double my age.

RTM: When had you started dating? At what age?

ETH: About 16. I think 16. I didn't date a lot. I went with a kid from Waverly named Allen and he ended up being a millionaire. He was about 4 years older than I was. He was a farmer who ended up being a really big farmer here in Auburn. I only went with him about 3 months. Allen brought this kid over, Buster, who was going with a friend of mine. Allen would have to bring Buster over because Buster didn't have a car. So Buster would get Allen a girl. So anyway they got a fat girl for Allen and he said:
"I don't want that girl anymore because she was heavy set." I always ran around with Margaret. My dad wanted me to go with nobody. He was that way with all of us, but more so with me. He was a mean sucker. He didn't want me to have any Boyfriends.

RTM: Did your father set up any particular dating or courtship rules at your house?

ETH: You just didn't go with nobody. [Laughed].

RTM: That was the rule, huh?

ETH: You just didn't go no place. If I went any place he was there to meet me to come home. If I went to the show he was there to meet me to bring me home. He was a... That's another story. I wouldn't get in to him. Anyway, my dad used to go down to this girl's mother's and he'd say that he was down there trying to keep an eye on me. Hell no, he was down there running women. But anyway, he did let me go with Margaret double dating and that.

She talked me into going with Allen. I went with Allen and oh my God. He'd write me love letters. He had only met me about twice. He was in high school and they used to have wood shop where he made things. He made me a little cedar chest with a box of candy in it for my birthday and he didn't hardly even know me. I guess he must have fell awful hard because when I quit going with him he cried all the way home and he wrote me a letter. "I don't care who I'm going with or what I'm doing just let me know and I'll quit them and I'll come and marry you." I never did. I knew he was in Waverly and that he got married to the girl he was going with when he started going with me. She was ready to kill that girl. We've become good friends. Anyway, we had the store here in Auburn and he ran the farm of Mr. Earl Faust. He came in to the store to buy groceries. When I was working there they said that it was Allen. I knew where he was from and I knew that I had went with him but I didn't know if he remembered it or not. We had a pinochle club and I belonged to it and his wife belonged to it. I never ever told her that I went with her husband, Allen. She doesn't know it to this day. But he died, he had two or three heart operations. He died, I'd say, about 4 or 5 years ago.

RTM: How did you meet Uncle Bone?

ETH: Oh, that's the story! Well I knew about Bone about 10 years before I ever met him. I'd always hear Harold talk about what a good guy he was and that he was really a swell
fellow, this that and the other. He was a pigeon man. It was Easter. Of course I worked and I bought nice clothes and things. I can remember what I had on. I had on beautiful dove grey, light grey high heel pumps. I had on a suit, like they have now, the three quarter coat and the straight skirt and it was a pretty thing. I would buy enough material for me and Phil and she'd make me a blouse. I told her what I wanted and I'd go to these shows and I'd love to see all of these fancy clothes. I always had something fancy. I bought two beautiful pins about 3 inches wide which pinned on my shoulder. So I told her and she could smock and everything. So I bought this real beautiful blue satin for the blouse to go with the suit. She smocked it in pique and it had like a little ruffle that went across my chest with no sleeves in it and a tight waist. I was real slender.

Fact is they wanted me to go to St. Louis and be a model but my dad wouldn't let me go. Erna Kitnacker was a model who lived there and she said that if I came she could get me a job. She used to send me her clothes from modelling and I had some beautiful clothes that her mother gave me.

Anyway, I always wore hats. I always went to Jennie Smith's and bought hats. She always made beautiful hats with flowers. I had my gloves and my purse. Everything matched. We weren't going to Bone's. Harold said to Phil: "Let's go up to Auburn and see if Louie Plumer's home." He said: "Come on Tilly." He always called me Tilly. "Go with us." I said "I don't think so." He says "Come on, you're not doing nothing anyway. We're not going to be gone long." So we went to Louie Plumer's. Well Louie wasn't home. Harold said "Well, Phil, let's run by Bone's. He'll be home. We'll go by there."

RTM: What's Bone's full name?

ETH: Sherwood Ellis Helms. He was named after a doctor and a minister.

That's when I met him. He, Hiram Bramlet and his dad were sitting out on the well platform and he had just cleaned his pigeon house. He had on the most awful looking old overalls, an old blue shirt and was dirty from cleaning it. He hadn't shaved that morning. He generally shaves every morning, but it was Sunday and he hadn't cleaned up and he had an old cap pulled over his face. Harold went around back there and pretty soon he said "Come on, Tilly, I want you to meet Bone's dad and Hiram." Boy after they seen me they said to Bone "Oh if we were younger we'd sure go after that filly." So anyway we went out to the front and were
sitting there.

Geri was just a baby and Sonny, your daddy, was 4 years old and I was very much his. I was his girl. Bone said to him something like "I'm going to marry your aunt." Sonny said "No you're not, I'm marrying her." I used to take Geri and Sonny all the time with me and buy them ice cream.

But anyway, Harold said to Bone "Your busy, so we'll just go on." Bone wouldn't hear of it. He said "No, no, no." He says "Wait. I got to go in and take a bath. I'll be right out. I won't be very long. Just stay here." Boy, I tell you, his dad said the day that he met me he never was in his right mind. He said "He fell for you". Bone went in and took a bath. When he came out he was dressed in his suit and a white shirt with a tie. He was real handsome! Beautiful. Beautiful eyes and wavy hair.

RTM: What color was his hair?

ETH: It was blond. Kind of an ash blonde. Real good looking. I tell him now that I know that couldn't have been the Bone that was sitting out there, that it must have been his brother that came out. He didn't want me to leave. Before we left he wanted a date with me. I know he must have had a date that night because he was going with some girl. But boy he dropped her right now. [Laughed]. Then I knew a gal that lived in Virden, who sold Avon and belonged to a card club that my sister Jennie belonged to. She'd come to Virden and play pinochle. I was going to come to Auburn and she said "Well, I'm going back to Auburn." I had a date with Bone. She said "I don't want you to get up your hopes because he won't never marry you. He used to go with a girl here for a long time." I said "Oh really." This gal would send him notes to the store but he'd let me read the notes that she wrote to him. She wanted to know why he wasn't coming to see her anymore. I said to Dell, "Oh well that's alright. There's plenty more around as far as that goes." He was the one who set the wedding date. We went together about 15 months.

RTM: Where did you go on your dates? What did people do?

ETH: There wasn't a whole lot of money. Now Bone had a job and he was making money, but he paid for the rent of his home because his mother had died. All the groceries, everything came out of his money so he didn't have any money. He wanted to go to the store and put $5 on the bill and he was lucky if he had a dollar or two. I was never one to make a guy go out and spend a lot of money on me. I figured most of them if they spend a lot of money on you they're
wanting to get you, if you know what I mean. I wasn't that type. We went to Irwin's Park and Bone never danced. Bone never had time to learn to dance. He never smoked. He drank a can of beer or two as far as that goes because he went with guys that drank. I never seen him drunk. Then he never drank after he went with me because I didn't drink or smoke either one. But we just mostly stayed at home or went for a drive in his old Chevy. Just fool around a little bit or something. There were not many places to go. Went to very few shows. We'd go into Springfield sometimes and have a sandwich or something. He mostly had pigeons and that's where we went. He had a lot of friends and there were always pigeon races. We'd go to their homes in Springfield. That's mostly what our dates consisted of, going to pigeon shows, taking pigeons to shows. Different clubs would have things like training the pigeons. The day we got married he had a pigeon race on and he had to go to Springfield and clock those pigeons in to get his points and things. Gosh I finally got tired, it got so late and they bought beer because he got married. Finally I said "I'm tired. I'm going out there in that car and go to sleep. I'm tired of this." Some of the guys when they'd drink they'd start arguing or fighting. I said to Bone "You can stay if you want to but I'm tired." We had went to St. Louis and got married at the Presbyterian Church there. Everybody mostly went down there.

RTM: What day was it you got married?

ETH: We got married on May the 14th. It was mother's day.

RTM: What was the weather like?

ETH: Beautiful. It was warm and beautiful. Didn't need any coats, it was a gorgeous day. We had a two room apartment with a little pantry way for storage and a bath. We called the building the honeymoon apartments because a lot of young people started their honeymoon up there.

We lived upstairs and I worked down in the McCoupin County relief doing filing.

I had a friend whose husband died. He'd been operated on for appendicitis and was getting ready to come home and he got a blood clot and it killed him. They had four rooms with lovely furniture. Well we only bought the kitchen table and chairs and the cabinets from her for $30 for the table and four chairs. They were beautiful heavy oak. Then we went to Springfield and bought a bedroom outfit. We lived up there for about 10 months and then we got a house and that's where Sherwood was born. We had it fixed
real nice and I bought curtains and drapes.

RTM: Before you got married were you still living at home?

ETH: No, I was living at my sister Jennie's. My dad was mean.

RTM: Where did she live?

ETH: She lived along the Hill Street road towards Masterson Street. I stayed with Harold and Phil some too.

RTM: Was Bone living in Auburn?

ETH: Yes. He'd come see me. He'd pay a guy a dollar to bring him down on a motorcycle and to come and get him. Many times Bone walked home, too, because he had to work the next day. I used to love to roller skate and he'd sometimes go to a pigeon meeting so one of his friends that took drove us would go roller skating with me. His name was Rutherford. He used to run a bakery. Bone never roller skated, except one time I got him on roller skates. He tried a few laps, it was funny. [Laughed].

RTM: How much did religion play a role in your life?

ETH: Well I always went to church. I belong to the Methodist Church. I sang in the choir and I belonged to a quartet and we sang at a lot of funerals. Fact is that I had a contract to sing for 13 weeks in Springfield over the radio but I didn't have the money to go back and forth and that so I let the Mortimer girl take it. I had a chance to teach. The State come in and taught first aid. I was so good at it that the State wanted to hire me but I had to go to Hillsboro for an advanced course. We didn't have the money for me to go. But when my boy was in the scouts I taught first aid to them.

RTM: Was your mother very religious?

ETH: Yes. We were Episcopalians. We were all baptized Episcopalians. My mother was with the Church of England. Both my parents were. They used to have an Episcopal Church in Virden. You went up a lot of steps and it was above one of the buildings on the south side. It was a wooden building and Mrs. Fracket was on cleaning staff and she would have to build a coal fire. We'd go every Sunday. It's a lot like the Catholic religion but one step away. You had catechism and the only thing that was different between Catholics and Episcopalians was that the priest or minister could marry. That's really the only difference between them. He'd wear all his robes. I had went with him for a
while but I didn't want to be a minister's wife. His name was Ralph Markey. Reverend Ralph Markey.

RTM: It's interesting that the Episcopalian and Catholic religion are so close together yet you mentioned earlier that you couldn't set foot inside a Catholic Church?

ETH: No, no. See the Episcopalians broke away from the Catholic Church. When I was growing up you didn't go to a Catholic church at all. But when I dated the minister, I went to some of the different churches. He was English. He came from England. I always swore I'd never marry an Englishman cause my father was English and my mother kowtowed to him. I'm not going to kowtow to no damn man. No way, I love Bone, and I do for him and everything else but my dad came first, first, first. First of everything. She put herself second and the kids came third. My dad got the best of everything. I don't believe in that. I believe it's equal. A man and a woman are equal. I don't think anyone should have everything and the other one have nothing.

RTM: As I recall you mentioned once that marriage is a 50/50 proposition: you have your 50%...

ETH: And I have his 50%! And he admits it and he likes it. Marriage is a 50/50 proposition. You can't expect everything to go your way and have everything your way. It's a give and take. If you can't give and take you'd better stay single. That's the way I feel about it. I was so anxious to have a home of my own that I could call my own because at home my dad made my life miserable. When I went to Jennie's that wasn't any heaven either with her husband. When I went to Phil's that wasn't too perfect, either. There were things there that nobody knew about. I don't know why I attracted men like flies to a honey pot.

RTM: Did you ever wish sometimes that you weren't quite so beautiful?

ETH: I think that sometimes it's a hazard because I was always considered this beauty. I never thought that I was that beautiful but men always thought that I was.

RTM: You only had one child, Sherwood?

ETH: Yes, that's right. I had a picture taken when I was four months pregnant with him so that if anything ever happened to me Bone would have a picture of me. It damn near did happen to me.

RTM: Did you have a difficult labor?
ETH: No, not having the birth. But I got a blood clot, phlebitis and it was in my groin in my artery on my left side it didn't have to go very far to kill me. They wouldn't let me move. I laid a hundred days flat on my back packed in ice. I wasn't allowed to move or to sit up. They was afraid that it would move. There weren't medicines then like they have now to dissolve blood clots. I've had trouble with my legs ever since. I finally told them that I was going to get up. The war had started December the 7th and he was born in January then. They fixed me up and took me to Virden to my mother's because dad was working and mom had to be home. So they moved me down there and it was the 1st of May that I got out of bed. I told them that I was going to get out if it killed me. I sat in a chair with my legs propped up until the end of May. So it took me from the 14th of January through the end of May and I should never have been up then. I told them that I was going to take the baby and go home and do the best I can. Bone helped me an awful lot. I didn't have any labor or pain. In the morning I had a little bit of blood seeping so I scrubbed the floor, hung the curtains. I did the neighbor lady's, she was a minister's wife, they lived next door across the alley and I used to set hair and that so I fixed her hair and she said that I should call the doctor. I said I'll have this baby today. About 4 o'clock Bone called the doctor anyway and he came to the house and he examined me and he said no I'll see you in the office tomorrow. The baby hadn't even dropped or come down in the channel. I said no I'm going to have this baby today. I stayed by myself and Bone was at work and when he come home about 8 o'clock I begin, I didn't have any pains, but he said I think you should call the doctor again. So they called the doctor and he was at the basketball game. He said if they call to take me into the hospital. They called him and he said to take me in. He didn't come. I walked into the hospital. I was alright. I never did have no pain until just right when he was going to be born. They gave you these shots to start labor and anyway I never did have labor like people have labor. Never had no pain. I was too damn dumb. I didn't know what it was all about. My mother used to sit on the porch, her and the other old ladies, and they'd talk about if you ever thought you had a pain just wait until you have a baby. I thought my God I must be terrible. As far as having him, I was sitting up there in the middle of the night didn't even know I had a baby. But they had held him back. His head was coming out, my mother was there, they hollered and the girls come in and they pushed my legs together. It's a wonder they didn't kill me and him too. They said to call the doctor but he was in Auburn and I was at the Springfield hospital. They held the baby back about an hour. I don't know how he
ever lived. But anyway he finally got there. He was born about 12:30 a.m. on the 14th of January, 1942.

RTM: Were they trying to hold him back because the doctor needed to be present?

ETH: Yes. My doctor wasn't there. Heck, they had doctors there. My mother said that "If they'd let you lay there five minutes on that bed", she'd been with people who had babies, even Phil, "you'd had that baby and wouldn't have had a bit of trouble." I remember saying I wish that doctor would hurry up and get here. I sure wish that doctor would get here. You could hear people screaming all over that hospital with pains for having babies. I never screamed or nothing. I just knew that I was supposed to have that baby but that water broke and that baby was coming. The doctor never charged me very much. For the nine days in the hospital, for me and the baby it was $65. And all of the visits that he made from my house and back, he only charged me $35. He knew that it was his fault because he wasn't there.

RTM: Where did your mother give birth to you children...

ETH: She had them all at home.

RTM: Was there a doctor who came to her house or were there midwives?

ETH: She had a doctor. Mom helped a lot of times assisting a doctor like when Mrs. Ronk had all of her children my mom assisted the doctor. But she said everyone of those babies was born dead. Every one of the ten boys was dead. Out of twelve children only the girls were living. Now what are we going to?

RTM: Getting back to your marriage to Uncle Bone, did any of your friends influence you? You said that he picked the date to get married.

ETH: Yeah.

RTM: Did anyone say "Well you really should marry him, he's a good catch."?

ETH: No, nobody ever said that to me. We kind of split up one time for about a couple of weeks but he came down to hunt me but he never could find me at home. Anyway, he said "Let's get married." I said "Well when do you want to get married. I'm not going to set a wedding date. You know why? You'll never say it was me that said let's get
married and when to get married." He said "Two weeks from today." This was on a Sunday. He said "Is that alright with you?" and I said "Yeah, I guess so." I was anxious to get a home of my own.

RTM: Did any of your friends really ever influence you very much throughout your life? I know some people where their friends or their family are really influential with the decisions they make in life.

ETH: No, I was pretty much independent. I thought I had a pretty good head on my shoulders. I'd seen my sisters get married, I'd seen my mother through marriage and I'd seen a lot of my friends get married, have children and everything. I wasn't too anxious to jump into that fire.

RTM: I can relate to that. [Laughed].

ETH: Yeah, I wasn't too anxious to jump into that fire knowing and seeing everyone else, but still, I wanted a home of my own. I knew Bone was a good person and very kind. He is yet today. He's a very compassionate person. He sees little kids on TV and the tears runs out of his eyes. He sees little kids around and he loves children. He dearly loves children. When we go shopping he goes hunting all these little children that are in the stores and their mothers. He'd give his heart to any kid. I mean he'd take it out and literally hand it to them if he could.

RTM: Did he ever wish that you had more than just one son?

ETH: I would have liked to have had at least one more. The doctor said no, not to have any for three years. Then he said that I wasn't doing any better and he said wait five years then he told me that I'd be better off not to have any more. So we didn't have any more.

RTM: Sherwood was born during World War II. How did that make you feel?

ETH: Well the war, for us, had started December 7, 1941. And Sherwood was born in January. But he'd already been on the way a long time. But Bone he was drafted to go. He went to Chicago and went through the thing but he was put on three year limited service. There were several ahead of him so he didn't have to go. He was on his way. He would have went.

RTM: Coming right out of the depression and into a major World War how did that affect your lives?
ETH: Well it didn't make me feel very happy when I knew he had to go for a physical and everything in Chicago. I thought what'll I do with a baby? We'd just moved to this house. I had been working like the dickens to get it fixed and cleaned up. I guess the good lord was watching over us on account of his eyes because he was getting regular service clear up to the last man. And the guy that was getting limited service up to him he put that guy regular service and put Bone limited service. That's how close it was. The other guy had to go to war.

RTM: The United States, until Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941, believed in isolation. Did you hope it would continue that way?

ETH: Yes. I don't believe in wars. I know there comes a time when you have to make a stand but I think our country does get into a lot of things that it has no business in. Too many places.

RTM: Before the United States entered the war did you think we should have aided England and the other Allies more?

ETH: I thought they were pretty capable themselves until the war got so big and then they needed the help. I think that we did give them a certain amount of help but we were still in the depression ourselves. We didn't have a lot. Of course when they struck at Pearl Harbor I never will forget that day.

RTM: What kind of impact did that make on you that the Japanese had came over and bombed one of our military bases?

ETH: You're just stunned. You're like you're in a trance, you just can't believe it. Over the radio was coming all this information about how it was burning and all this terrible stuff. Then at the shows they were showing news previews with footage. It was an awful impact. You're just too numb to think that something like that would happen.

RTM: When you and Bone were married what kind of work were you both doing?

ETH: I was working at the McCoupin County relief office in Carlinville doing filing and Bone was a butcher. Bone started working when he was three years old delivering papers. Both him and his older brother Hokie. He worked all his life. He was so good to his mother. His mother died in 35 and he turned over every penny of his money to his family. When his brother Hokie died he left everything he had to Bone. Hokie had said that all the others had
been selfish while Bone had been giving and sacrificed.

When Bone's brothers were in the service during the war, there were four of them, Hokie, Matt, Loren and Gene, they'd come here to our house to stay. They wouldn't go anywhere else. Bone has always been the hub of the wheel that kept his family going. They'd all spend their service leave at our house. Whenever there was anything to do with family they always came here. They never went any place else. Bone's sister Maurine's boy got killed when they dropped a bomb on a ship. He was buried at sea. I've never had a crossword with any of his relatives and we've been married all of these years. His family was always welcome to come. I can't say that Bone didn't have crosswords with them because he did. They could fight each other but they wouldn't let nobody else outside the family say anything against them.

RTM: Was there a hub in your family?

ETH: I guess it would be me. I was the one who had everything to do. All of the deaths all fell on me and I had to make all the arrangements for my mother and father. Now I'm the last of my family.
CONCLUSION

While Elaine and I did not have time to cover every subject about family life, I feel that we covered some important territory, such as education, discipline, dating, courtship, marriage, birthing and parenting.

Even though my great-aunt lacked kinfolk, such as her grandparents, my great-aunt's life seemed to have been very rich in color and experience. She witnessed some of the greatest events in history: (1) the great depression (as a child and young adult), (2) World War II (as a wife and mother), (3) the technological innovations in transportation, industry, households, space exploration, etc. (from childhood to present) and (4) medical advancement. She is happy to have lived through these changes, found them exciting. She believes that none of the generations to follow will ever experience so many changes in one's life course.

My great-aunt has had many turning points and transitions in her life as demonstrated by the interview. There are still so many subjects unexplored to date that I fully intend to investigate with her in subsequent interviews.

Although our time ran short and we just briefly touched upon the subject of death, I know that my great-aunt does not fear it. She accepts it as the inevitable fate of everyone and firmly believes that there is another form of life beyond this physical realm we presently share.

She is an optimist through the core of her being and I am
richer for knowing her.

I am also grateful to have had this opportunity to interview her and learn more about my ancestors' lives and the past through her eyes. I have been working on piecing together our family's lineage and now, I feel that I know more about them than just names written in record books. They live within her memory and now they will live within mine.