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The home of Lorraine Hansen in Gallatin Tenn.

on the date(s) of March 30th 1996

for the oral history collection being compiled by Dr. Marshall.

Lorraine B. Hansen Date: 3/30/96
Interviewee's Signature

Address Brandywood Ret. Home 553 E. Bledsoe Apt 8

Gallatin TN. 37066

Phone (615) 452-9081

Stacy Stallings Date 3/30/96
Interviewer's Signature

Address 2084 White Oak Rd

Albertville AL 35950

Phone (205) 891-0878

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Lorraine Hansen M/F: Female

Address: Brandywood Ret. home 553 E. Bledsoe Apt 8 Gallatin
TN. 37066

Phone number(s): (615) 452-9081

Approximate age or date of birth: 3/23/09 87 yrs old

Mothers name: Doris Bunker

Father's name: Arthur Charles Bunker

Places lived and when: Omaha Nebraska, South Dakota, Yankton South Dakota
Joux, Kansas City

Education: Finished 8th grade - when she was 36 when back & graduated valedictorian
when to school in Omaha Nebraska

Religion: protestant & went to Catholic Church for 52 yrs.

Business, political and social memberships (past and present): She votes for - the man
not the party

Present occupation: Retired

Former occupations: Started at age 13 doing (insure door to door, at age 15 worked
northwestern Bell - (telephone Co.) then got married & didnt work any more.

Special Skills: Vol. work for Red Cross (10 yrs) worked on Orators

Major Accomplishments: Raising 4 children, that turned out successful,
going back to finish school at age 36,

National Events in which interviewee has participated: Wrote w/ Red Cross got many
awards for life saving.

Local Events in which interviewee has participated: _____

National born U.S. citizen? Yes/No Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No

Country from which he/she emigrated: _____

Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee: _____

Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: _____

Additional information: She also mentioned her husband often his name was
Arthur Charles Bunker. She mentioned she son Bob Bunker and Presidents
Roosevelt and Coolidge.

Stacy Stallings
Oral History Interview
History 102
Dr. Marshall
April 9, 1996

My interview was with a woman by the name of Lorraine Hansen. The interview took place in her home in Gallatin, Tennessee. The topic of the interview was the Great Depression and the effects it took upon her life. She presently lives at Brandywood Retirement Center located in Gallatin, Tennessee.

Ms Hansen was born March 23, 1909, in Omaha, Nebraska. Her mother's name was Doris Bunker and her father's name was Arthur Charles Bunker. Ms Hansen only completed 8 years of school due to her starting work at the age of thirteen. Her family was very poor, so she had to work to help bring in extra money. Her first job was conducting door-to-door census in Omaha. At the age of 15, she started working for a company named Northwestern Bell as a local telephone operator. She quickly moved to the position of long distance operator and finally promoted to a customer service representative.

She married at the age of 17 to a man named Herbert Hansen. Mr. Hansen believed that she shouldn't work, so she quit her job at Northwestern Bell. She only did volunteer work for the American Red Cross when time permitted. Ms Hansen worked for the Red Cross covering major disasters such as a tornado in Kansas and a major flood in southeastern California.

The Hansens lived about three miles from the city of Omaha, Nebraska. They ^{did they own or rent?} owned a modest home and the rent was about twenty dollars a week, which was all that Mr. Hansen would make in a week. They would have to sit down and make a strict

Ms Hansen
budget to go by for necessities such as food and clothing. They put the money in different envelopes according to what it was going to be used for. The envelopes would be labeled "rent", "groceries", "clothing". On Saturdays, Mr Hansen would take his two year son Bob to the Omaha potato market to find the best buys on food. He would bring a red wagon that Bob could ride in and also could put the food in it to carry home. They would make their way to the meat market after going to the potato market. The meat market would sell the bones that were cut off the larger pieces of beef that were sold the day before. Sometimes these bones would have enough meat on them to make soup that could last up to three or four days. Ms. Hansen said "Nothing went to waste those days." They would also buy "day old" bread and rolls. The fresh bread usually sold for ten cents, but on Saturdays you could buy the day old bread for a nickel. She also said it was much easier to find fresh vegetables cheaper on the week-ends. Ms. Hansen said they would buy as much as they possibly could as long as it stayed within their budget.

Ms Hansen explained the different ways they cleaned their clothing. Since they didn't have enough money to send the clothes to the cleaners, it was her responsibility to see the clothes were clean for her family. She used a special cleaning solution for her husbands work slacks, which she soaked in a galvanized tub. She cleaned ^{them} ther other clothing with a manual washing machine. She said "the machine was not an ~~e~~lectric machine but a machine that powered by my right arm!" She did the laundry in their small basement and would carry them outside to hang dry. If it was raining or too cold outside she would ~~to~~ hang them in the base-ment, which sometimes could take a very long time to dry. I asked Ms Hansen if her husband had any problems keeping a job during the Depression, and she replied by saying "he was a very reliable, hard-working man." Many times after making their budget they wouldn't have extra money left over for him to take the

streetcar to work. He would have to walk to work sometimes in heavy snow or rain.

She said an additional problem for young families was paying for doctor bills. They would go to the doctor only if it was absolutely necessary. Ms Hansen said they were fortunate enough to find a kind doctor who would let them pay their bill one dollar a month. The bills were not as expensive as today's doctor bills of course, but they were high for those times. The doctors knew the situation people were in and were very understanding, kind and courteous.

Tell story w/ out me asking you questions

My next question pertained to people working with each other to help one another out.

She agreed and said people were very close during those hard times, especially to help one another out. She also said that sometimes two or three families would all live in one house or apartment to help cut down on rent cost. I asked her what kind of effect the Great Depression took on the middle and upper classes. She said many of the upper class weren't really effected as the lower class. Many of the upper class had money "stashed" away they could fall back on. *yes*

She then started talking about her children during the Great Depression. Her son Bob was two years old when the Great Depression started. She became pregnant when Bob was three years old but the baby died at birth. She was seven months pregnant when the baby died due to massive hemorrhaging. She was under heavy anesthetic and never saw the baby but she knew the baby was a girl. One year later they adopted a little baby and her name was Jane.

I asked Ms Hansen if she knew any of the farmers during the Depression. She said that she didn't personally know any of the farmers but thought that they may have had it a little easier since they could grow their own food. They didn't have that privilege living

in the city. There wasn't even enough space for a small garden where they lived. That's why it was so important for them to buy the day old food, bargains, and sales. I asked her if she had ever stood in any of the bread lines and she said that her husband was the only one ^{who} that would go to town. Her husband would come home and say the bread lines were pathetic on that day and "many a tear were shed in those breadlines."

Ms Hansen then talked about how people would swap clothing during the Great Depression. Families with older children would let the families with smaller children have the older children's clothes. That's how close many of the families were just to help one another out. It was impossible for them to just go out and buy new clothes when they needed them. Ms Hansen made all of her children's clothes. She would watch for sales on clothing material and buy as much as their budget would allow. She could sometimes find material on sale for as little as seven to ten cents a yard. She said she wasn't the greatest at making clothes but that the children never complained. She would make their shirts, pants and sleeping clothes, practically everything they would wear.

My next question was about the presidents during the Great Depression. I asked her if she agreed with the policies and decision making of the president. She said most people thought that President Roosevelt understood what they were going through. She remembers President Roosevelt being a very kind man. They didn't personally know President Roosevelt but they agreed with most of his ideas and policies. She remembers President Calvin Coolidge as being a very religious person. He was also known to be a calm and courteous person. She added that it had been quite a long time ago and she has a hard time remembering too many specifics about politics during that time period.

My next interview question was about entertainment during that time period. Ms. Hansen said that they had to be somewhat creative due to not having any money. They

didn't own a car, so they couldn't go riding around. They also couldn't afford such things as going to the movies. They discovered over time that money wasn't really necessary to go out and have a good time with friends and family. They would take picnics in the parks where they cook^{ed} out and play^{ed} horseshoes. Sometimes one to three families would get together and go to the park. Many of the parks had swings and tin slides for the children to play on. The children would enjoy hours of entertainment with these simple things. It would make the parents happy just to see the children having fun and enjoying ^{themselves} ~~themselves~~ without spending too much money.

The children would sometimes play games like tag, hide-n-seek, and have various races. She chuckled and said that it just wasn't the children playing the games. The adults would join in have races against one another. Sometimes it was men against men and even the men against the women. She told all of this with a big grin on her face, showing she is really fond of those memories. The parks also had sandboxes the children could play in. If the park they went to didn't have any sandboxes, Ms Hansen said "the children weren't afraid to sit down in a nice little pile of mud!" She said the mother's really didn't mind though because they knew their pleasures were limited.

Since they couldn't afford swimming pools they would go to rivers and lakes to go swimming. They would also go fishing in the rivers and lakes. They could go fishing for practically nothing. All they needed was a bamboo pole, a little string, a few hooks and they were ready to go. Fishing was a great source of entertainment the entire family could enjoy. They had the option of keeping the fish for lunch or supper which could save a few more dollars.

Another good source of entertainment were the public dances. Sometimes the big

bands would come and perform for the public at no cost. It was a good time for friends and families to get together for fellowship. My next question was about education during the Great Depression. Ms Hansen said the quality of education was very good. The classrooms were usually very large because the school system couldn't afford to pay enough teachers for the amount of students. Sometimes as many as three grade levels were put into a classroom with the same teacher. Ms Hansen said even though the conditions were crowded the eagerness to learn was very high. The students seemed to take their schooling very serious.

Ms Hansen remembered the schools didn't have a very strict clothing policy. The school system seemed to take the hard times into consideration. All they really asked was the child must be fully clothed. Cleanliness was a very big topic in the classroom during these times, Ms Hansen recalled. She said the schools did require the children to be clean before coming to school. The teachers were all highly educated and it seemed very important to them that the students learn.

Ms Hansen said keeping shoes on children was very tough in those times. She would make their clothes, but she couldn't make shoes. Shoes were an expensive item then, something a family must save in advance for. Cardboard was used to cover holes until enough money was saved to buy a new pair for the child. Ms Hansen said if the child was very active they would constantly be going through shoes, which could become a very big burden on a poor family.

We then talked about her clothing. She owned one dress that she would wear to church and special occasions. Ms Hansen said women took very good care of their clothing then, especially their dresses. They would immediately hang their dress up when returning from church in a closet full of mothballs. She couldn't make her own

clothes because she was unable to fit herself. She would have to rely on what she could buy at second hand thrift shops.

Talking about church dresses brought me to my next question. I asked Ms Hansen what type of religion she was involved with during the Great Depression. Mr. and Mrs. Hansen attended a Methodist church the first three years of their marriage. Mr. Hansen grew up attending the Catholic church so they decided to switch over to the Catholic religion. They attended the Catholic church for 52 years. Ms Hansen switched back to the Methodist church after her husband passed away. She now attends a Methodist church in Gallatin, Tennessee.

I asked Ms Hansen if she remembered the beginning of World War II. She didn't remember any specifics about the beginning but she did say all three of her brothers participated in World War II. All three brothers began active duty the same month, unfortunately it was the same month their father passed away. One brother was drafted into the United States Air Force, while the other two went into the United States Navy.

I asked Ms Hansen if the Great Depression still has any effects on the way she lives now, such as spending and saving. She said she still looks for bargains. "Bargain shopping is like a big game to me" she said. Ms Hansen said a bargain isn't something that is necessarily cheap. She looks for well made items that may save her a few cents or dollars down the road. Her husband's pension helps her out a lot so pinching every little penny is really not necessary anymore.

By this time I could tell that Ms Hansen was growing tired so I thought it would be a good time to conclude my interview. I thanked her for giving me the opportunity to take this invaluable piece of history and place it into the Oral History Archives. She said she

was very honored and really enjoyed talking about the "good 'ol days."

And you
actually informed well
plenty of good ideas on living
frugally but well!
Work on grammar
& writing

-90-