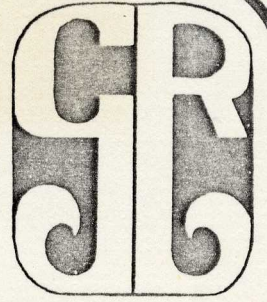


Sample Letter to Interview
Subjects



Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, zip _____

Dear _____:

The Junior League of Cedar Rapids and the Cedar Rapids Public Library are cooperating in an Oral History Project for Cedar Rapids. We are collecting taped interviews with people who remember the community of Cedar Rapids in the early years of the twentieth century (1900-1940). You have been recommended to us to be interviewed because of your involvement in the community during those years.

With your permission, a trained interviewer will arrange a meeting with you at a time that is mutually convenient. She will bring taping equipment to record your comments. Most interviews last an hour to an hour-and-a-half. The interview tape will then be transcribed into a manuscript, and both the tape and the manuscript will be donated to the Cedar Rapids Public Library for its collection. Your memories will become part of our record of the past.

A member of the Oral History Committee will contact you within the next two weeks. We hope you will share your memories of the early community to help future generations know community life as it was in the early decades.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Laura M. Derr
Project Chairman
2000 Blake Blvd. S.E.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403
319/363-4968

Oral history session, Oct. 3

An oral history training workshop will be conducted Oct. 3 as part of a continuing oral history project, "Cedar Rapids: The Early Community."

The training session, to be held from 9 a.m. to noon at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, will feature Harold Ewoldt of the Chamber of Commerce speaking on "Local History" and Loren Horton of the state Historical Society speaking on "Interviewing Techniques."

The project, a cooperative effort of the Junior League and the Cedar Rapids Public Library, is a series of taped interviews with community members who remember early 20th century life in Cedar Rapids.

About 25 interviews have been conducted this summer. The project's goal is to complete at least 100 interviews with people from a variety of backgrounds.

Persons interested in volunteering for the project need to attend the workshop. For more information, contact chairwoman, Laura M. Derr, at 363-4968 by Oct. 1.

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
Julia Robbins Allen

INTERVIEW TOPICS

CEDAR RAPIDS: THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- When were you born? Where?
- How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?
- What are your parents' names?
- Where did you go to school?
- Are you married or single?
- Did you raise a family? How big?
- What has been your occupation (career) during your adult years?

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

- 29-30 --Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
- 6 --Trolleys (the Interurban)
- Horses and First Automobiles
- 6 --Mud roads and the seedling mile
- Hunter Airport and the first planes
- Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

2. Communications

- Newspapers
- Radios
- Advertising
- Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation

- 8-9,23--Motion Pictures
- Cedar Rapids Parks
- 35-36--Dances (Parties)
- Carnival Week
- 11--Chautauqua
- Community Theater
- Little Gallery
- 27--Symphony Orchestra
- 13--Circus
- Greene's Opera House
- Amusement Parks (Alamo)
- Camps
- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)
- 10--Canoeing

2. Famous Characters

- Cherry Sisters
- 14-15--Grant Wood
- 15-16--Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- 14-15--Marvin Cone

Julia Allen

3. Lifestyle

- 16 --Life before air conditioning
- 16-17 --Winter Activities
 - Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
- 34 --Clothing
 - Toys
 - Saloons/Taverns
 - Farm Life

4. Family Life

- 18-19 --Household Help
 - Women's Roles
 - Childrens' Activities/Behavior
 - Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

- Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
- Indians
- 20 --Segregation of Blacks
 - Jobs Available

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education

- Cedar Rapids Schools
- Coe College
- Mount Mercy College
- Cornell College

2. Government

- City Services
- Streets/Roads
- Relationship with Marion (Courthouse Dispute)
- 22-23 --Streetcars

3. Medical

- Hospitals
- Patient-Doctor Relationship
- Broken Bones
- Polio, TB, Debilitating Diseases
- House Calls
- Home Delivery of Babies
- 24 --St. Lukes Hospital Auxiliary

Julia Robbins "Dody" Allen was born in Cedar Rapids in 1909, the daughter of Helen Larrabee Robbins and Charles Burton Robbins. The grandfather, William Larrabee, was governor of Iowa for two terms between 1886 and 1890. Her father, known as Colonel Robbins, was a lawyer and judge in Cedar Rapids. Many of Mrs. Allen's growing-up memories relate to Cleremont where she and her sister often stayed. After attending the Emma Willard Boarding School, she returned to Iowa and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Iowa. She married Alvin W. Allen in 1938, and except for three years in California during World War II, has lived in Cedar Rapids ever since. Her memories include transportation and local landmarks, as well as the early days of the Junior League and the art community.

IL: Julie, I know that you have been in and out of Cedar Rapids, but I don't know when you first came. They asked us to start with where you were born.

JRA: Here in Cedar Rapids.

IL: You were? I'm not going to ask when.

JRA: Well, you may. I was born in 1909.

IL: That's all they care of--and then you did live here in Cedar Rapids for a while?

JRA: Until the war.

IL: World War I?

JRA: World War I. My father was stationed in Deming, New Mexico, in the old Thirty-fourth Division. It appeared that he was going to be there for a long time, so my dad rented a house in Deming, New Mexico. We lived down there the better part of a year. Then Mother was sick and Dad got sent off to the war in Europe.

IL: Now this was World War I?

JRA: One, yes indeed. Mother was bed ridden, and so we went to my grandmother's in a little town of Cleremont, north of here. She had surgery in Boston and died. So rather than my father bringing us back to Cedar Rapids with him, after the war, we stayed with my grandmother and Aunt Anna. We commuted--came up every weekend.

IL: And this was in Cleremont?

JRA: Little town of Cleremont.

IL: Incidentally, did you see it on TV, I think it was Tuesday night?

JRA: I was supposed to be there, Iney.

IL: Oh, were you?

JRA: Yes, I was a hostess. And my daughter became ill--here I am talking about illnesses all the time--and her husband was out of town, so I felt that I shouldn't leave her.

IL: Well, I can understand that. So you say Cleremont, then, that was your home base from 1919?

JRA: 1919, and there we, my sister and I, were sent east to boarding school. But when we came home, we still went to Cleremont, rather than stay with Dad here in Cedar Rapids.

IL: Now was that in Washington. Were you at boarding school in Washington?

JRA: No, at Emma Willard in Troy, New York.

IL: And then Vassar?

JRA: No, I went to Iowa. I got home sick. I loved Iowa.

IL: Something came to mind when you were talking about Washington. Didn't you girls have a debut in Washington?

JRA: Yes. That was my--would have been my junior year in college.

IL: Oh.

JRA: Dad was made the Assistant Secretary of War. My sister had graduated from Vassar, and I took a sabbatical from Iowa, and we made our debut.

IL: I remember that.

JRA: Do you really?

IL: From those stories in the Gazette.

JRA: Oh, dear, Grace Glass, wasn't she editor?

IL: Well, when you were in Cleremont, did you ever come down to Cedar Rapids for a weekend, or something like that?

JRA: Frequently, yes.

IL: What do you remember about Cedar Rapids in those days?

JRA: There were lots of girls my age, whose parents were friends of mine, and I got asked to parties. (I remember especially one, the Cherry family whose house burned down on First Avenue, the Walter Cherry family, Virginia Cherry was my age.) The house they lived in had a ball room and I can remember Dad taking me downtown to buy a new dress for a ball. We were all children, you know, and he kind of over-did it. It was fluffy, ruffly, and the rest of the girls had kind of plain dresses on. But, we and Barbara Douglas, who is a good friend of mine, oh, let's see if there's any more around...

IL: And those were the days when the snappy sports cars were around. Oh, wow.

JRA: In fact, Dad had one, a LaSalle Roadster, '29 LaSalle Roadster. Gravel roads--and we used to go whipping across the country side. We'd pass a car and you'd eat gravel for ten miles.

IL: You said that he took you to buy a dress. Do you remember what stores you went to?

JRA: Must have been Killian's--Armstrong's didn't have a women's department.

IL: Was Denecke's?

JRA: Denecke's?

IL: Or was it Newman's by then?

JRA: Well, I don't know the dates. But it must've been a big department store.

IL: That would be fun, and you came down from Cleremont to do that shopping?

JRA: Yes. There was a little railroad line, the Rock Island--we called the Pea Vine--that went from Cedar Rapids to Cleremont. And most of our trips were made on that, even though we drove quite frequently, as I say, in the dust and dirt. If you got to a mud road, forget it, you were there.

IL: Wasn't your dad, after his service years, wasn't he involved with the Light Company?

JRA: No, he wasn't. He had a little insurance company here, and he kept up his activity in the reserve. He went from the National Guard to the Reserve Corps, and became a Colonel, and that's how he got his name, Colonel Robbins.

IL: A very well respected name, I might add.

JRA: Thank you! Thank you very much, Iney. Everyone's forgotten him, you know.

IL: I will always remember Colonel Robbins. I don't think I ever knew him, but the name certainly.

JRA: Well, he was a great guy.

IL: Speaking of those roads and trains and all, when you were in school down

to Iowa City, did you take the trolley up the Cedar River?

JRA: Oh, my. We used to go out to--we'd get a ride of some sort to Coralville, with one of the few who had a car, and board the Interurban there. Because people were climbing in the windows in Iowa City, you know. It was the only way to get to Cedar Rapids. And so, we'd have seats by the time we, they, got to the depot in Iowa City and all this horde came aboard.

IL: So, there was always a crowd from Cedar Rapids going to Iowa City, or from Iowa City going to Cedar Rapids?

JRA: Well, yes, they went from Cedar Rapids on, you see, on the Rock Island, or Northwestern or what have you.

IL: They'd come to the trolley to take the train from here?

JRA: Well, they were not only Cedar Rapids people, they were from all over. But they had to get to Cedar Rapids to get on their way, on a different route.

IL: Do you remember those days when you didn't take the trolley and you drove those awful roads? It's only by the grace of God that we're all here.

JRA: This is so true. And nobody could ever make the Midriver Hill if it rained, you know. I don't think I was at Iowa yet, but it was the famous Wisconsin game where it snowed and rained. Everybody who had been to the game and was coming north got stuck on the Midriver Hill. I don't know how long it took them to get untangled. And it was so miserable because it was snowing. I think some of them had to spend the night in their cars.

IL: I think they did.

JRA: You remember that, Inez?

IL: Yes.

JRA: I remember, I think my aunt and uncle were some of those that were stranded.

IL: Well, Margaret and Lumir Severa...

JRA: Severa, sure.

IL: I think they were some of those that were stranded. I don't know whether they were in their car or found a farm house or something.

JRA: Well, I don't know either. I wasn't at Iowa yet, but even you know the story, I mean, and you were younger.

IL: Who do you remember, as some of the outstanding people in Cedar Rapids, that you knew?

JRA: Well, I knew the Douglas' very well, and the Sinclairs. I knew the Goods-- your father's law firm.

IL: Grandfather's.

JRA: Grandfather. We practically knew everyone. The Ely family were very dear friends. And of course, we rented a house to the Holt family, next door to us on First Avenue. Our house was where the Americana is now. Great big old house. Mother bought the property next door to control tenancy. Her tenants were the Poe's, so they were good friends...the Cherry family... Iney, just about everybody in town. It wasn't too big a town in those days.

IL: You weren't here when the starch works blew up, were you?

JRA: No.

IL: No, that was before you came here.

JRA: I think it was the Quaker Oats fire that I was on the train, just leaving Cedar Rapids, and, of course, the Rock Island tracks going north, right by Quaker Oats.

IL: So you remember that?

JRA: I remember that vaguely, yes.

IL: Let's see, were there any other disasters at that point? I don't remember that there were.

JRA: Nothing was a disaster to us in those days, you know, life was great.

IL: There were no problems, were there?

JRA: No, and things like a disaster of the starch works blowing up, didn't mean anything to us. I mean, for heaven's sakes.

IL: It just seems incredible that anything like that could happen.

JRA: It does.

IL: Do you remember the movie theaters?

JRA: Oh, yes. I remember when the Paramount opened. I don't know why I think of this, because a young man who went kind of in our crowd was named Ray Wernimont--you know, Ray--and we used to call him Wernimont of the Paramount. Remember that? Then there was the Iowa which opened in the late

twenties. But the old one was called, the Isis?

IL: The Strand?

JRA: The Strand.

IL: On Third Avenue?

JRA: Yes, the Strand.

IL: Then there was the Isis, and the Palace.

JRA: Oh, yes. Second Avenue, the Isis.

IL: There were two. Can you imagine nowadays, two movie houses across the street?

JRA: Two movies across the street from each other. Well, that was our only source of entertainment. I think we had radios then, but we didn't have any television, for heaven's sake.

IL: Do you remember the ball room there? Rose?

JRA: Dance Land.

IL: Dance Land.

JRA: Where the Interstate is now, on A Avenue? My yes, and the floor used to bounce.

IL: And there was one over on Fourth Avenue and about Second Street. Do you remember that one? I can't remember the name.

JRA: No.

IL: And then, of course, remember the one on the river?

JRA: Oh, yeah. What was the name of it?

IL: Manhattan.

JRA: Manhattan Beach. Yes, indeed. I had forgotten about it, Inez.

IL: Do you remember that?

JRA: Yes, I do.

IL: And the sides would go up. Did you ever go boating on the river?

JRA: No. I don't think I ever was on the Cedar River.

IL: It was notoriously dangerous.

JRA: It still is.

IL: You were a good girl because you didn't go on it.

JRA: I guess nobody asked me, Inez, or I would have gone. I used to canoe on the Iowa. That was the sport in those days. And lots of people went up to Midriver on the Interurban and took their canoes and then paddled back to Iowa City. It was a whole day voyage. I remember them coming back just burned black, you know, and tired--they could hardly move. I never did it... but I remember my sorority sisters...

IL: That sounds like fun.

JRA: Yeah.

IL: Do you remember Chautauqua?*

* The summer schools inaugurated at Chautauqua, an assembly lasting several days, for educational and recreational purposes; the program included lectures, concerts, etc. Webster's New World Dictionary: 1967, p. 127.

JRA: I do. I was a little girl in Cleremont. They had a Chautauqua up there, and I can still remember some of the interesting people. One of them, named Julian Bryant, later became a famous journalist.

IL: Oh, really?

JRA: And I remember dinner was at noon, and a very formal meal, at Grandmother's. I can remember Julian Bryant coming to dinner. And I was so--I think he had been a war correspondent or something--but, I was a youngster, and I was all stars in my eyes, you know.

IL: Wasn't it a thrill?

JRA: Did you ever go to Chautauqua?

IL: Yes, I was taken to Chautauqua. I can't remember whether it was here or maybe up at Spirit Lake or someplace when I was a child. I remember the tent, and I don't remember who spoke, I don't remember the show or anything.

JRA: The musicians and what have you.

IL: And the Community Theater. You've been active in the theater haven't you, the Community Theater?

JRA: No. I was interested in it when it used to be upstairs from the Hobby House on Third Avenue. And all my friends, of course, were active in it, and had lots of jokes about the what-not.

IL: Were you ever, do you remember the Little Gallery?

JRA: There, next to...

IL: There on First Avenue. The Little Gallery?

JRA: It sounds very familiar, why can't I remember it?

IL: It preceded the Art Gallery. It was a government funded thing, and mister somebody...

JRA: Ed Rowan.

IL: Ed Rowan came to run it and when the money ran out, why...

JRA: It did.

IL: Everything else did too.

JRA: We were quite culturally active in those days, with the theater and art, and...

IL: The symphony?

JRA: The symphony. It kind of went through a bad time, and then it came back in the thirties, I think.

IL: That was in the thirties. Do you remember Greene's Opera House?

JRA: Yes, but very vaguely. I remember, was it the Majestic Theater?

IL: Yes.

JRA: On Third Street. Oh, we used to go to matinees there.

IL: That was live theater.

JRA: Oh, I know.

IL: They had, what was that company that came and did a different show every week?

JRA: Every week. I remember going with Cyrenus Cole, did you ever hear of him?

IL: Oh, we used to play with his top hats.

JRA: He was quite a character.

IL: Yes, he was a friend of Luther Brewer.

JRA: Oh, yes. They were journalists together.

IL: Somehow or another, his top hats, some were theater ones, the ones that collapsed, you know...

JRA: Really? What fun!

IL: How they found their way to our costume box, I'll never know, but we had a lot of fun with those...Do you remember circuses here in town?

JRA: I remember elephants walking out First Avenue, but that's...I think I remember parades downtown with tigers and their fancy cages, you know.

IL: Marvelous.

JRA: And the calliope going.

IL: Wasn't it fun?

JRA: Wasn't it fun?

IL: Sorry that our children will never know those...do you remember the Cherry Sisters?

JRA: I remember, I never saw them.

IL: And Grant Wood?

JRA: Oh yes, indeed. In fact, I've been looking up facts on Marvin Cone lately, and a man came up from the Art Museum, is it now?

IL: Cedar Rapids Museum of Art.

JRA: We used to have a whole bunch of Cones, because Marvin Cone, you know, he was on the border with Dad down in Deming, New Mexico.

IL: Oh, really?

JRA: Well, I'm diverting, but General Allen, who was with the light company, and my father, who was with the insurance company, and was a lawyer and had been a judge--knew everyone in Cedar Rapids. When they picked a headquarters company, they picked sons of prominent citizens--Worth Averill, Jim Yuill, and Marvin Cone, and so on and so on. We were all very good friends. When Allen and I were first married in 1938, Marvin wanted to go to Mexico on sabbatical leave from Coe. They had an auction on the second or third floor of the old library. They had an auditorium in there and Allen and I went. We sat right behind Grant Wood. So when they started bidding on paintings, Grant would turn around and say, "Now come on, Allen, let's talk it up, talk it up." And he finally pushed us in to a painting that I paid \$240 for and when we gave it to Coe College, it was appraised at \$7,000. If I had known it was worth \$7,000, I would have kept it.

IL: Marvelous.

JRA: Yeah. Grant was quite a guy.

IL: Now you have some of his paintings, don't you?

JRA: No, we sneered at them.

IL: Oh, so you don't have any?

JRA: In fact, Inez, my sister was married in 1931, and Grant and Marvin each gave her a painting identically framed so they were supposed to be hung together. My sister had an upright piano and she hid the Grant Wood behind it. She loved the Marvin Cone. It was of children in Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. It was a sweet thing. And the Grant Wood was his original Stone City painting. And my niece, who has it now, has been--people have been after it for years, but if something is worth something, it might be worth something more.

IL: I'll bet it's worth something.

JRA: It's the original painting.

IL: The fact that it's a Grant Wood would give it good...

JRA: So now it's right out in the middle of the room.

IL: You still have your Marvin Cone, don't you?

JRA: I only have one, well, I have two left. One is Dad's view from his office at the American Building looking up towards Shaver Park. And the other is a little scene from Montmartre, I loved that. That's really the only Marvin Cone that I have.

IL: Do you remember when Carl Van Vechten's book, The Tattooed Countess came through town?

JRA: Wow! Everybody who knew who it was, you know.

IL: He was a friend of my mother's. They were about the--had the same birthdate.

JRA: I don't think I ever met him.

IL: I never knew him. But I remember when the Tattooed Countess came out. They had a copy at home, but it was in the back of a ...

JRA: Oh, they hid it.

IL: They never wanted us to see it.

JRA: The closest I ever got to Ralph or Carl Van Vechten was Van Shaffer, their nephew. I knew Van very well.

IL: Do you remember life before air conditioning? Do you wonder how you lived?

JRA: I was thinking about it during the heat last week. I was here in the summer of 1934, I wasn't in 1936. I think before the summer of 1934 we just took it in our stride. But do you remember 1934? It was...

IL: Not too much of it. I went with the girls to the World's Fair. It was kind of hot, but we didn't think it was too hot.

JRA: It's all a matter of relativity, isn't it? But I can remember Ellen Douglas Williamson, who was quite character, got several hundred-pound cakes of ice and put them in the Douglas' swimming pool. We had more fun trying to stay on those. Anything to keep cool, you know.

IL: Oh, I think that's marvelous.

JRA: Isn't that fun?

IL: Marvelous.

JRA: She was always thinking of something. Quite a character.

IL: Well, did you do lots of winter activities? I don't think we did too many

in those days. Did you do a lot of winter activities?

JRA: No, scarcely any. I did when I was a child up in northeast Iowa. We were raised on skis. It's a Norwegian area, you know, and all the men who worked there skied after their horses. We started out on barrel staves. And when we could stand up on those, they'd let us have skis.

IL: Now, this was in Cleremont?

JRA: At Cleremont.

IL: There were lots of hills up there?

JRA: Real hilly. It's beautiful country up there.

IL: Hope to get there some day.

JRA: Oh, you must.

IL: Do you remember holidays? Did you make a big thing of holidays--the Fourth of July, Christmas?

JRA: Christmas, perhaps. I don't remember anything happening on the Fourth of July, except sparklers and things like that. My family weren't great for family picnics or anything like that.

IL: Do you remember, I don't know why you should, saloons and taverns?

JRA: Heavens no! My family were Prohibitionists.

IL: Oh, they were?

JRA: My grandfather, you know, he used to get shot at. He was such a violent prohibitionist.

IL: Now, which grandfather is this?

JRA: My mother's father, Governor Larabee. When he was governor, he got prohibition in Iowa. And I think one reason he had two year terms, and then the third term, he was defeated by a man from Waterloo named Bolice on the drinking problem. But they didn't even have a bottle of ginger ale in the house. It might be suggestive.

IL: Oh, really?

JRA: No, no taverns.

IL: No bubbly of any kind.

JRA: In fact, there was a Federal Law when I was growing up, Prohibition.

IL: That's when we learned about spiked beer.

JRA: Oh, the boys at Iowa used to spike their beer.

IL: Do you remember, when you were little up in Cleremont, and here in Cedar Rapids, there was always plenty of household help, wasn't there?

JRA: Oh, live in, especially during the Depression. But always in Cedar Rapids there were so many Czechs coming over, you know--didn't have anything. I think of old Annie Wolfe--her name wasn't Wolfe at all, it was something Yellowneck--that lived with the Wolfe sisters forever. Do you remember Annie?

IL: Annie? I don't know her, no. I guess I remember hearing them talk about her.

JRA: Nancy McHugh and I joke about Annie. She ran the family. She'd break in

the conversation when she was serving dinner and say, "Now, Fan that isn't right." But she was absolutely devoted, you know, it was her whole life. And then the sisters died, she died. But she came over from Czechoslovakia, oh, she must've been about seventeen and she worked for the Wolfes.

IL: Were there girls from Norway, Sweden?

JRA: I don't remember anyone but the Czechs. And there were lots of farmer's daughters. Couldn't make a living on the farm, you know, and the girls needed jobs.

IL: I know. We had one from the Amanas.

JRA: Oh, did you really?

IL: Of course, at that time, when they left the Amanas, they couldn't go back. So here was this poor gal, she couldn't go back. She could go..one of her Sunday deals was to go for Sunday dinners or something like that, but she couldn't stay. I wondered if you had run into that.

JRA: And when you're so young to make up your mind on a thing like that.

IL: When you were little, were there children's activities for you any place? Were you Camp Fire or were you active in a church group?

JRA: No, I wasn't.

IL: You don't remember any of those things? You said there were so many Czechs. So many Czechs coming to town. Someone said there were lots of Greeks that came in. And there were Greek restaurants in those days. Do you remember any of those?

JRA: There were Greek restaurants. And, of course, the Lapes family flower

shop is still in business, I guess. I'm sure they were Greek, weren't they?

IL: Oh, I think so. Probably would be called "Lop-us." Mr. Lapes.

JRA: Mr. Lapes.

IL: I think there was a cafeteria, the Harmony.

JRA: Yes, next to the old Cedar Rapids National Bank on Third Street.

IL: I think that was still running during the war, World War II.

JRA: Well, I know it was run by a Greek. I know that "Keg," Cyril Keggler, got his start there as a bus boy, before he opened Bishops or got into Bishops.

IL: Do you remember the situation with the Blacks here in Cedar Rapids?

JRA: We didn't have any. We didn't have any until after the war. We had so few, Inez. The Jim Hamiltons, their Bob was about the only Negro I can remember.

IL: There was a time when the big bands would come to town and if they were black, there was no place for them. They had to be housed with the local Blacks.

JRA: Local Blacks...Inez, was this after the war do you remember?

IL: Before World War II. I think it was probably before World War II.

JRA: I think it was after World War II that a black bought some property out on Mount Vernon Road, near Indian Creek, and built a motel for Blacks.

IL: Oh, I'd forgotten about that.

JRA: Right by the creek. He couldn't make a go of it. But it was just for Blacks.

- IL: I don't think I remember that. Seems to me, that there wasn't much problem. Of course, except during the Depression, of jobs; availability of jobs. Do you remember?
- JRA: I think even in the Depression, we were healthy. We had these big food factories; Quaker Oats, and the starch works, and what-not. Then we had road building equipment. The government was spending money on roads to keep the economy going. And I can't think we ever had a real depression in Cedar Rapids.
- IL: In one of our meetings, building up to this program, this project, they said that during World War I, a group of business men here in town got together and provided food.
- JRA: World War I?
- IL: Not World War I, excuse me, the Depression.
- JRA: Well, the Junior Service League ran a soup kitchen for the kids at Tyler School, you know.
- IL: This was before that, apparently.
- JRA: For heaven's sake.
- IL: Before the Depression. I hadn't heard that until this time, and I was wondering if you ever heard it? Getting to the schools, you didn't go to school here in Cedar Rapids, did you?
- JRA: Well, I went to Arthur School. In fact, our children, our girls, joked about it for years. I was in the first class at Arthur. And when our older daughter went to Arthur, I saw the plaque in the front hall there,

the opening date, and I shut up about having been to Arthur--September 1914. But, you see, then we went to Deming, New Mexico, and I never did get back in school.

IL: And Coe, and Mt. Mercy, and Cornell didn't play a big part in your life?

JRA: Coe, Dad was on the board at Coe, and I knew some of the personnel. And, of course, we have always tried to support Coe. Cornell or Mt. Mercy wasn't even in existence.

IL: It was still the convent...you don't, as far as city services and streets and roads were concerned--the street cars, do you remember the street cars?

JRA: Oh, Inez, I took the street car to Arthur School.

IL: Oh, you did.

JRA: We used to come home for lunch.

IL: Now, you were living on First Avenue at that time?

JRA: Yes, and Ella Poe lived next door, and the Davis', Betty Davis. We all went to Arthur and if the weather was bad, I don't think we walked. It's quite a hike to Arthur, that 1900 block. But I can remember Ella joking with the conductors and she had them all named.

IL: You'd take it up to 27th Street?

JRA: Yes. And then we had a horse and buggy. It was a big barn roof, I remember, behind our house.

IL: I went to a party in your barn.

Jra; Oh yes, you did. The party to end all parties. Oh, dear, what a mash that was. Well, we had a man who lived upstairs that took care of the horses. We had cows and chickens, can you believe it--on First Avenue. He would drive us to school sometimes.

IL: Well, that was kind of nice.

JRA: Those old street cars were the only way we got around. No cars, you know. If we wanted to go downtown, we'd hop the street cars. It was double-tracked on First Avenue.

IL: Oh, that's right.

JRA: Yes, indeed--all the way to Marion.

IL: I do remember that. The street cars were fun. They weren't air conditioned though.

JRA: Oh, nothing was. The theaters--the theaters were the first thing. I remember going to Paramount Theater to get cooled off. And it was so cold that you had to take a coat to hang around your neck.

IL: And I can remember going to the last show, so that it would be cooler when you got out.

JRA: Yes.

IL: Were you on the board at St. Luke's Hospital?

JRA: Yes.

IL: For a long time, weren't you?

JRA: So were you.

IL: Yeah, this is my last year, I'll be off. Were you on other community boards, were you interested in other things?

JRA: Yes, connected with St. Luke's, I was one of the ones that founded the Auxiliary.

IL: With Margaret.

JRA: With Margaret Averill, you bet. She made me in charge of opening a gift shop. I knew nothing about the retail business. I couldn't add two and two, either. And Laurel Ely and Grace Files--they had Grace Glass Files, and I started the gift shop. And Mrs. Ely's idea was to have it, oh, like bazaars at Christmas time.

IL: Handmade stuff.

JRA: Oh, yes. Embroidered dish towels and stuff, which we saw immediately weren't going to sell. I think we, one day, made all of five dollars, and now they make \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year, at least, don't they? Our quarters were terrible. The food bar was in the same room as the gift shop and there wasn't room to turn around. And we didn't know what would sell either, except candy bars. We sold them by the gross. Everybody wanted candy bars. We finally got the board to allow us to have cigarettes over such non-smokers as Bob Armstrong and the Methodist Church, and what-not. We sold cigarettes like mad until they put the squelch on that. Well, I wasn't there too long, Inez, because I had two children at home and getting in in the winter time was a job, and so I resigned. I belonged to the Auxiliary, but...

IL: And, of course, you were active in the Junior League.

JRA: Yes, I was vice president of the Junior League once, and I was on the PHNA Board, Public Health Nursing Association Board. I got the job of driving the truck to the camp and the summer camp Good Health. Used to go to the Bishops and pick up the food for the women who were out there scrubbing floors. Ella Johnson Miller and I worked hard at that...let's see, Inez, I don't remember what else.

IL: Were you ever involved with the YW?

JRA: No, no. I'm a member, but I've never had a big part in it at all.

IL: Going back to the League, did you work the soup kitchen?

JRA: Did I work in the soup kitchen? Oh, what an experience. Just fantastic. Really, if people could have seen those children they would have appreciated us more. The Tyler District obviously was the poorest part of town. Those little kids would come, and if they possibly could, they would bring a penny. They didn't want to be on--a different era, isn't it?--people didn't want to be given things. They had their pride. We made them wash their hands, and they'd come through the line showing their little, grubby hands. It was all volunteer work. I remember people like Esther Armstrong making sandwiches by the gross, you know, people you wouldn't expect to be working in the kitchen. But we were so well rewarded by giving these kids one good meal a day.

IL: My job was to answer the phone in Miss Bender's office on Wednesday mornings. That was one of my jobs down there, and that was the day they had vegetable soup.

JRA: You can still smell it?

IL: I can still smell it, I can't eat it.

JRA: I don't blame you any. I never had anything to do with the day nursery.
Did you?

IL: No. Esther Armstrong, you mentioned her, she and I used to work in the
Well Baby Clinic together down there.

JRA: Oh.

IL: Did you ever have any broken bones?

JRA: Not until the summer of 1980.

IL: Recently.

JRA: And then they started breaking, and I just had a rash of them.

IL: Do you remember when the doctors made house calls?

JRA: Well, not too long ago, I was thinking of Jerry Greenblatt coming to see
one of our children. Morgan Foster used to come, but was out of town and
Jerry came to this child who was howling and whimpering and said, "Do you
mind if I sit down, I always get in bed with my patients." And the kid's
eyes just bugged out. And Jerry was number one thereafter. That was even
after we moved out here.

IL: Really.

JRA: Yes.

IL: How long have you been out here?

JRA: Since 1949. Well, we bought the property in 1945 and we built in '48 or '49.

IL: I didn't realize it had been that long.

JRA: It's quite a hitch. I do, when I get geriatric diseases of the house--
degenerating diseases.

IL: When the house gets them.

JRA: Yes, the house gets them.

IL: Well, it's so pretty up here. It's just lovely.

JRA: Well, this was McClelland property, you know. Dr. McClelland was a very good friend of my family's. My uncles and he were at Iowa together. He used to visit in Cleremont. He lived on the corner of Nineteenth and First when we lived across the street and up half a block, and he raised horses. I can remember. A real nice guy, Dr. McClelland. But he only would sell us narrow swaths. You know, we were speaking of symphony, he had a chalet down here, just where this house is built. It had a whole bunch of tile. It burned down but, before that, he used to have musical practice for the symphony out here. And, was it, Ed Files?

IL: Dr. Ed Files.

JRA: Yes, was active in the symphony. And so was Dr. McClelland. I forget who else, but they always reminisced about practicing at the chalet. They could come out here and blow their brains out, you know, and nobody would know. It was out in the woods.

IL: Wouldn't that be fun? We used to think that out at the farm. A great place for the kids. Liz and all her gang could come out there and scream and nobody would care.

JRA: Nobody cared.

IL: We were talking about the department stores a while ago. The ones that were there. Do you remember Killians? Armstrongs, as you say, they didn't have a ladies department.

JRA: It was a men's store.

IL: It was an all men's store. And Denecke's, that later became Newman's.

JRA: Newman's, were the Newbergers. Martin's is still alive.

IL: Martin's is still alive. And across the street from Martin's was...

JRA: O'Meara's.

IL: Yeah, O'Meara's, but then--they were on First Avenue. Then they bought through, bought the Mansfield block on Second Avenue...I shouldn't have brought it up.

JRA: Kresgee's on the corner of First and Third...

IL: Kresgee's.

JRA: Sanford's, I remember very well.

IL: Do you remember when it was on Second Street, Sanford's?

JRA: The Mullin Building.

IL: Right.

JRA: They had little listening rooms where you take a record in, and you could see people dancing around to the music in there.

IL: I can still hear people walking on that floor.

JRA: Oh, really, Inez. It really sticks with you.

IL: Doesn't it though? Do you remember the Union Station?

JRA: I wept when they tore it down. What a tragedy! Today it would have been known all over.

IL: Tragedy.

JRA: Yes, those great gothic arches inside.

IL: Mother said that when it was new and it was opened they had a great ball in there.

JRA: Oh, wonderful.

IL: That would have been fun.

JRA: That would have been great. Oh, that was a fascinating building--parking lot.

IL: I can smell that.

JRA: Can you still? They had something like 36 passenger trains a day.

IL: Oh, the smoke, and every passenger that went through there was smoking a cigar.

JRA: Always. They had big fires going in the fire places in the winter.

IL: Yes.

JRA: And I remember the train. The night train from Chicago sent out a car, a Pullman car and when we went to Emma Willard, we were taken down and put on

the car. We were supposed to go to bed, you know. But we'd be real gay. We'd hop off and go and play in Greene Square. Got picked up during the night sometime and...

IL: You never got left?

JRA: No, I don't think we stayed up that late.

IL: The banks, there were quite a few banks when we were there.

JRA: Well, my father was associated with the Cedar Rapids National. Before that, I think the Security Bank. There is still the Security Building, I don't know who owns it now. The light company used it for years before they moved to IE. But my safe deposit key is from the Security Bank. Because when it went under, or whatever happened, they moved its vaults to Cedar Rapids National. When the Cedar Rapids National was taken over by Jim Hamilton, it was moved to the Merchants. It's a real old box and key. I kind of love it because it's so many years.

IL: Where is it now, here in the house or in the bank?

JRA: Oh, it's in the bank.

IL: Oh, you mean they are still using the old box?

JRA: Yes, yes. I think there is an "S" on the key so they can identify the bank and the box...

END OF SIDE ONE--BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

IL: Okay, here we go again. Some of the buildings downtown. It's interesting to go through town now; all the grubby ones are being torn down.

JRA: Yes, well it helps the looks of Cedar Rapids. But they are being indiscriminate, I mean, they aren't saving any of the old pretty ones.

IL: It's too late for some of them, they are already gone.

JRA: They are already gone. I know the Magnus Hotel and the Allison. That dreary looking corner by the tracks where that one hotel was, you can see the paint on the building next door.

IL: Isn't that awful?

JRA: Just awful.

IL: I guess they have to finish that law suit before they decide what to do with that, don't they?

JRA: I guess, I think that the restaurant won.

IL: Did they?

JRA: It was in the paper the other day.

IL: Thinking back over the times when you were young, your girls were young, and now your grandchildren. Don't you think it is interesting the different philosophies that are used?

JRA: The manners and the morals are so different. I mean, our parents would have been absolutely horrified at what our children did, much less our grandchildren. Wearing jeans to school and shorts. Even my girls wore starched dresses, you know, all dressed up every school day. But what they wear now, Inez, I take my granddaughter to Franklin, they look just like a bunch of people working in a hay field. It's just impossible.

IL: Do you remember when you were young, were you allowed to go to Sunday movies?

JRA: We were allowed to go to no movies when we were in Cleremont. My aunt, Mrs. William Larrabee, Jr., used to wind up her old Cadillac, one of those open jobbies, and go to West Union, nine miles away, for movies. And Grandmother would never let us go. But, incidentally, next weekend, I am spending with my cousin, Janet and Larry Mitchell, from that family, the William Larrabee, Jr. family. She inherited most of the old family house which is down the hill from Montauk. When her husband retired from Chapman, Cutler Law Firm in Chicago, they decided to refinish it. They spent a year replastering it, putting in new this, that. They came out during the summer several times. In fact, you mentioned my not being at Cleremont when the Governor was there. You said something...

IL: This was on P.M. Magazine the other night.

JRA: Oh, that's right, you said it was on television. The Governor, his wife, and the three children, one of them five months old, a nurse, a security guard, and his airplane pilot all visited Jan. That's how big her house is. The William Larrabee, Jr. house. She wanted me to come out. I said, "Jan, for heaven's sake, where would I sleep?" She said, "I saved the maid's room for you." So they have plenty.

IL: Oh, you mean they all stayed there with her.

JRA: Stayed there with her, yeah. She said they were just wonderful people, just absolutely down to earth. Just plain old, everyday people. She had to go some place with the Governor at eight o'clock the next morning, to do with his schedule. She got back and Mrs. Branstad had washed all the dishes and

cleaned up and everything. They are just that kind of people.

IL: Isn't that nice.

JRA: She said that the baby was just an angel. Didn't give anybody any trouble at all.

IL: Wasn't that fun for her?

JRA: It was.

IL: She's a very special person, I think...and how different now, the working woman. Do you remember, when we were growing up, we didn't know very many women who worked? Do you remember?

JRA: Teachers.

IL: Other than teachers?

JRA: Other than teachers it was zilch.

IL: There might have been some secretaries.

JRA: And clerks.

IL: Yes.

JRA: Yeah, there were secretaries, Inez, too, but somehow they weren't in our league.

IL: Somehow, our paths never crossed in those days.

JRA: That's the way you should put it.

IL: Do you remember the Lyman-Stark Building? Oh, no, you wouldn't, you wouldn't

remember that.

JRA: That's the Lyman Company, was on First.

IL: Betty Lyman was one of your neighbors down on First Avenue.

JRA: Yes, yes. And the hats--flowers and feathers. Women wore such elaborate hats. And we always wore hats.

IL: Always had hats and white gloves.

JRA: You bet, every place. And I remember we used to take the New York Central from Chicago to Albany when I went to school in the East. To go in for breakfast, lunch, or dinner you wore a hat and gloves.

IL: Wasn't that amazing?

JRA: Now people go in jeans. A different world.

IL: Certainly, going into restaurants in blue jeans and tank tops I think is simply awful...Do you remember a great deal about Women's Suffrage, when the women got the vote, and all? Do you remember anything about that?

JRA: The only thing I remember, this was before the war, Inez, and Dad had a great big old Kissel car--how could anybody drive it? It had a gear shift on the outside, you know. It had to be cranked and everything. Every weekend, every Sunday I guess it was, Dad would drive Mother through rural areas and she would put Women Suffrage literature in their mailboxes.

IL: Oh, really?

JRA: Now, that's all I remember about Women's Suffrage.

IL: But was she an active?

JRA: Very active.

IL: Suffragette.

JRA: And her mother, my grandmother, was absolutely the opposite. Grandmother would never vote. She said it was not a woman's place to vote. But Mother...

IL: Even when her husband was running for Governor?

JRA: Well, no, no. Women did not vote. It was a man's world, you know. Men were great gods.

IL: Oh, the Roaring Twenties. You mentioned your friends, the Douglasses, the Sinclairs, and the Poes in the Roaring Twenties. That was kind of fun, wasn't it?

JRA: We had a lot of fun because we made our own fun. This is what bugs me about children today. They have to be going someplace. We gave our own parties. We thought up our own activities, and, of course, the famous, famous parties at Brucemore that Ellen Douglas cooked up, you know. Why, they are still famous. Any of us who ever went to one of them would like to write a book about it, I think. We made our own fun.

IL: Were those parties costume parties?

JRA: Some of them, yes. The most famous one, Ellen wrote the script for, was a reverse party. The men came as women and the women as men. And they had a wedding and some really masculine guy, I don't know, maybe Frank Witwer, was the bride, and some very delicate little female was the groom. And I can still remember the ushers, the groomsmen, they carried potted geraniums.

And it was mirthsome, people like that in their dresses. Even Morgan Foster, Dr. Foster, was one of the bride's maids.

IL: Were those parties..that was very definitely a theme party...

JRA: We had them alot at the club, too, Inez--theme parties. We had ones that were about the "Wild, Wild, West" or something like that. And we all dressed up, and we had a fantastic time. And nobody drank much, and if they did, they had to...

IL: Hip flask.

JRA: They had to have a hip flask, and go behind the bushes or something. But it was so much fun to make your own fun. And we had a pool table at our house on First Avenue. We had kids every evening over there playing pool, and the women getting madder and madder because the boys were...

IL: Playing pool instead of talking to them.

JRA: Yes, instead of. And we'd roll the carpet back and get out the Victrola and dance. Now they have to go somewhere.

IL: Go somewhere. Oh Dodie, you have been a marvelous interview. It's been such fun.

JRA: It's been fun talking to you, Inez, because you are old Cedar Rapids, and you remember so much that I did.

IL: We remember alot of the same things.

JRA: We do indeed.

IL: Well, it's been fun. I hope that you're not too tired.

JRA: Oh, no. I hope you're not after...

IL: Heavens no, I'm not. Can you think of anything more you'd like to say?

JRA: I love Cedar Rapids.

IL: That's nice. That's nice to hear.

JRA: After the war, Al loved California. We were stationed in the Bay Area; Al and I were stationed for three years. We bought a house out there and Al really wanted to stay. And I said, "If you stay, you are staying alone. I'm going to take Julie and go back to Cedar Rapids." It's a nice town. It has enough cultural events and what-not. And we've got Coe College and, of course, we've got Mt. Mercy now. And art, and the stores are excellent. What more do you want?

IL: Another thing that I feel about it--it's a wonderful place to be from. You can get any place in the world. At least in a 24-hour period.

JRA: You're equidistant, almost, from the coasts. Although those provincial people on the East Coast. They are just as bad in California, you know. Al and I went on a cruise once through New York. And, somehow or another, talking to a couple of school teachers, and they said, "Are you from IOWA? You come all the way from IOWA to get on this boat?" And we said, "Well, we are fairly close to the Mississippi, but they don't send cruise boats up." They didn't even know where Iowa was--the famous New York cartoon about New York, Chicago, and then nothing until you got to Los Angeles, or some place.

IL: Al was in the Navy, too. Did they tease him about being from where they made furniture?

JRA: I've heard that all my life.

IL: Really?

JRA: Always, Grand Rapids.

IL: Grand Rapids.

JRA: Actually, in the Navy, it wasn't too provincial because they were from all over. Still have Navy friends from Boston, Michigan, Ohio, so there were lots of us in the same category, as it were.

IL: This has been great, and as I say, I hope...

IL: We're back on tape. We're talking about Hazel Brown and Mary Lackersteen, and the Hobby House. Do you remember when it was on Third Avenue, the old house?

JRA: I do, indeed.

IL: And...

JRA: The Hobby House Gift Shop was on the ground floor. And then, upstairs, they had a place for a theater. All the early Community Theater's presentations were up there.

IL: They were, that's where they had their plays?

JRA: Yes, as far as I remember, Inez.

IL: This was before they went to the old YM. There was a time when they used to give their productions at the YM.

JRA: Well, yes. It must have been.

IL: This is before that.

JRA: I don't think any of the performers were very much on acting, they were all amateurs. Just having a good time. But everyone enjoyed it. And, of course, the Carey family were all wrapped up in it. They always are in anything theatrical, you know. And Mrs. Carey and then Liz, I suppose, who must have been quite young at that time.

IL: Now, let's stop and make sure we're coming through.

END OF SIDE ONE--END OF INTERVIEW

