JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
Ella Kettering Johnson Miller

Conducted by Ann Swaney
July 4, 1984
Indian Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Transcribed by Renae Blasdell

INTERVIEW TOPICS
CEDAR RAPIDS: THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

* means from Tape II

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

1,19--When were you born? Where?
1,22,31--How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?
1,19-20--What are your parents' names? and additional backgound.
1,3--Where did you go to school?
2,12*,13*--Are you married or single?
--Did you raise a family? How big?
4,5,29-31, 13*--What has been your occupation (career) during your adult years?

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

2,10,11,12-13,20--Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
3,5,8,12,22,1*--Trolleys (the Interurban)
2,4,8-9,17--Horses and First Automobiles
10--Mud roads and the seedling mile
--Hunter Airport and the first planes
--Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

2. Communications

16*,25*--Newspapers
26*--Radios
--Advertising
25*-26*--Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation

25-27,7--Motion Pictures
--Cedar Rapids Parks
--Dances
--Carnival Week
--Chautauqua
27,15*--Community Theater
--Little Gallery
5-6--Symphony Orchestra
--Circus
--Greene's Opera House
--Amusement Parks (Alamo)
--Camps
9*--Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)

2. Famous Characters

21*--Cherry Sisters
14*,15*,22*--Grant Wood
22*,27*--Carl Van Vechten (<u>The Tattooed Countess</u>)
21*-22*--Marvin Cone
3*,14*--Brucemore, Howard Hall's Palisades home

* means from Tape II

3. Lifestyle and appearance of Cedar Rapids landscape--2*,3*,27*,28*
13--Life before air conditioning
--Winter Activities
2,3--Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
--Clothing
20--Toys
--Saloons/Taverns
--Farm Life
10--Motels

4. Family Life--19
--Household Help
18*--Women's Roles
12 --Childrens' Activities/Behavior
--Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life
10*-11*,19*--Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
--Indians
--Segregation of Blacks
--Jobs Available

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community
1. Education
3,4,5,28,30-31--Cedar Rapids Schools
2,6-7,27,28,20*--Coe College
--Mount Mercy College
5,6--Cornell College

2. Government
--City Services
--Streets/Roads
--Relationship with Marion (Courthouse Dispute)

3. Medical --14,20-22
--Hospitals
20--Patient-Doctor Relationship
--Broken Bones
20-22 --Polio, TB, Debilitating Diseases
--House Calls
--Home Delivery of Babies
14,3*,23*--Public Health Nursing
14-15,3*,23*-24*--Camp Good Health

4. Women's Relief Corps--19
Junior League--27,32,38-40,5*-8*,13*
TriDelts--25
Carlton Literary Society--29
Horse-Buyers Club--9*-10*

* means from Tape II

4. Business and Economy
--Local Factories (Douglas Starch Works, Quaker Oats, etc.)
--Local Brewing Companies
7*--Retail Businesses /Department Stores
--Professions
--Banking and Finance
--Restaurants (Greek Restaurants in 30's)
34, 26*--Businesses that no longer exist (old groceries, drygoods, icehouses)
--Farmers Market
--Mills on Cedar River
--Buildings Erected
--Manual Labor/Types of Jobs
--Companies (Labor Unions, Strikes, Pay)

5. Attitudes/Values
19,24-25--Children/Discipline
--Sex/Petting
37--Charity
17*--Divorce
29--Work
23,18*--Working women, Voting Rights for Women
--Patriotism (World War I)

D. Historic Events in and Outside the Community
1. Catastrophic Events
--Clifton Hotel Fire (1903)
15-16--Douglas Starch Works Explosion(1919)
33-34--Bank Closings (1933)
--Lyman-Stark Building Collapse(1913)
--Public Library Murder(1921)
13-14--1929 Flood
2. National Historic Events
23--Womens' Suffrage
23--World War I
--Roaring 20's
28--Prohibition
32-33,4*-7*,10*--Great Depression
12--President Harding's death

Ella Kettering Johnson Miller was born in Lisbon, Iowa on January 11, 1903 to Ella Kettering Johnson and Elmer A. Johnson, a lawyer. Ella shares many experiences gained through her travels to Europe and across the United States, her friendships with local personalities and the everyday life situations and discriptions that add dimension to Cedar Rapids area history. Topics include years with the Junior League and Camp Health, transportation, Brucemore, symphony, and area colleges and schools.

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Interview with Ella Kettering Johnson Miller

Conducted by Ann Swaney

July 4, 1984

Indian Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

AS: Ella, where were you born?

Miller: I was born in Lisbon, but my name is Ella Kettering Johnson Miller.

AS: Ella Kettering Johnson Miller?

Miller: Right, in Lisbon, Iowa, January 11, 1903.

AS: What were your parents' names?

Miller: My mother was Ella Kettering and my father was Elmer A. Johnson.

AS: How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?

Miller: Since 1919.

AS: So you lived in Lisbon until you were 16 years old?

Miller: Right.

AS: From 1903 to 1919?

Miller: Right.

AS: Where did you go to grade school?

Miller: Lisbon Elementary School and then Lisbon High School.

AS: And then college?

Miller: I wanted to go to Cornell but my father said there was a perfectly good college in Cedar Rapids, and that I should go to Coe College. I am very grateful that I went to Coe College because I was the

only one of the Ketterings that came to Coe. My Grandmother Kettering was Mary Coe, a cousin of Daniel Coe.

AS: When were you and Errol Married?

Miller: Errol and I were married May 12, 1940, at 1809 Second Avenue, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

AS: We're sitting here talking on the Fourth of July. Do you have any memories of the Fourth of July when you were a child?

Miller: Yes. There was a friend of my father's--W. H. Kurtz. Mr. Kurtz was the clothier down there at Lisbon. Every Fourth of July, the Reids from Cedar Rapids always came down the night before and stayed with the Kurtz's. Then the next morning we would leave for Stoney Point which is just south of Mt. Vernon, and spend the day. My father always rented the hack from the livery barn so we could take a couple of hammocks and a couple of cane poles. And of course my mother and Mrs. Kurtz always furnished the food.

We would spend the whole day down there. Fishing and . . . I don't remember them shooting off any fire crackers but they probably brought a few along.

It was quite a day, and I was permitted to hold the lines driving the horses. I could sit up in the hack, right up on the front seat. That was a big thing for me.

AS: How did the Reids get from Cedar Rapids to Lisbon?

Miller: They came on the Northwestern train.

AS: How long did that take, do you remember?

Miller: About a half an hour because the train would have to stop at Otis, Bertram, Mt. Vernon, and Lisbon.

AS: You were saying something earlier about fire crackers at that

time?

Miller: Yes. Dr. Hasek was a young doctor at that time. He would come down to see, who later was his wife, Ruth Sturgeous. He would bring a big box of fire crackers, and I mean a big box--sky rockets, roman candles, and all kinds of crackers. It was quite a thing for the Sturgeous boys to invite us children--and we were permitted to maybe hold a roman candle--and watch the fire works at night on Main Street that Dr. Victor Hasek would bring down.

AS: Where did he buy the fire works?

Miller: In Cedar Rapids. He bought them in Cedar Rapids and he would bring them down on the Inter-Urban.

AS: So the Inter-Urban was also a common transportation?

Miller: Yes. It came to Lisbon in 1913. I was just ten years old and I can remember them bringing, you know, running it down in the town. Which was quite an occasion.

AS: You also must have done a fair amount of going back and forth between Lisbon and Mt. Vernon?

Miller: I did. I took music at the Conservatory. Then when I graduated from high school in 1920, I had to go back and forth, and we moved to Cedar Rapids in 1919. I went back and forth on the Inter-Urban to finish with my class--the class of 1920.

AS: Ella, I know that at one time you were a teacher at Wilson's School in Cedar Rapids. What was that like in 1920?

Miller: I started teaching school over at Wilson in 1926. I had taught two years previously at Notre Dame. My father told me when I was a senior at Coe that I had to get a job teaching school to learn where the dollar came from. So I did, and I enjoyed it.

I think he felt I was having too good of a time up at Milford because it was close to Lake Okoboji and I didn't miss anything. We went to dances and had a good time. So, he had me come to Cedar Rapids.

I taught under Miss Post at Woodrow Wilson for three years and enjoyed that experience very much.

AS: What did you teach?

Miller: I taught American history.

AS: Did you have teacher training classes at Coe?

Miller: No.

AS: Was that common at that time?

Miller: In fact I taught normal training at Milford and went to the institutes at Spirit Lake with the kids. Some of those high school seniors were older than I. I was 21 when I went to Milford to teach. There were several boys and one girl that were over 21. So we went to the institutes at Spirit Lake the two years I was there.

My father would bring our Cadillac--we had a seven passenger Cadillac--and I would take a load of those and another student whose father had a car. We'd take our sandwiches and go to school at Spirit Lake for three days.

AS: For normal training? Teacher's training?

Miller: That's right. And then the students at the end of the year would be given the state exams. This idea was for them to become teachers in the country school. When we would give them their examinations I was more nervous than the students. I was afraid they wouldn't pass. But they all made it.

AS: Were you a history major in college?

Miller: Yes.

AS: Would you guess that it was very different in school at that time than it would be now? How big, for example, were your classes?

Miller: Well, I had--of course in Milford they were smaller--but over at Woodrow Wilson I had 32 or 33 in my class.

AS: A large class. And your basic equipment was a text book?

Miller: That's right.

AS: And a blackboard?

Miller: And a blackboard.

AS: Did you have any particular discipline problems?

Miller: I was young and I think that made a difference. When I taught at Milford, as I said, some of those students were older than I. And I never had any discipline problems.

AS: You grew up a few miles from Cornell College as you have already stated, what can you tell us about Cornell during those years?

Miller: Cornell, and it still is, an excellent college. Every weekend on Saturday mornings I would take the Inter-Urban and have a piano lesson at the conservatory. I attended the conservatory over there for about three years. I enjoyed it.

One of the outstanding events was the yearly May festival. The Chicago Symphony would come out every May for the five concerts.

AS: Was this a regular tour of theirs or did they only come to Mt. Vernon?

Miller: That's right. They came just . . .

AS: That must have been pretty unusual.

Miller: Yes. And then of course Dr. Stock, during the war years he was

the head of the symphony--Frederick A Stock. He would come out many times and never charge for his services. And they all loved it. The college would have baseball games. Roland Coe and I raised $115,000 for the Dr. Frederick A. Stock memorial. We thought he should be remembered because he gave his time and many of his services to the college and never charged.

AS: I'm sure that helped the school's reputation.

MILLER: That's right. And at that time in the early days, Cornell, and still is the only college to have--it's the oldest college west of the Mississippi for music festivals--May festivals.

AS: Did a lot of children take music lessons?

Miller: Yes. Cornell was an outstanding music school at that time.

AS: Can you remember how much it cost to take music lessons?

Miller: No, I never paid the bill. (Laughter)

AS: Did you practice alot?

Miller: Well, not any more than I really had to. But I have always loved music and I was a lazy person. I played by ear, still do, but nevertheless, I wouldn't give that experience for anything.

AS: Well, then you did go to Coe College and that was in the early twenties, I guess the roaring twenties.

Miller: I also took piano from Max Daehler.

AS: At Coe?

Miller: At Coe.

AS: Were there a lot of women in college in the twenties. Was it common for women to go to college?

Miller: Yes.

AS: You lived at home?

Miller: Yes.

AS: What was your social life like in college? What did a typical college student do on a weekend at Coe College?

Miller: When I first went to Coe I was a little bashful. After all, I came from a little town and it was a little hard for me to get in the swing of city life. But I learned, and I had a friend who was a senior and was outstanding and she was an example to me. She did a lot for me.

AS: Were most of the activities on campus or were they in private homes?

Miller: When I was a junior we had several people--one from West Branch, one from West Liberty--and the girl's family would invite us to come down for a weekend. My father gave me his car and we would fill that with girls and we would all go down and have a wonderful time for that weekend.

AS: Were there many dances or theatre productions on campus?

Miller: Yes. We had theatre productions. We'd all been in Cedar Rapids' Majestic Theatre. We had theatre productions.

AS: You said something about going to Iowa City football games?

Miller: Yes, that was quite an experience. I was a junior when that happened. My father had gotten tickets for the event and Bert Hickenlooper was in his office, just starting out in law business. So he and another friend of mine and a friend of his and my father and mother went to the game. But on the way over to Iowa City it started to sprinkle and my father didn't want to sit out in the football game and get a little wet so he told me to drive to the Inter-Urban station so he and my mother could come home.

So we put them on the Inter-Urban and we went back to a party over at the park. It happened that the Hickenloopers' fraternity was having a party with another fraternity. Then it started to rain and it just poured all night. So Hick and a friend of his found a place for us to stay--Peg Ubil and me--and they picked us up the next morning at 9:00 and took us to a restaurant to have our breakfast.

It had stopped raining in the meantime and cars were stuck between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City but I thought we could go home by the way of Solon because I had driven that road many times.

AS: Were they mud roads all the way?

Miller: Yes, in those days. So Hick said no, I couldn't drive that, it was too risky. We argued and he got so mad he called my father on the telephone and my father said to put her on the telephone. So he told me, you leave that car in Iowa City and come home on the Inter-Urban. Well, I lost my case. After a great argument I should do as I was told. And I couldn't have my car for a whole week! Then Hick had to go to Iowa City to get it. So I was without transportation going to class at Coe College.

AS: That must have really been something when cars would bog down in the road. Not only would the road be bad but then they would have to dig the cars out before it would become passable again.

Miller: That's true. Many times, just east of Lisbon there was a big hole and a fellow used to stand with a team and pull the cars out of this mud hole. He was making money in those days. He charged $5 every time he pulled a car out of this mud hole.

AS: When did your family first own a car?

Miller: In 1913.

AS: You were ten years old?

Miller: That's right.

AS: And when did you learn to drive?

Miller: Well, I didn't learn, I watched Mr. Fiala who sold my father his seven passenger Cadillac. The Fiala's would take me with them. They had two children and the oldest, Willard, was in my class. They would take me with them a lot and I would watch Mr. Fiala drive that car so I knew exactly how to handle a car. I learned to clean carburetors--and grease cups, fill those by watching him.

AS: Was it necessary at that time to know how to do that?

Miller: That's right. We didn't have garages.

AS: Gas stations?

Miller: They were just starting to have one pump where you turn the handle to pump a gallon of gasoline.

AS: Like when you went to Iowa City?

Miller: That's right.

AS: I know that you took some fairly long car trips, early?

Miller: The first long one was to Seattle in 1935.

AS: What were the roads like in 1935?

Miller: They were graveled, not all of them. And they were dirt, you had to watch. But we had fairly good roads.

AS: How long did it take you to get there?

Miller: Five days.

AS: To Seattle?

Miller: Well, see, I took my Aunt Jo and her daughter. When we started

out we went to the Black Hills and then up through Montana, Billings, Lewistown, Great Falls. And I had never seen Glacier Park nor had they so we went to Choteau and spent the night on the east side of Glacier Park, and then went across the park. The next day that took us a whole day--and had our lunch I remember in Many Glacier's Hotel. We came down and I remember we had our dinner at Kalispell.

AS: Where did you spend the nights? Were there hotels regularly placed?

Miller: Yes. Then we went to Kalispell, I wanted to make time. We spent the night, I think it was in Thompson, Montana--a little town where the Milwaukee trains' engines came in at night. Then the next day we made Seattle.

AS: You did stay at hotels?

Miller: No, we stayed at tourist homes. The western hotels weren't like ours. Tourist homes are more for our pocketbook anyway. A dollar a night.

AS: Can you tell me anything about the Seedling Mile?

Miller: Yes, that's out on the old Lincoln highway between Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Mt. Vernon. The Seedling highway starts where the division is now that you take past Camp Good Health or into Marion. Percy Smith put in that mile. They were testing out what cement would do. Whether it would hold up during the winter or the summer. What the cold and heat and that sort of thing . . . They were trying it out for roads and if it was successful they would continue to use it. The country is full of it now, cement roads.

AS: What was the next thing they paved when they decided it was successful? They continued that road onto Mt. Vernon?

Miller: Yes, but it was a number of years later.

AS: How about train trips?

Miller: I had quite a few train trips to Los Angeles at one time. Seattle I went just once by train, then I went up to St. Paul and took the Canadian Pacific over to Vancouver. Then you take a boat over to Victoria and down to Seattle. I did that in 1927. That was my first trip.

AS: Before you went west you went to Europe, then?

Miller: Yes, in 1922.

AS: Was that . . .

Miller: That was four years after World War I. It was most interesting. The battle fields outside of Paris, and then we went up to Belgium and saw the small berth that did a lot of . . . The Germans had turned that gun on their fortress where they had hidden--camouflage --and the fortress was made out of cement. It just opened up that fortress. The shell was 1,400 pounds and the way they got the shell into that gun--they had a little wagon on a track that was a small, narrow railroad track. And they would haul that 1,400 pound shell. They had one shell left that we saw. This gun barrel was 57 feet long and all camouflaged.

AS: How did you get from Cedar Rapids to New York? Did you sail from New York?

Miller: No, we sailed from Montreal. We went there by train, to Chicago...

AS: And then oceanliner?

Miller: Right. We took an English ship to Naples through the strait of

Gibralter.

AS: How long were you gone on this trip?

Miller: It took us almost two weeks to get to Naples. Our trip started out the eleventh of June, and we came back the eleventh of December. Our trip down the Rhine River--when we came to the Coblenz we were leaning over the rail and I saw a flag in the distance. I said to Margaret Armstrong, I believe that's the American flag. When we got closer we saw two American soldiers walking back and forth in front of this building. It was where the United States Army had their headquarters--in Coblenz--after World War I. I might add that when I saw that flag and those soldiers I had to weep. Because here was a little country girl, I'd never been away from home this far, and there's no place like the U.S.A.

AS: There's always been a lot of train traffic in Cedar Rapids.

Miller: One of the greatest and most interesting was when I was--in 1923--when I was a junior at Coe; President Harding died and his funeral train was to come through Cedar Rapids. We found out it would be in on a certain afternoon so we got into my father's car and went down and parked it right near the library. All of us got out and waited for this train to come in. It finally did all decorated with American flags and going very slowly. Mrs. Harding was sitting in the last coach. It was all draped in boack.

AS: Ella, how easy was it to get around in Cedar Rapids?

Miller: You had use of the streetcars before the days of buses. When we lived in Lisbon it was a big treat for us to come on the train. The women would bring the children up on a Saturday and spend the day at Bever Park. We would get off at the Northwestern station

and get on the Beaver Avenue car and go out to Bever Park. These cars in the summer time were open so that you had plenty of good ventilation and you were just out in the open. We'd go out to the park and they had the animals in the park at that time and that was another treat. Then they had all sorts of swings, chute-to-chutes, and our mother's would bring the food and we'd spend the whole day. Late in the afternoon it was time to get on the streetcar and go back to the Northwestern station and wait for the train to come and take us back to Lisbon.

AS: Can you remember what kind of food you would take on these picnics?

Miller: They would have fried chicken, potato salad, sandwiches--all kinds.

AS: There were no food vendors available in the park?

Miller: Nothing like that, no.

AS: How many bridges were there in Cedar Rapids, say in 1920?

Miller: We had the F Avenue by the dam. Then the First, Second, and Third Avenue, and a bridge going across for the Inter-Urban. Then the Eighth Avenue, that was a new bridge. And also the 16th Avenue.

AS: You had as many then, almost, as you do now.

Miller: That's right.

AS: You mentioned a flood, a bad flood?

Miller: When I was teaching over at Woodrow Wilson we had a flood in 1929. The only way we could cross over to the west side was to use the 16th Avenue Bridge. So I always took some of the teachers every morning and after school that one day I said, how would you like to have me drive you up to First Avenue on the west side near St. Patrick's Church to see this water. To see how far it had come up on the streets, we had read about it in the Gazette.

Miller: No, but all the entrances to the bridges were under water.

AS: You were on the board many years for Camp Good Health weren't you?

Miller: Yes.

AS: When did Camp Good Health start?

Miller: It was in the late twenties.

AS: And the purpose of it was . . .

Miller: To help undernourished children. Mrs. Johnson, who was head of the Public Health Nursing, started this project of Camp Good Health for the children because she came in contact with them and they needed help. She was taking them various places for many weekends and they'd have a tent put up. Mr. John F. Ely was on the board. He took an interest in this project and he's the one responsible for getting the land for the camp where it is at the present time.

AS: What would you like to say about medical care during this time?

Miller: All the doctors gave their services to go over these children so they were the ones that were worthy to go into this camp. Mr. Vern Marshall gave it publicity, and in fact he was one of the big sponsors of it in the beginning.

AS: It obviously was before penicillin, antibiotics, and probably before too many vaccinations were available, too.

Miller: Not too many.

AS: Was most of the work and materials contributed for Camp Good Health?

Miller: That's right, it all was. Mr. Ely was responsible in having the Administration Building put up by his wife and Mrs. George Douglas.

And then he had other people, such as Mrs. Dows, and various other people give cabins where the children slept. Mrs. Douglas called me and wanted to know if she could do something for the camp later on. I said, Mrs. Douglas, we need a new well. The first well that Mr. Ely put in was too close to the creek, a big creek. Every time the creek would overflow we would have to chlorinate it. So Mrs. Douglas asked me to find out how much it would cost for the new well. I remember I called Phil Shive, who was on the board, and he advised me to get a man whom I knew, Charlie Noland.

I took Mr. Nolan out and we walked all over that Camp Good Health ground and put the well in up on top where it is today. He gave me a price of $200. It runs a hundred and some feet deep, and we're still using it.

I might add this. The road facilities weren't too good so we got help. I was given help spreading gravel, and so forth. Everything was donated. Then we needed another cabin, which was just a plain cabin with bunks in it. The carpenter and I put that up, it was the last one. It was just torn down recently with all the other cabins. The administration is still in good condition and it is still up and usable.

AS: It's always been a good project?

Miller: Absolutely. And it still is.

AS: Ella, you mentioned Mrs. Douglas. Do you remember when the starch works blew up?

Miller: I do as a child. I can remember my father was at the baseball game down at Tipton. He came home and said they could hear a rumble that followed the river. Then they discovered--the report came

that it was the Douglas Starch Works.

AS: Did you go down and see it? Did you know people who were involved?

Miller: Not at that time, I was just a youngster. When we had our first car, we drove up past there and saw the ruins.

AS: It just leveled it, didn't it?

Miller: That's right. And then also, the Lyman Building, when it fell. Concrete. I think it was from the sixth floor, fifth or sixth. That fell, and we had our car at that time and we drove up on a Sunday afternoon -- Samuel G. Fouse (was from Lisbon) and us-- we went to see that. I'll never forget those rods, reinforcing rods hanging down from the fifth floor, and all the cement. As I recall, it killed several men.

END OF SIDE I TAPE I

BEGINNING OF SIDE II

Follow-up Interview
May 10, 1985
Conducted by Laura Derr

LD: Ella, I'm not going to cover some of the biographical information again, because we already have that from Ann's interview. But, one thing that's intrigued me from what I have heard from Ann's interview and from our earlier discussions is, I would like to have some background on your growing-up years in Lisbon before you came to Cedar Rapids. To start off, would you tell me, what did your dad do for a living.

Miller: He was a lawyer. He came to Lisbon in 1899. One of his classmates was Aver Sargeant, who was an outstanding attorney here in Cedar Rapids.

LD: And how many brothers and sisters did you have when you were growing up?

Miller: I was an only child.

LD: You were an only child. That explains alot to me because you have a very individual personality. You know what you want, you see, I could tell that from what I've heard earlier. Your father probably treated you like a son. Did you ever feel that way?

Miller: He was very exacting, I can tell you that.

LD: Okay. Can you give me an example?

Miller: Well, I could say this: We had an automobile, our first car, he purchased in 1913, from the Lattner twins, T.M. and Joel Lattner from Cedar Rapids. Then in 1916, he bought a seven-passenger Cadillac and I had learned to drive, in a way, from Mr. Fiala, who sold him the car. The Fialas used to take me with them on trips to Solon. Their children were in school with me and Ward, the oldest of the two, was in my class and I watched Mr. Fiala drive that car, which was a Cadillac, and I knew everything that he would do. I even watched him fill the grease cups. So when my father decided to get this car, it was given to me on Memorial Day out at the cemetery.

LD: What year was that then?

Miller: 1916.

LD: 1916. So you would have been 13 years old?

Miller: I was so surprised because Mr. Fiala said, "Now this is your car. Come on and I'm going to take you out for a ride." So we went out through the gate and went down the south road and we got down

there a ways and we stopped. He said, "Ella, do you think you can drive this car?" I said, "Yes, Mr. Fiala." So he allowed me to get into the driver's seat and I drove it down the road for probably a mile or two. Then he saw a driveway running into a farmhouse. He said, "Do you think you can turn this car around?" I said, "Yes, Mr. Fiala." So I turned the car around and we headed back to the cemetery and we got back to the gate and he said, "Well, I think you'd better stop now and let me drive in." So I did. We got out of the car and my father and mother came and we were going to go home. My father took over the wheel and my mother and I were a little frightened the way he drove home, but we were able to make it. He drove into the barn and we thought he was going through the back end of the barn but he stopped it in time. Then when he got out of the car, he said to me, "Now don't you dare take this car out of the barn without an older person with you." Apparently Mr. Fiala had told him that I could drive. I never disobeyed him because what he said, he meant, and I knew.

LD: Even though you were probably a better driver than your dad was, right?

Miller: He used to keep me out of school. I could drive through the mud and take him to cases. I remember going up to Eldora.

LD: What was your mother's role in your household when you were growing up? Did she primarily stay home, take care of the house? Did she have servants?

Miller: Yes. No. No, she did her own work.

LD: She did everything.

Miller: Everything.

LD: Did you live on a large acreage that required alot of upkeep?

Miller: No. My father had ten acres at the edge of town. We were the third house from that acreage. But we were still in Lisbon at the east end, on Market Street.

LD: Was your mom involved in alot of community activities when you were growing up?

Miller: She belonged to Relief Corps.

LD: The Relief Corps. Now what was that exactly?

Miller: That's an offshoot of the Civil War, you know, the old GAR's (Grand Army of the Republic). Then the women started their organization, the Womens' Relief Corp.

LD: Who did the disciplining in your household?

Miller: My father.

LD: Primarily your father.

Miller: Always.

LD: He ran things with a pretty stern attitude.

Miller: Always.

LD: Who handled the budget in your household when you were growing up, do you remember?

Miller: My father.

LD: Your father did that, too.

Miller: You see, I might mention this, my mother died when I was three weeks old. My stepmother was a good friend of hers. She was married in 1893. Her husband had the hardware business and she also was a seamstress. She made my mother's wedding clothes and my baby clothes. My father and mother, my own mother, were

married in 1901. Then I was born in January of 1903. The next year, 1904, the first of February, my stepmother's husband died. Three weeks later, their ten-year-old son died of scarlet fever. Eventually, my father and mother got together and made a wonderful home for us. I was very fortunate.

LD: We were talking before we even turned on the tape about childhood diseases and about the differences in the way that things were treated in those days. Would you tell that story again about your father's blood poisoning?

Miller: In the days before automobiles were used, our transportation to Cedar Rapids was by the Chicago Northwestern on the train. He was coming home one night from Cedar Rapids and he went from one car to another and he happened to scratch his left wrist accidently and he didn't pay any attention to it. Later on, blood poisoning started. He had streaks going up his arm, so he knew he had to do something about it. He came to Cedar Rapids and stopped to see Dr. Ben Crawford. Dr. Crawford had to take care it and he lanced it. He said, "You go home and rest and take care of this thing, this is very dangerous, for a couple weeks." My father said, "I'm on my way to Cresco, I have to try a case." Dr. Crawford said to him, "Elmer, you go ahead and try your case, but it will be the last one you'll ever try." So he came home and I, at that time, had acquired mumps. So the two of us were laid up for awhile. At that time they had ordered a surprise for me, a victrola, from H.C. Waite and Company, here in Cedar Rapids, It came for us for Christmas, which we all enjoyed.

LD: You mentioned the special treatment that your stepmother had for mumps. Could you describe that?

Miller: Yes. She filled a couple of little salt sacks with corn meal and would put them into the oven. My mumps were on each side of my face and underneath my chin and that heat really relieved the swelling and also the ache.

LD: Can you think of any other home remedies that you used to use that people probably wouldn't even know about nowadays?

Miller: Well....

LD: For colds and other things that just were pretty common?

Miller: I can remember they gave castor oil in those days. (Laughter)

LD: We were talking about medical practices and childhood diseases. Do you remember epidemics when you were growing up?

Miller: Yes, we had one there in Lisbon. It was smallpox. A doctor down there called it chicken pox at the beginning. It turned out to be smallpox.

LD: Do you remember if a lot of people died from smallpox?

Miller: No, but it was an epidemic.

LD: What did you do if you got smallpox in your household?

Miller: We had to be vaccinated

LD: They had the vaccination at that time?

Miller: Oh, yes. I had mine on my leg, I didn't want it to show on my arm. They used to do it on the arm, you know. Then I thought about when I would be growing up, you know, for evening dresses.

LD: Thinking ahead.

Miller: Absolutely.

LD: Did homes have to be quarantined?

Miller: Oh, yes. There was a yellow sign on the house. Marked "Quarantined" then whatever it said about scarlet fever, I mean, smallpox.

LD: Did you have any smallpox in your home?

Miller: No.

LD: Because you were vaccinated.

LD: Do you know whether people had to actually discard or throw away clothes or bedclothes?

Miller: I have no idea. See, when that happened, I think I was 14 or 15, right in there.

LD: You weren't thinking about things like that too much in those days.

Miller: No.

LD: I'm going to scoot on here a little bit to that period when you moved to Cedar Rapids. Why did your family come to Cedar Rapids from Lisbon? It would have been 1919?

Miller: 1919. Well, Mr. Joe Donnelly, a lawyer up here, asked my father if he would join him in the firm of Johnson and Donnelly. So my father and his secretary, Miss Hope Kertz, came to Cedar Rapids April 1, 1919. My mother and I came to Cedar Rapids in October. She came up in the afternoon with the freight car behind the Inter Urban car pulling all of our earthly possessions.

LD: All your belongings. Where did you move to originally?

Miller: We moved to 1809 Second Avenue and we lived there for over 30 some years. The house was later sold to Bob Vernon.

LD: 1919 was a year when alot of things were going on, obviously.

It was the year of Armistice Day, wasn't it.

Miller: 1918.

LD: That was 1918. You wouldn't have been in Cedar Rapids for that. Do you have memories of how Armistice Day was celebrated?

Miller: Yes. They make a mistake. The first armistice was the day before and they found out that there'd been a mistake made. So, it finally was November 11, the next day. Mount Vernon and Lisbon had a parade and Lisbon people. We had our Cadillac. It led the parade to Mount Vernon. People with students and townspeople marched over to the Cornell Chapel.

LD: Was there a speech or ceremony?

Miller: Yes. There was a ceremony in the Chapel of the Mount Vernon people and the Lisbon people. It was really quite interesting.

LD: It was a great day.

Miller: Yes it was. A memorable day.

LD: Yes everybody that I've talked to has very special memories of that day.

1919 was the year of the Voting Rights Act that gave women the right to vote. How did that affect your household? Do you remember that there were discussions about that?

Miller: No. But I can remember when we went to vote just off of 18th street between Second and Third Avenue, down the alley, they had a kind of a ...well it was on wheels. A shed that they'd bring every time that we had to vote.

LD: And you were able to go there and vote.

Miller: That's right.

LD: How did you do it in those days? Was it just by ballot?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Did you just check by a name or . . .

Miller: That's true.

LD: Then stuffed in a box. So you voted from the time that you were able to .

Miller: Well, 21. I was 21.

LD: There were some women that didn't take advantage of that right away back then.

Miller: In fact, I was a senior in Coe when I voted.

LD: Do you remember the first President you voted for? That would have been in the 20's. That's too late for Theodore Roosevelt. Too early for Harding.

Miller: Oh, yes. See Woodrow Wilson was World War I, 1918.

LD: Maybe it was Harding. Did Harding follow...?

Miller: I was going to say Harding.

LD: It probably was.

Miller: Then Coolidge took his place. It was probably Harding.

LD: Because I remember you said you saw Harding's funeral train coming through Cedar Rapids.

Miller: That's true.

LD: At Coe in the 20's. I wanted to ask you some questions about the student body and the attitudes toward women students and men students on the campus during that time. First of all, where did you live? Did you live at home?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Of course, you were that close.

Miller: Do you remember particular policies and rules on the campus

that affected the coeds on the Campus? Things that the Dean of Women, for instance, said you did do or didn't do? Was it very strict policy at that time?

Miller: Yes. We couldn't do alot of things. They'd have to get permission, the girls would, if they were going out for dates at night and so forth. I think it's entirely different today. Of course, that's fifty years, sixty years ago.

LD: Were you a member of a sorority?

Miller: Yes, I belonged to the Tri Delts.

LD: The Tri Delts. Did they actually have a house?

Miller: No.

LD: They just met as a group.

Miller: At different girl's homes.

LD: At different homes.

How were you treated as a woman student compared to the men students in the same classes. Did you feel there was any differences in the way that the professors treated you?

Miller: No. No.

LD: Knowing their expectations for you as a graduate?

Miller: No.

LD. That's great. Where did you go when you went on dates?

Miller: Well, we used to go over to the old Majestic Theater. To the Isis Theater. There was another movie house that had started called the Strand Theater, on Third Avenue.

LD: Would those have been vaudeville shows or silent movies?

Miller: At the Majestic, they had vaudeville.

LD: At the others it was actually movies.

Miller: Movies.

LD: Any particular movies that stand out in your mind from that period?

Miller: Jack Benny.

LD: Did he come in person?

Miller: No. What was the name of the movie...?

LD: I Didn't realize he was in films.

Miller: And that was at the old Strand Theater.

LD: I think of him as radio, you know, I don't think of him...

Miller: No. "Sonny Boy"

LD: He was in "Sonny Boy".

What was a typical, if you went to the. . .

Miller: No, that was Al Jolson, I'm sorry, not Jack Benny. Al Jolson.

LD: Do you remember, what was a typical date like? Did the young man pick you up? Did you go alone? Did you go in groups?

Miller: Sometimes we went in groups. Yes. They'd come to the house.

LD: Did you have very definite hours?

Miller: Very. I had to be home by 10 o'clock.

LD: By 10 o'clock. But you did not have to be chaperoned. You were able to go out with your friends without a chaperone.

Miller: Yes.

LD: When you you went to the Strand or to the Isis, what was the procedure? Was there a piano player or was there some introductory music at the show?

Miller: Well the Strand had a little orchestra. Bert Pucket, who just died recently, played the coronet. And then, also over at the Majestic they used to play.

LD: And then they'd show the film after that. Did they play along with the film?

Miller: No.

LD: Not during the film itself. Was there refreshments available at the movie houses in those days?

Miller: No. The first refreshments that I remember was after the Junior League (Junior Service League) had started. The Community Players were just starting out. They were putting on their plays over at McKinley School. That's when Miss Prescott was the Principal. They asked me to have charge of the coffees in between acts. The girls, the Junior Service League girls, made the cookies. I took care of the tables to get people to help wait on them. I remember Mr. Boynton furnished the coffee from Kautke Company. We had people, in order to make....create interest for the event. For the Community Players. That was part of the beginning of the of our Community Players today.

LD: I want to come back and ask you more about the Community Players. Let me go back to a couple more questions about Coe. What are your memories of Flunk Day at Coe? Did they have Flunk Day back when you were going?

Miller: We had Flunk Day. I only had one good memory. We had the old Cadillac and we drove it out to Fairfax. I can just remember that and that was it.

LD: No big trip up the river.

Miller: No. We used to take our lunches, but I did that so many times.

LD: That wasn't anything that special. Did you know William Murray when you were at Coe?

Miller: He was in my class.

LD: I presumed you were real close. I interviewed him about Flunk Day. He remembered it well because he was President of the student body I think at that point. He got to call the day. What is your memory about--those were the years of Prohibition--what do you remember about the amount of drinking that went on amongst college kids?

Miller: We didn't have, as far as I know, there might have been some on the side but I never knew about it.

LD: So it really wasn't the issue. ...

Miller: No.

LD: ...it seems to be today. Did young women ever take a drink in those days?

Miller: I don't know.

LD: Because you didn't. None of the ones you were around.

Miller: No.

LD: What were the religious requirements for students at Coe in that time? It was still very tied to the Presbyterian Church.

Miller: We went to Chapel every morning. We had Vesper Choir on Sundays at 4 o'clock. They had the Vespers and I was in the choir. I was also in the Glee Club. Under Risser Patti. He was head of the Conservatory at that time.

LD: What did you major in at Coe.

Miller: I majored in history.

LD: Did you have definite plans for what you were going to do after you left Coe.

Miller: No. My father said to me when I was a senior, he said, "I want

you, after you graduate, to get a job teaching school. I want you to learn where the dollar came from."

LD: Get a realistic notion of how . . . .

Miller: So I got a job up at Milford, Iowa. I was up there for two years.

LD: And then you came back to Cedar Rapids.

Miller: Then my mother wasn't too well and my father. . . I could have continued to teach up there, but he felt I should be at home. So I didn't apply for a job, but went to the Board of Education (he told me to go over there and they'd tell me). They told me I was to teach over at Woodrow Wilson under Miss Post. Miss Jenny Post. She was excellent.

LD: It's interesting to me that in Cedar Rapids during that time there were really a high percentage of women who were in administrative positions. In the Principal positions. Do you know anything about why that was the case?

Miller: No. I have no idea. Miss Post had Woodrow Wilson. Miss Swem--Roosevelt Junior High. Miss Francis Prescott--McKinley. Ruby Byers at Franklin Junior High School.

LD: Maybe it was more progressive than surrounding communities.

Miller: We had four excellent junior highs.

LD: Everything I've heard about those women is just real strong.

Miller: And that's when those building were put up.

LD: During that period. One more question: What organizations besides Tri Delt and the Glee Club were you involved in when you were on campus?

Miller: There there was the Carlton Literary Society when I was in school.

LD: The Carlton Literary Society?

Miller: Yes.

LD: And who organized that? Was that part of your department?

Miller: There were several. There was the Sinclair Literary Society. I think there was another one. We met maybe once a month and I don't really recall just exactly what we did because I wasn't always there. I had other jobs to do.

LD: Moving on to those early years then, when you were in the community as a teacher. What are your memories about that period and what the school system was like during that time. As you were coming in to teach to junior high students? How many students would you have in your classroom?

Miller: I had--it varied--32 to maybe 36.

LD: Pretty large classes.

Miller: Yes.

LD: How long would you have them? Did they shift and go to different classes like they do now?

Miller: Yes. I had a homeroom, which was permanent, and in the morning they would come to my room, the students, and then they would go to various classes. I taught history and there'd be English and I think there was Latin, Physical Ed., then some others, some subjects that I don't recall now. Miss Henrietta Franks, who will be 101 in June (the 17th), she taught over there at that time.

LD: Did you, as a teacher, during those days, find that you had discipline problems with your youngsters?

Miller: No.

LD: What do you attribute that to?

Miller: I don't know, but I was very fond of my class. We weren't the smartest but we were the next to the smartest and I never was in school either. They graded students, you know, and '71's, '72's, and '73's. We were the '72's.

LD: This is your students, the '72's.

Miller: That's right. I went right along with them. If I had an exam the next day for them, I'd keep them after school for about 15 minutes or 20 and go over those questions so I didn't want anybody to flunk.

LD: In other words, you helped them to succeed.

Miller: And I was very proud of my students. The fire chief, Jesse Hunter, he was one of my good students. Les Burianek was a photographer and he worked for the Gazette. Nadine Zabotnek also worked for the Gazette and charge of the TV section. Then there was a boy who was an electrician, Dick Groat.

LD: These are all people you've remembered over the years.

Miller: And they did alot for the community of Cedar Rapids. I was very proud of them.

LD: How long did you stay?

Miller: I was there three years.

LD: Three years. Then you moved to another school?

Miller: No. I had a chance to do some work in the East. I went back to New York with these friends and stayed with them.

LD: That would have been the late 20's.

Miller: Yes. '29.

LD: So how long were you out of the community then?

Miller: I was back there about three years. Two or three years.

LD: What brought you back?

Miller: The Depression.

LD: Why? Did you lose your job then in the East?

Miller: No, I could have stayed. My father wasn't too well at the time and then I came back. I might say this about when I was teaching over at Woodrow Wilson, I had a postal card from Ellen Douglas Williamson--but she was Ellen Douglas then--they were organizing the Junior Service League. Ellen wanted to know if I wouldn't belong. I called her on the telephone and said, "Well, after all, I'm teaching" and she said, "Maybe there are families we could help over there on that side of the river." So I always kept my membership. When I came back from New York, the girls had started the soup kitchen down at the Community House. That's the way I started out.

LD: So the League was organized then before you left Cedar Rapids.

Miller: Yes.

LD: When would that have been, in the mid-twenties?

Miller: 1929.

LD: 1929. Then when you came back in the 30's, 1931, would you say? They had already organized to the point where they had the soup kitchen established.

Miller: Yes. It might have been organized before '29 but that's when I quit Wilson Junior High.

LD: When you came back to Cedar Rapids, what could you see the effects of the Depression were on this community.

Miller: Well, we knew alot of people in the East who had lost everything. It was sad. Some of our friends jumped out of windows, that sort of thing. You really felt it back there. When I came home, I didn't feel that were in a Depression state. I felt, people had their own gardens, they had enough to eat. There were a few of my friends who had played the stock market and that was kind of hard on them.

LD: But for the most part, it was not the same as. . .

Miller: It was entirely different.

LD: It was a good time to be close to the agricultural part of the country.

Miller: And then out on the farms, they were only getting. . .I went out to a farm north of Stanwood. They were getting five cents a bushel for oats, ten cents for corn. This friend said, "Come on down to the basement, I'll show you I can't afford coal, I don't have the money." So he was shoveling corn into the furnace and it gave the best, hot fire. It was just wonderful.

LD: So instead of selling it, he just used it as a fuel.

Miller: That's right.

LD: It was more useful to him that way.

Miller: That's right.

LD: The bank closings occurred during 1933. Do you remember that affecting your family personally?

Miller: My father was in the legislature in Des Moines at that time. I drove him home, I drove him and my mother, we stayed at the Kirkwood in those days. My job, I was his chauffeur, and I had to have him over to the statehouse every morning at eight

o'clock. The session started at nine, but he wanted to be sure and be up on his bills. Then when the banks all closed, he came home and he didn't have any money, so he was a little desperate, didn't know how he'd get back to Des Moines. He went over to the Killian Tea Room and ran into Mr. Killian. Mr. Killian loaned him $50.

LD: To get back to Des Moines.

Miller: Then my mother, that weekend, had me drive her out to Fairfax. She had a lockbox out there. On the way back, she said, "I have saved some money just for this sort of thing." I'll never forget this, she had saved $600. I remember taking her out there, but I didn't know what for. I was brought up it was none of my business, so . . .

LD: You didn't talk about money in your household.

Miller: Never. Except if I spent too much. (Laughter) No sir. That taught me a lesson.

LD: Where was the lockbox in Fairfax?

Miller: In the bank.

LD: It was in the bank. She was able to get into it, even with the bank closings.

Miller: The bank was open. The banks that were closed. . . Fairfax stayed open, Mount Vernon and Lisbon. But east of Lisbon, they'd all closed, to the River, the Mississippi River.

LD: There were a number of banks in Cedar Rapids did not reopen, I know during this time.

Miller: That's right.

LD: Was your family's money in one of those banks?

Miller: Part down in Cedar Rapids Savings. I think that my father and Hope Kurtz had some money in there. But the other banks, I think Merchants was all right.

LD: Yes, they reopened. So in other words, your family had made, your mother had made some steps for that. . . provided for that situation.

Miller: That taught me a lesson.

LD: She must have had some real foresight about what was going to happen.

Miller: Well, that's the way they were in the early days. She was raised on a farm, you never know.

LD: You have to keep something aside.

Miller: That's true. For a rainy day, so to speak.

LD: Did your father stay in the Legislature all during that period of the 30's?

Miller: He was in the Legislature three different times as I recall. But he couldn't run every two years. He didn't have that kind of money. He paid his own way.

LD: And he was not connected with a party that would help to run his campaign.

Miller: He was connected with the Republicans, but he wanted to pay his own way and he felt that he wanted to do something for his country.

LD: Was your father the. . . and I had heard a story about a Legislator who refused to run. . . I mean refused to go out and campaign when he ran for office.

Miller: That's true.

LD: Was that your father?

Miller: That's right.

LD: And wouldn't circulate bills or posters or anything to. . .

Miller: No, but his, Hope Kurtz, his secretary, and Orrie Lawrence, one of the lawyers in the office at that time, they got his picture and had his pictures taken off and had some billboards made and they got me to peddle them, which I did. Hope said my dad, she said, "You ought to go out and give a few speeches." and he said, "No, I've lived in Linn County 35 years and if they want me they'll vote for me and if they don't they won't."

LD: Didn't he have a celebration party that he didn't go to or a some sort of an election night party?

Miller: Hope had a little party. There was Mary Lacherstein and Hazel Brown, you know, the Hobby House girls. Then Harriet Moon and Hope and they decided to call him up to see how the election was going. He was losing. Mount Vernon and Lisbon voted against him and he and I had taken some posters over to Ely. They voted for him and two little precincts, they brought him through. Then after that, the next two time he ran for the Legislature, he had no trouble.

LD: But he wasn't real interested in the election night.

Miller: No, the girls called him at 10 o'clock to find out how he was feeling in regard to the results, you know, as they were coming in on the radio. Hope said that the telephone rang and rang and finally he answered. She said, "Well, where were you?" He said "I was in bed!" (Laughter) She said, "In Bed! Aren't you

listening to the returns?" He said, "No. I told you, if they want me, they'll vote for me. They voted for me and if they didn't, that's it." So the next morning I said to him, he was shaving in the bathroom, and I went in and I said, "Well, you made it." He said, "What do you mean?" And I said, "Just what I said." He said, "You mean I got in?" And I said, "Yes!" He said, "That's good." (Laughter) That's it.

LD: He took it all as a matter of stride.

Miller: That's right.

LD: Was he involved in, that you're aware of, of legislation to deal with the Depression, the effects of the Depression in Iowa? Were there particular things that the state of Iowa. . . I know there was no social welfare system in those days. Do you remember things that were actually passed in the state legislature during that time that would help individuals who were in need? Or was it still just up to each community?

Miller: As I recall, there wasn't any. . . every community took care of itself.

LD: Back to that, then, because you were so involved with . . .

Miller: Now Community Chest we had. And that went for needs here in Cedar Rapids.

LD: Who organized the Community Chest? Was that a thing . . .

Miller: Chamber of Commerce I think. I don't know who started it in the beginning.

LD: Had it been there before the 1930's. Had it been in the Community?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Were you ever involved in one of the leadership positions on that?

Miller: Not the leadership, but I went around and I'd get people for money.

LD: For donations.

Miller: That's what I did with the Junior Service League. I was. . . Well, we had to have a little money so we started out and I headed that so-called campaign for funds for five years.

LD: So you actually. . .

Miller: In the Junior Service League.

LD: As a member of the League, you went out and asked for community funds.

Miller: I had a group of the girls and every girl had about 20 names.

LD: And when you received donations, what did you do then, did they have to go back to the Community Chest or were you able to just use them for your own finances.

Miller: No, this was for the League itself.

LD: For the League projects.

Miller: And then we wrote notes. I'll never forget Clemmy Marshall, Verne Marshall's wife, she was the head of that division, and Verne was so afraid that we were going to spend the money that people had given us for postage stamps.

LD: Frivolously. (Laughter)

Miller: No, the girls are delivering these by hand. Which we did.

LD: You took each thank you back.

Miller: Yes, we did. That's right. Every girl. No, we did that and

somebody'd have a car. We delivered them.

LD: What did you use those funds for in those days?

Miller: As I recall now, the soup kitchen was one of the big items. I can't. . . we'd have to look it up in the minutes.

LD: Were you involved in the soup kitchen? Did you ever go down there and work?

Miller: I went down and helped, yes.

LD: Besides dispensing soup, were there any other things that they did there?

Miller: Yes. The community for the playground work for the children, and even help to women, too.

LD: Was there some sort of a bathing center that was there?

Miller: No. That's when somebody had a good idea of starting the--which is still being used and it's wonderful--the Elizabeth Bender Pool.

LD: What can you tell me about the beginnings of that then.

Miller: Somebody that was on the board should tell about that. I remember that Sutherland Dows was one of the factors for that project.

LD: For Bender Pool. And that would have been in the 30's then. When you were a member of the League, how big was it? Now we have about 200 regular actives.

Miller: I think we were around 50.

LD: How often did you meet?

Miller: I should know, I was on the board, but I can't remember, isn't that terrible?

LD: We have monthly meetings now. I wondered if you met. . .

Miller: I think it was monthly

LD: About that same regularity. Did you meet in homes of members?

Miller: No, we had a place down at the Montrose. On the second floor just off the mezzanine.

LD: Was it like a regular meeting room?

Miller: Oh yes. Nice room, it was very comfortable.

LD: Did you have to pay a fee to use it? Or was it just made available to you?

Miller: I think somebody gave it to us. We didn't have any money. . .

LD: Well, sure, you were out trying to get money for projects.

Miller: . . . to throw around. (Laughter)

LD: What was the social. . . ?

END OF TAPE I Side II

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
Ella Kettering Johnson Miller

Conducted by Laura Derr
May 10, 1985
Indian Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Transcribed by Renae Blasdell

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Ella Kettering Johnson Miller

Conducted by Laura Derr (Follow-up Tape)

May 10, 1985

Indian Road SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

LD: Another fascinating part of your life at that time, and I think into the later years, too, was your relationship with the Hall family. Can you tell how you became friends with the Halls originally?

Miller: Yes, Irene Hall Ryan and I were freshmen together, we knew each other. Then when we were sophomores we got acquainted. That's when my father gave me permission to take the car and go. Irene, in those days, had to take the Grande Avenue streetcar. Her mother, when they came to Cedar Rapids, built a beautiful home out in the woods which was out on Park Terrace.

LD: There was the woods then?

Miller: The woods, that's true. Now there's houses all over the place. But it was a beautiful spot and it still is. Irene would take this streetcar down to twelfth Street and Third Avenue and she had to walk over to Coe. So one day I asked her if she'd like to have me take her home, and she said yes. So I drove her out to her place. We were sitting on the front porch visiting and Mrs. Hall, her mother, came out. We had a nice chat, and she said, Ella, you come back again. And I thanked her and told her what

a nice time I had, and what a beautiful place she had. That was just a come-on, and I went back quite often after that. Irene and I--every time Howard would do something, we girls would have to find out what he was doing.

One thing that he did do that we followed up on--he had bought a little old machine shop out on 17th Street. So Irene and I decided to go out and see what it looked like, where it was. We started off of First Avenue on 17th, and there were a couple of houses on that street from First Avenue and the rest were all fields. We kept going out in the country and we came to a railroad track. We crossed that and just beyond that a little ways out in the field to the right was a building--two story. Today that is Iowa Manufacturing.

LD: That was the beginning?

Miller: Howard kept that original building and he built his plant right around that building and he had the second floor for his office.

LD: So that's where it is right now today?

Miller: That building is still there and enclosed and protected.

LD: He was older then, than you? How much older?

Miller: Yes, I don't know.

LD: Several years? He was out of college already doing his own thing?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Was he married to Margaret at that time?

Miller: No, oh no. This was in 1920 or 1921. They were married in 1924. Just after I graduated from Coe.

LD: Did you know Margaret Douglas in those days, too?

Miller: Very well.

LD: And visited Brucemore?

Miller: Yes.

LD: What did it look like in those days? Did it look the way it does now?

Miller: Very much so. Mrs. Douglas was a great gardener.

LD: Talk about the gardens. Did the gardens look like they do now? Were they that extensive?

Miller: They were more so.

LD: Where did they go, then? Did they go all around the house?

Miller: Not around the house but in the back.

LD: Out in that back yard?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Was the estate being used at all for farming at that time?

Miller: Yes. Back of the barns to Forest Drive, that was all gardens, really. Vegetable gardens.

LD: What are your memories of Mrs. Douglas?

Miller: She was a great person. I was very fond of Mrs. Douglas. And when I was on the Camp Good Health Board, Public Health Nursing, she called me one day and said, Ella, what can I do to help the camp? And I said we need a new well. I said Mr. John F. Ely gave the camp a well but he put it in the wrong location. It was right down by the creek. Every time the creek overflows we have to chlorinate that water. She said, well, how much do you suppose a new well would cost? I said I didn't know. You find out and let me know. So I knew a fellow that drilled wells and I called Phil Shive, he was on the Board of the Public Health Nursing at the camp. Frank Nolan. I said, Phil, what about this? He said,

you get a hold of Nolan. So I got Mr. Nolan and took him out and we went all over that camp ground and we got up on top of the hill, up a ways from the creek. He said, to me this is it. I said, Mr. Nolan, how much would that cost? Finally he figured it out and he said I can do it for $200. So I called Mrs. Douglas and she said to go ahead and have it done.

And that well is still working and it's being used for the children.

LD: All these years?

Miller: Yes.

LD: It was the right place, obviously.

Miller: And this was in the thirties.

LD: She was like that wasn't she?

Miller: She was a wonderful person.

LD: She initiated things.

Miller: And I know at one time--she told me this herself--that she took care of over 12,000 families.

LD: In what way?

Miller: During the depression.

LD: Providing food?

Miller: For food, right.

LD: Did that all come from her garden, do you suppose?

Miller: No.

LD: She would just provide funds so that they would have . . .

Miller: That's right.

LD: So much of what she did has never been recorded.

Miller: She was a great person.

LD: That's why I was asking people about her because she must have

done most of what she did without ever wanting recognition.

Miller: That's true. And then another thing she did--after the depression and I came home from New York, the government was starting to help the elderly. These women over 65, they didn't want to just sit and have money just handed to them so the government created a project, like a sewing project. They called me to come to a meeting. So I went over to the Chamber of Commerce--Charlie Manson was head of the Chamber at that time. There were all the representatives of the various organizations here like Community House, and Home for the Aged Women, and all the rest of them. They mentioned about the sewing project. They wanted me to take charge of it. I said I don't know how to sew, I'm not interested. Well, if I could run it. I said I couldn't do that unless I had an organization behind me. At that time the Junior Service League was hoping to get into the National Junior League. Mary Stubbs was the president. I located her, she was having a permanent over in the Iowa Theater building and I went and disturbed her. This was on a Monday morning this happened. Monday evening we had a meeting at our house. My parents were down in Des Moines at the Legislature.

We had about ten girls we finally got together. Margaret Hall was one of them, Margaret Douglas Hall. We met at our place and Julia Robins Adam, I remember, they gave her the job of looking up sewing machines. Julia went around the next day with two fellows from the county with trucks, one truck rather, looking for sewing machines.

LD: Looking for donations of sewing machines or to buy?

Miller: Yes, donations. And she landed 23 sewing machines.

LD: In one day?

Miller: Down at the Federal Building . . .

LD: She did real well.

Miller: And she doesn't even remember that. I said, Julia that's true because I had 66 women come in the next morning at 9:00.

LD: To do some of the sewing?

Miller: That's right. We started organizing these women.

LD: As they were involved in the project they received some compensation?

Miller: Oh, yes. I made up the rule, and when they spent so many hours I'd give it to Miss Jacobs, the over-seer.

LD: What sorts of things did they sew? Were they children's clothes?

Miller: The Junior League, that night at our house, Miss Jacobs came. She and I had a can of soup out in the kitchen and then these girls came and she organized it so that we had a findings committee for needles and thread and that kind of thing. Then she also--the boy scouts would pick up--we had a drive for used clothes. The laundry fellows to do the washing or cleaning, and those were the committees that were organized that night. We had to do everything, you know.

LD: You had to come up with a way for everything?

Miller: That's true.

LD: Now this Miss Jacobs, was she working with the county?

Miller: Welfare. She headed the welfare for Linn County.

LD: So the League really was instrumental in working with the county in getting this project going?

Miller: That's right.

LD: How long did that continue?

Miller: We had that for, let me see, I think it started in January. I had that until May. You know, you donate your time and everything. The next year I said let somebody else take it. I forget who it was, I think it was Pauline Murray.

LD: And so that continued on for a number of years?

Miller: For several years. What these women did, it was really amazing. Here were all these cleaners that did the cleaning at cost because they couldn't donate--we were in a depression, you see.

LD: They were trying to stay alive.

Miller: I contacted them and they said, we want to do our part. So we finally got enough money to pay them the actual cost for the washing of the clothes and the cleaning of a few things.

These women would cut this stuff up and they made little boys' suits. Mrs. Douglas gave me $100 for little girls' dresses so they could buy the material.

They made beautiful comforters. The government furnished that material. And suits and coats, and little girls' dresses, and gloves or mittens, you know. Just anything, and they didn't waste any material.

And then Mr. Newburg, I contacted him and he gave us--he ran Newman's.

LD: That was a department store?

Miller: That's true. He gave me a couple of windows and every so often these women would display, and it was just wonderful what those women had done. And they put them in the windows there for a

week or two, ten days.

LD: Then what happened to the clothes after that?

Miller: Mr. Jacobs saw that the needy people received them.

LD: That makes so much sense, everybody was working to help everybody else in the community.

Miller: And right in your own community.

LD: I've never heard that story before, I'm glad you told us.

Miller: The Junior Service League did that. That was one of the big things at that time.

LD: Was that maybe one of the things that made the difference in the league being accepted as a national league?

Miller: Yes.

LD: That was about the mid thirties, 1934 I think, it became a national organization.

Miller: I had a chance, when I lived back in New York and Stamford, Connecticut, I had a chance to belong to the Stamford, Connecticut Junior League but I turned them down. I said I'm with a group of girls out of Cedar Rapids, Iowa and we'd like to get into the national. I wanted to stay with my . . .

LD: Your original community?

Miller: That's right.

LD: Well, you certainly made it with style. That was very early for midwestern leagues.

Miller: Yes it was.

LD: In relation to those years--and I do want to talk to you about moving onto the farm, too--but are there other people that you can remember who were really important to the community in terms

of philanthropy who helped through their own generosity to keep this community in good working order during that time?

Miller: We have a lot of--I'd have to look it up, I've forgotten the names of some of those men. Some of them like John Northcott, for instance. That's Louise Knapp's father, he was a great YM fellow. Well known in the community.

LD: So the YMCA was working in the community at that time?

Miller: That's right. And Lou Dunlap was another influential man. We had a number of them.

LD: Did you ever hear of an organization called the Horse-Buyers Club?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Do you know what they did during that period of time?

Miller: No. They had lunch together.

LD: I knew they had lunch at Killian's.

Miller: They started down at the Roosevelt I think.

LD: Maybe they did.

Miller: And Owen Elliott belonged to it. And Harold Truin, wait a minute...

LD: Henrietta Dows father belonged to it.

Miller: Sud Dows, that's right.

LD: She was telling us about that.

Miller: Oh dear.

LD: Probably Howard Hall, I would think.

Miller: No.

LD: Maybe not in that period of time.

Miller: And the fellow that belonged to the light company that lived on Bever Avenue, right near Bever Park. What in the dickens is his name? And Cap Hedges.

LD: They must have--I know they were primarily business leaders--but they must have also at that time taken a role in helping people in the community?

Miller: They were leaders of everything here for the city of Cedar Rapids.

LD: But you don't have any specific memories of the things that they were involved in?

Miller: No. But I know Harold Truin was always talking about the horse-buyers.

LD: Was that a happy time in Cedar Rapids, was it a grim time in Cedar Rapids? Are your memories that people were really concerned that there might not be a future?

Miller: Oh, no!

LD: How did people feel about it? The country . . .

Miller: They never were down. Their spirits were always up and if anything happened that they needed help, people got together. They were like a small community in a way. Not like a city like we are today. It's entirely different.

LD: The despair that was in other parts of the country--you just didn't feel that at all?

Miller: No.

LD: Do you know if the depression hit the ethnic communities or parts of this community, really hard? For instance, the Czech communities which was--there were many Czechs here in those days already.

Miller: Well, it hit people. See, I taught over at Wilson.

LD: So you were right in the middle of that area?

Miller: Yes. Than after the war, after World War I, Major Dotezal started an orchestra over--in the different schools, but especially

over at Wilson. I think he first started at St. Paul's with a small orchestra. He was a Canadian officer that had both legs taken off during the war. He was a musician and he was wonderful. He did a lot, he started all these orchestras in the schools. And these little Czech boys, you know, would come to school, or the little girls--I can still see them with a little violin under their arm.

LD: So that was the beginning of the music program?

Miller: That's right.

LD: Was he paid by the school system to go from one school to the other?

Miller: Yes.

LD: At a time when most schools were barely . . .

Miller: But he started up for almost nothing, you know.

LD: Because he thought it was a good thing to do. When did you buy this property that you live on now?

Miller: Next year which is 1986 it will be 50 years. We bought, Winifred Lattner and I, bought 27 acres. April the first we took over in 1936.

LD: Now why would you want to move out here in the country?

Miller: The Lattners were finishing up building a house right near by. Mr. Stepanek who had lived here in this house had died and his children didn't want this place so they wanted to sell it. So we girls decided to buy it.

LD: You were both young, single women?

Miller: No, Winifred was married.

LD: Winifred was married at the time but you decided it was a good investment?

Miller: Well, I didn't think about the investment. I thought about what it would produce. It was just sand, it didn't amount to much. After Errol and I were married four years later in 1940, we girls divided and Errol and I took this part. It was pretty run down. The fellow that had rented it had jaw bones, and horses and horse meat, you know. Anyway, Win and I started in and had an old house that we had to have them tear down.

LD: You did that before you were married?

Miller: Yes. What I was going to say, then after we were married, Errol and I, Errol said this would raise pine trees. Winifred and I had wonderful vegetables but we couldn't get any trees--Miss Verba would bring down some peach trees and we just couldn't get them to grow. I don't know, we probably didn't know how to do it. Then my father got me a couple of cows. There was a red barn here. He told me I had to be out here at 6:00 in the morning to milk those cows!

LD: So you weren't living out here then?

Miller: No.

LD: You were just coming out?

Miller: We got a man and his wife to stay here in the old house.

LD: The Richards?

Miller: Yes. They helped Winifred and me.

LD: But really, you were farming then, in a sense, at that time?

Miller: That's right. So I came out and milked those cows in the morning and at night. The Johnson's would get the morning milk and the Lattners the evening milk.

LD: Did you have any other livestock, did you have any chickens or

anything?

Miller: I had pigs, yes we had chickens, too.

LD: Did you have to clear the land at all or was it pretty much open?

Miller: It was open.

LD: Were you doing this the same time you were teaching, then?

Miller: No this was afterwards.

LD: This was when you came back to the community?

Miller: I taught in Cedar Rapids from 1926 to 1929.

LD: So when you came back you bought this in 1936?

Miller: Yes.

LD: So you were able to come out and spend a lot of time?

Miller: Not a lot, I was working on Junior League.

LD: That takes a lot of time, I know that.

Miller: Right. Then I gave it up. I was supposed to be candidate for president but I gave that up. Henrietta Sheehey was the president and I was the vice president.

LD: You still had lots to do didn't you?

Miller: Yes, I had lots to do! Then Errol and I were married in 1940.

LD: Is that when you moved out here and built this house?

Miller: No, we lived in Mt. Vernon for eight years. Then we came up here in 1948. We started to remodel it, the house, in 1947.

LD: And then moved into it?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Was he a carpenter by trade?

Miller: Well, he was a farm hand. Errol was a very versatile person. He was a contractor. He built Howard Hall's cottage out at Palisades. That was the first thing that he did for Howard, and later he put

up their house down in Marathon in the Keys, Marathon, Florida.

LD: Then he also was involved in the refurbishing of the basement at Brucemore?

Miller: Yes. He did quite a few things. Before he and I were married, he and Grant Wood, for Mrs. Douglas, in regard to her opening of the gardens in the spring. She always had her gardens open in the spring for the public.

LD: So anybody could come to her garden?

Miller: That's true.

LD: It wasn't just the Garden Club?

Miller: Oh no.

LD: What would Grant Wood do to help with that?

Miller: He and Errol did the carpenter work and Grant could do anything, too.

LD: So he and Errol worked together quite a bit?

Miller: Sure, quite often.

LD: That really does bring me to something I wanted to ask you about, and that was your acquantance with Grant Wood. I know you pointed out the other day that some of the molding in this house was done by Grant Wood.

Miller: He designed quite a bit of molding. This isn't designed (points to woodwork) but the beadings . . . Errol had all kinds of stuff that he used. Now Audrey Anderson, he used it over at her house when they built that. Then in Jack Lattner's second house he built for Winifred.

LD: Did Grant Wood simply do the design work and Errol did the actual work with the wood?

Miller: Grant had already done this. William Hunting had run this stuff

off over at their mill on the west side of the river.

LD: But it was Grant Woods' design.

Miller: That's true.

LD: He designed it and they did it according to what he had.

Miller: Yes.

LD: Do you have any anecdotes about Grant Wood or memories that you can share with us?

Miller: No, I don't.

LD: Not your personal ones?

Miller: No, Errol would. He was the head of the--when we'd give these teas, coffees, or whatever, when they had the plays over at McKinley school--Grant was the head of the art department when Fran Prescott was the principal.

When they had plays he'd have the scenes, you know.

LD: He did some of the backdrops?

Miller: All of the backdrops, that's true.

LD: That was in the twenties?

Miller: No, it was in the early thirties.

LD: Were you involved in the Community Theatre in any way other than with the coffees?

Miller: Just the coffees.

LD: Do you have any memories of the early plays or the way productions were put together?

Miller: Helen Heinz wrote quite a number of them.

LD: They were actually written by someone here?

Miller: Yes.

LD: They were not just copyrighted?

Miller: No, she had about three plays I think they put on that she had written.

LD: That has always had such a loyal group of people behind it and obviously I suppose they pulled that kind of talent, too.

I really would like to get any memories that you have of the differences of social life of those days and social life of today. When you and Errol were married, what did you do to have a good time?

Miller: He wasn't a social person.

LD: You didn't go out a lot?

Miller: No.

LD: Before that point, how did people enjoy themselves? Were there a lot of organized activities or was it primarily just that you just did things on a spontaneous basis? Were there a lot of parties that you went to?

Miller: No.

LD: Just more friends socializing. Do you remember the role of the Gazette in the social scene in Cedar Rapids in those days? Someone else we were talking to said that you always read the Gazette to see who went out of town and who came in.

Miller: They had the society page which was always good.

LD: It was a good bit of importance to people in those days?

Miller: Like a little town paper, you know.

LD: And everybody read it to see who had been where and what they had done?

Miller: Yes.

LD: When you were here in the thirties, and I guess really up until the

time when you were married, what was the community's view, or at least the part of the community that you were in, towards for instance, such things as divorce? Did you know anybody that was involved in divorce?

Miller: Oh surely.

LD: How was that dealt with?

Miller: In this part of the country it just wasn't done. People got a divorce, there was something wrong. But when you went East that was a different story.

LD: It happened quite a bit more there?

Miller: That's true.

LD: Did you feel that--were people ostracized as a result of divorces, women and men?

Miller: They were just kind of looked down on, depending on the person. My mother was always horrified about it. And that's one reason I never cared about getting married. I was married late in life, I was 37. I believe that when you're married you should stick. I still believe in that and I still do.

LD: That certainly has changed in society as a whole.

Miller: Which is too bad because there are too many homes broken up. I feel sorry for the children. They're the ones to be considered.

LD: They're always the losers.

Miller: That's true. And it makes a difference in their way of life. They have a life ahead of them to live.

LD: Back in the twenties and the thirties and forties, the home was a much more stable environment.

Miller: That's for sure!

LD: Back to the roles of women at that time--and you were working so you would have seen this--was there a difference in the amount of money a woman was paid to teach, for instance, versus a man? Were you aware of that?

Miller: You just took that for granted.

LD: You didn't even think about that?

Miller: No. Just because they were a man they'd get more, so what!

LD: It didn't bother you?

Miller: Money, as far as I'm concerned, is only a medium of exchange.

LD: So it didn't bother you?

Miller: And people worship money. You know you can't eat it, you can't take it with you when you leave this world. What you can do is, you can always help somebody or do something that is beneficial.

LD: That's a very different way of looking at money than a lot of people do but I think you're right. I think people view it as a sense of their own value nowadays. They equate that with the amount of . . .

Miller: I don't care whether they're worth ten billion, it's what they themselves are. If they're honest and above board and help your neighbor.

LD: Obviously you've already covered this, I was going to ask you how hard it was for women to get into leadership positions when you were back in the early days of the League. Certainly you seemed to know how to get done whatever you needed to get done. Did you ever find that it was difficult to work with the people who were the dominant--the heads of boards and all of that in those days. Was there an attitude that made it difficult?

Miller: No, I can always get along.

LD: You didn't have any trouble?

Miller: No, it's up to you. It's just like--for instance, people would drink a lot of coffee, you know, and they have to step down and not drink as much. And how hard it is for them, as far as I'm concerned, that's all in your mind. You can make up your mind to do anything if you want to.

LD: And it doesn't matter what your sex is or what your position is?

Miller: That's true.

LD: During that period of the twenties and thirties in Cedar Rapids, what are your memories of the different people who came here from different backgrounds? Did you know, for instance, a lot of people that were of Greek origin? There were a lot of Greeks coming over at that time. Or other different backgrounds, obviously the Czechs?

Miller: I didn't know too many.

LD: Most of the people that you taught during that period, were they youngsters from the Czech community?

Miller: Czech people, yes.

LD: Do you have any observations about the traditions in those families that you noticed that was different or valuable to those youngsters or the community? Did they all speak English?

Miller: Some of the parents didn't at that time. But the little ones . . . the parents were wonderful as far as I'm concerned. And they always--no matter whether families had a hard time financially, they were so-called poor people--but their children always came to school clean. Maybe they had a hole here, or you know, but

they were always immaculate, they were clean.

LD: They were obviously cared for?

Miller: That's right.

LD: Those families were very strong family units, I think.

Miller: Woodrow Wilson was a wonderful community when I taught over there, and it still is.

LD: Obviously there are a lot of people who want to keep and it still is very important. Are there other areas that I have not covered--either organizations that you were involved in?

Miller: No.

LD: Memories of any particular--we talked about Grant Wood. There are some other famous characters from Cedar Rapids, were you familiar with William Shirer?

Miller: Yes, I knew Bill Shirer.

LD: Was he--he would have been later at Coe I believe, or was he about the same time?

Miller: Yes, his sister was ahead of me. I remember them when they lived on Second Avenue. Then Mrs. Shirer bought a place back of us on Third Avenue and lived there.

LD: What kind of family was that?

Miller: She was a widow when we came to Cedar Rapids.

LD: He must have had a great deal of talent even when he was a young man.

Miller: Oh, Bill was very into it. I can still see all the books under his arm. When he was in high school and the same way at Coe.

LD: Wasn't he the editor of the Coe paper?

Miller: Yes, Cosmos.

LD: I'm sure you're too young to remember the Cherry Sisters, they preceeded you didn't they?

Miller: I knew who they were. Effie--we were here when Effie ran for Mayor.

LD: Effie ran for Mayor?

Miller: Yes. I went down to the old Majestic with somebody. She gave a talk down there.

LD: That must have been in the twenties, then?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Was she taken seriously, as a candidate?

Miller: She was serious, but anyway....

LD: But the community didn't take it very seriously? But people went to hear her speak?

Miller: Oh, surely!

LD: Who was she running against, do you remember?

Miller: I don't recall.

LD: She didn't win, obviously?

Miller: No.

LD: What about Marvin Cone, were you a friend of Marvin Cone?

Miller: Yes.

LD: Any memories that you can share about . . . ?

Miller: Yes, his father was a very good friend of my father's, Harry Cone, who was a jeweler. And Marvin and his father used to come to our house quite often for dinners at night.

LD: Did you ever go to his studio and watch him paint?

Miller: I never saw him paint but I took two years of French under him.

LD: He was your French teacher?

Miller: At Coe.

LD: Yes, I remember. Someone else said he taught there, that he taught French at Coe. Was he a stern teacher or did you enjoy him as a . . . ?

Miller: He was, he was quiet.

LD: Was he very different from Grant Wood? They were very close friends.

Miller: I wasn't around Grant enough, Marvin was a quiet person. At the dinner table my father always sat at one end and Harry Cone to his right and Marvin, and then my mother at the end and me across. And Marvin and I couldn't open our mouths, you know, when Mr. Cone and Mr. Johnson took over.

LD: You just sat there and listened?

Miller: We had to just say nothing.

LD: I know you're too young for Carl VanVechten, but do you remember when The Tatooed Countess . . . ?

Miller: I remember when the book came out. I had that and I don't know what ever happened to it.

LD: You had a copy of the original one?

Miller: Oh, yes. I had a good library when we lived on 1809 Second Avenue.

LD: But you've just kind of lost track of some of those books?

Miller: When my family moved out of the house over to the Carlton Apartments, we brought these books out and I don't know what ever became of it.

LD: Do you have your memories of who the various people in the book were supposed to be? For instance, who the countess was supposed to be in Cedar Rapids?

Miller: I always heard rumors and this and that and the other, but I didn't

pay any attention.

LD: You didn't write it down in the margin to save that?

Miller: No.

LD: I know that caused quite a stir when it came out. Any other folks that you can share memories of that you thought were important in that time that made a difference in the community?

Miller: We've had a number of great leaders in our community. As I said before Mr. John F. Ely, John M.'s father, was on the Public Health Nursing Board. Then John M., old Mr. Ely, was the treasurer.

LD: So you worked with them a lot when you were involved with Camp Good Health?

Miller: That's right.

LD: How many years did you do that? Or what years, I should say?

Miller: Quite a while.

LD: Did you start on that in the thirties?

Miller: It was in the thirties. Then after I was married I still was on their board for a couple of years. Mrs. J.W. Ballard, who just died about a year and a half ago, she was the president for many years, of the Public Health Nursing.

LD: That has been one of those things that has just gone on and on and on, because it's obviously doing a very good job.

Miller: You mean the Public Health Nursing.

LD: I was thinking Camp Good Health.

Miller: Another thing that's so wonderful about it now, it isn't just donated for the youngsters, but they take the elderly out during the month of August. They did that last year.

LD: What a wonderful idea.

Miller: Yes. They would take them out for a couple of weeks.

LD: For fresh air and a wholesome environment?

Miller: Yes. Camp Good Health does more of a job than people realize that they do.

LD: They do it very quietly. They really don't toot their own horns very much but I've been hearing about it from many people that I've interviewed. I guess the original intent was to provide a wholesome environment and good nutrition for youngsters who didn't get it at home.

Miller: Well, it was started--this nurse had a bunch of little kids and they'd take them out to Palisades and they would sleep on a blanket and that kind of thing. That's what inspired Mr. Ely, who was on the board--John F. Ely.

LD: On the Public Health Nursing Board?

Miller: Yes. And Mrs. Johnson was the head of it then.

LD: And that was the beginning of it. Did he provide the land that the camp was on?

Miller: He bought that from Alanzo Berry's father. And Alanzo Berry used to be our--what do you call it--the assesor.

LD: The tax assesor?

Miller: Yes.

LD: I guess I have really hit most of the areas that I was most interested in. I guess we had some topics that you covered before on transportation, I thought, very well. The only other area that I can think of that we didn't talk of that would be kind of fun would be communications. I know that the way that we communicate with each other changed a lot from back in those days. What

are your memories of newspapers in that time, and how important they were in every day life compared to now?

Miller: When we lived in Lisbon I remember my father took the Registered Leader, which is today now, the Des Moines Register. He took the Chicago Tribune, he liked the editorial. Of course, we kids liked the Sunday paper the best--The Chicago Tribune--on account of the funnies. He took the Cedar Rapids Republican.

LD: That's right, the Gazette and the Republican were competitors at that time. Was the Tribune a Cedar Rapids paper during that time?

Miller: That was a Cedar Rapids paper, but a later paper that I got.

LD: But the Gazette bought the Tribune out, I believe, later on?

Miller: I think they did.

LD: And the Republican just stopped?

Miller: Cyrenus Cole was one of the owners in the early days of the Republican.

LD: Those were daily papers?

Miller: Yes.

LD: When did you first get a telephone when you were growing up?

Miller: My Grandfather Kettering . . .

LD: What kind of a phone did you have? What is a party line?

Miller: No, it was a single line.

LD: It was a single line?

Miller: This was in Lisbon.

LD: Where would you call on it? Did you use it much?

Miller: I was too little. It was up on the wall.

LD: It was too high for you! It was really a grown-up affair?

Miller: That's right.

LD: At what point in your life did you begin to use the telephone regularly?

Miller: I think when we came to Cedar Rapids. I never used it in Lisbon.

LD: Did you use it for social conversations with friends in those days?

Miller: Yes. I was in Coe then.

LD: What about the radio? Do you have memories of that?

Miller: Yes, my father got his . . .

LD: Oh, it was the Victrola when you. . .

Miller: It was the Victrola in 1913. My father got a radio, finally, I went to teach school in 1924--he got it either in 1924 or 1925 from Mr. Stanley Reeder.

LD: Was that a store that sold . . . ?

Miller: No, he had a shop between Second and First Avenue near the Chevrolet place.

LD: What did he sell?

Miller: Radios.

LD: Fancy new inventions?

Miller: Well, he was still down there a few years ago. I don't know whether he's still living or not.

LD: Did the radio have a big impact on your family?

Miller: No. My mother liked it. She would get John, he had a beautiful voice. He would give these Sacred concerts from Boston.

LD: And she would listen, she would be able to pick these up?

Miller: In the morning at 10:00, every morning.

LD: Were they carried through a local station, because that would

have been a long way.

Miller: I suppose, yes.

LD: Are there any other comments or memories that you would like to share about your life here in Cedar Rapids during that period of time?

Miller: I've had a wonderful time in Cedar Rapids, it's been good to me. I've enjoyed living here.

LD: If you had to compare the community in those days to now, and that's really not fair . . .

Miller: Of course, I love the olden days.

LD: You liked it during that time a lot?

Miller: You know, I could go down, when Second Avenue was a two-way street--many a time, speaking about the Public Library today--Mr. and Mrs. VanVechten would be sitting on their front porch. And their house was across from where Turner's Mortuary is--across the street and up about the third house, as I recall, second or third house. It was on Eighth Street on the left-hand side as you went downtown. Mr. and Mrs. VanVechten would be sitting on their porch late in the afternoon when I'd go down to pick up my father.

LD: And you could just wave at them as you went by?

Miller: Yes.

LD: That was a very different looking community in those days?

Miller: Oh yes!

LD: The downtown area didn't spread nearly as far as it does. What would Second Avenue look like? Were the elms . . . ?

Miller: Oh yes. And from our house up on Second Avenue there was an arch high enough up that you could see toward the river, toward

downtown, an arch of trees on both sides that leaned over. It was just a beautiful sight.

LD: I do thank you for your giving me this time and sharing these memories with us.

Miller: I've enjoyed it, and thank you very much.

LD: We'll make sure you get a copy of this.

END OF SECOND TAPE