Oral History Interview

with

Dorothy Jameson

Interview Conducted by
Mary Larson
June 18, 2011

O-STATE Stories
Oral History Project

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O-State Stories

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Interview History

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Project Detail

The purpose of O-STATE Stories Oral History Project is to gather and preserve memories revolving around Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (OAMC) and Oklahoma State University (OSU).

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on October 5, 2006.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Dorothy Jameson is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on June 18, 2011.

About Dorothy Jameson…

Dorothy Strong-Jameson was born in the Oklahoma panhandle and grew up just outside of Boise City. She attended school there and later attended Oklahoma Panhandle State University for two years, studying home economics. She then transferred to Oklahoma State University (then Oklahoma A&M College) where she pledged with Chi Omega and was named Outstanding Senior Girl in 1944 by the girls' athletics department.

After OSU, she accepted a job with the Extension Service which took her to New Mexico for a few years. From there she relocated to Davis, Oklahoma, where she taught vocational home economics for the next twenty years. After a short break, she returned to teach fifth-grade science for ten years before retiring. Over the years along with her teaching career, Dorothy has been very active in her community and her church. She was recognized as Woman of the Year by the Soil Conservation Board, and as Outstanding Teacher of the Year for Murray County. In her interview, Dorothy recalls small-town life, the Dust Bowl, and the influential people in her life.

Dorothy Jameson

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Stillwater, Oklahoma

Larson *Okay, today is June 18, 2011. My name is Mary Larson, and I'm here with Dorothy Strong-Jameson here in Stillwater where she's visiting. I was wondering if you could take just a moment at the beginning and tell us a little bit about when and where you were born.*

Jameson When I was born?

Larson *Yes, when you were born and where.*

Jameson Okay, as my mother refreshes my mind, I was born in the oldest house in the panhandle of Oklahoma. It was an old rock house. Of course, everything was rock out there, the corrals and fences and everything because there weren't any trees other than cottonwood, and they didn't last very long. This was the old Z. H. Cattle Ranch, and it was a long three-room, one room right after another. Of course, there was no running water, no electricity, and women's work was really hard. I just look back on the days and the things that my mother did then, and I don't know whether the people today could stand up under it or not. Anyway, we were a pretty rugged bunch. I lived there until I was three, and then my two brothers were ready to go to school. Mother had taught the oldest one at home, homeschooled him the first year. Then we moved to Boise City, and lived there until I was five. Then we moved out on the ranch, built a house, and moved out there. I know I'm not doing a very good job.

Larson *Oh, no, no. It's wonderful.*

Jameson So then when it was time for school to start, my dad said, "Do we even have a teacher at the schoolhouse?" Nobody had hired a teacher. Nobody

had done anything. There was a young man from Boise City whose dad was a county agent, had just graduated from college, and was getting ready to go to law school. My dad talked him into teaching that year so that we could have a schoolteacher and so he could stay at our house, which he did. He got ready to go to school, first day or something soon, and he asked my mother, he said, "Isn't Dorothy going to go?" She said, "No. She isn't old enough." "Oh, she is old enough," he said. "Send her."

So I went to school at five, and I was really surprised at the number of students that were there. When we got there I felt like, well, we were late because there must have been fifteen or sixteen students. It was grades one through eight. School went along real fine. About myself, I was the only left-handed one in my family, and everybody teased me about it. I ended up wondering what I should do because I didn't like to be teased. No child likes to be teased. I remembered the directions. I knew my directions, north, south, east and west. I noticed that everybody picked their pencil up in their south hand, (the desk faced the east) so I broke myself to write right-handed. (Laughs)

Larson *You mentioned that you had brothers. Did you just have brothers, or did you have any sisters?*

Jameson No, two brothers.

Larson *Were they both older?*

Jameson Yes, but they were very close together. One time, we were one, two, and three. (Laughter)

Larson *So all just right in a stair step?*

Jameson Right.

Larson *Before we go on with school too much further, could we talk a little bit about the history of the ranch? You mentioned a few things to me earlier that I think we'd like to…*

Jameson Well, I wish I really knew more about it and had thought about it more. I could've done a little research. The way I understand it was with it being No Man's Land, they opened it up for settlement, and it was being divided up into homesteads, 160 acres. The cattlemen were running the whole area, large section after section. They couldn't make any money if they were going to have to do something like that and put up a bunch of fencing, so they put it up for sale for homesteading. My grandfather, who came from Ocate, New Mexico, had sheep and had lots of

Mexicans, so he brought sheep and Mexicans and cattle to the ranch, and they did everyone's homesteading.

I have often thought every pile of rocks that was a corral or a fence, that was the Matoya place. And then there was another one that was another Mexican place. They were all named after the Mexicans that homesteaded at that area. It was strictly used for grazing. I really don't know, as small child, too much about an irrigation project my dad and his two brothers started on the Cimarron River. It didn't pan out to be a great irrigation project to raise the feed that they needed. But there was an interesting thing to me that I had two of my uncles—my dad had two brothers. Both of them went to college, but Dad didn't. One of them decided that he was going to make soap weed silage.

Most of you know what a soap weed is. It's bare grass. They have different names for it, yucca and so forth. During the Dust Bowl there wasn't anything for the cattle to eat but soap weeds, anything green. Dad had a machine that my uncle had bought to chop up and make silage out of, and it cut those spines about an inch and a half or two inches long. So he fed those and cake the year around. He had some Mexicans that would go out, and you can cut one of those yucca plants right out under the ground real easy with a shovel. You just get under the ground, and it cuts easy. He'd pile up big piles, and then they'd just pull the soap weed grinder around, and it ran off a pulley belt on a tractor, and it would cut it up.

Well, this became very popular with all the ranchers up and down the river during the Dust Bowl, because they didn't have anything to feed their cows, either. So they would cut up the soap weeds and have them piled up, and they'd pull this machine up one side of the river and down the other. A lot of fellows got to use it, which was a blessing for everybody. As time went on, the government came in in '35 with the Soil Conservation Service and was able to talk people into putting some of this grassland into banks and not farm it, not till it, not do anything. That's what happened back in '29 when they were having the Depression on the East Coast. They were selling wheat at a high market out here and raising lots of it. Then it got dry, and it was just blowing away. There was no vegetation to hold it, so they planted trees, and they planted vegetation, and did everything. Then back in the early '40s, rains came. The ground was fertile. The soil was fertile if we just get water on it, so then with the rains coming and everything, they were able to get back into the raising of grain and pasture and so forth.

Larson *Did they ever patent that machine that ground up the soap weed for silage?*

Jameson No. It was interesting. I live down at Sulphur now, and Bill Chitwood, who is a big dairy man, moved down there from Lake Arcadia. The government came in and bought their dairy, and that's where Lake Arcadia is now. He wanted to go out and see the black mesa where I grew up, and we went out there last fall. I was showing him that, and he said, "Well, that's just about the same thing that we have. We call it a silage grinder." So somebody else had already patented it or something, but, that's how it got started around our place.

Larson *Do you know when your family first purchased the ranch, which generation in your family?*

Jameson It was my grandfather, and it would've been in, I would say, 1893, but I may be mistaken. I don't think I am, but...

Larson *How big was the ranch when you were growing up?*

Jameson Well, out there, you have a lot of state land. I cannot explain to you what certain section was set aside for state land. You have to lease that from the state. What my dad had with deeded land and state land was about twenty-two thousand acres, but, see, it takes about forty acres or forty-five acres for each cow and calf unit in a place like that. Would you like to hear some about the Dust Bowl?

Larson *Oh, certainly.*

Jameson Oh, my. That was something else. The wind blew continuously for, I don't know, just day after day after day, and most of the time it blew out of the southwest. It blew gravel. It'd sting your legs, and most of the time, girls then didn't wear jeans. We wore dresses. It would just sting our legs and so forth. A car driving between Guymon and Boise City with one of those hard winds, the sand, it just looked like it'd been sandblasted. The paint would've just been removed. It was really, really dusty, and a lot of people said they got dust pneumonia. I don't know whether they really had dust pneumonia or not. I just can't say, because I wasn't a doctor and none of our family was bothered with it.

I do know that you could not keep the dust out of the house. With the weather the way it was, a lot of people would put up wet curtains, sheets and stuff over windows and doors to keep the dust out. That was okay. My two brothers and I went to high school at Boise City, and we lived in a little two-room house, and we had those green roller shades. You'd pull them down, and then we put a chairback against them to keep it from blowing out. Then about once a week we'd come along with our fire shovel and fire bucket, ash bucket, and dig out all of that. Oh, it would be the most fertile dust you could find. It was just silt. That's the

way we cleaned house.

Larson *So that worked pretty well, though, to keep it out of the rest of the house.*

Jameson Right, right, yes. A lot of people used wide paper sticky tape that came down and just taped the windows and doors and everything that weren't going to be opened, closed. That kept out a lot of it, but there was no way of keeping out a lot of it. It just was going to get in.

Larson *Well, and in the summer, too, especially when it's so hot, you want a little bit of a breeze if you can get it. How did you deal with that, trying to keep the dust out but the air in?*

Jameson Well, most of us learned not to be too good a housekeeper because it was really hard to keep the dust out. Then as we grew older and the rains started coming, things got better. People kind of forgot about the Dust Bowl until all of a sudden it's coming back. You're seeing more things about the Dust Bowl. I think there is even a jazz band of some kind that calls themselves the Dust Bowl now, down in southern Oklahoma.

The thing about it was that it made me appreciate life. I tell you, I cannot throw anything away. My children can tell you that if they can't find anything, they can go up in my attic and find it. You just don't throw things away when you need them and you don't have money to buy them. Nobody did. I laughed—I went to a high school reunion one year, several years after we graduated from even college, and this friend of mine named Nellie Wells said—we were driving around reminiscing about high school days. She said, "Dorothy, you were poor, but we were poor, poor, poor." I said, "Well, I know that, Nellie. That's the reason we always went after basketball practice over to my house and ate toast and drank milk because I knew you didn't have it at home."

Her dad had died. He was a farmer southeast of Boise City in the Griggs community and had died with, I don't know whether it was pneumonia or what, but left a lady with six small children. She moved to town and worked as a waitress. Well, you know she wasn't getting too good of wages in Boise City during the Dust Bowl, but her kids all graduated. They did well, and several years later, one of them was written up as one of the largest wheat farmers in the panhandle of Texas. See, if you just stick with it—it's kind of the story of Job in the Bible.

Larson *What's your earliest memory of the Dust Bowl, I mean, your youngest memory? Are there any specific things you remember from really early on?*

Jameson Well, they put through a railroad, Santa Fe Railroad, from Boise City to

Lamar. It joined up with the other at Lamar. They had an excursion train, the first train that ran, and we all went on it. It was the worst day you could have had as far as dust. You couldn't even see out the windows. You couldn't see things, but yet it was packed with people. People had to ride that train.

One of the scariest things was probably when I was, oh, probably twelve —I don't know, maybe not that old. I was visiting my grandmother, and she lived in a ranch house. It was in a little valley, and you weren't aware of clouds coming in. Well, this was Palm Sunday, and it had been a beautiful day. People had picnics and what all, and all of a sudden, it just turned dark. Of course, she didn't have electricity, and she had to hunt for the matches and the lamp to light it. Then when she finally got it lit, you could just see that tiny, tiny flame. Well, that was the first black duster they had. You can read books of telling about the birds going ahead of the storm.

Well, a year or two later, then, on April 1, my brother and I had borrowed the pickup from Dad to have a school picnic. We started home. We saw this big cloud. Now, the black dusters came from the north, northeast. Most of the dust storms came from the southwest. But we started home, and we ran into that cloud. Well, it just hits you, and within seconds it was total darkness. It was like you would go into a closet and shut the door, and not a bit of light would get in. That was how dark it was, not for a very long time, but that's the way it was.

We were sitting there in the pickup. He had to stop, and we were sitting there in the pickup together, talking, but couldn't see each other. Then pretty soon as the dust kind of lifted, kind of like a fog lifting, then we tried to start the car. It had built up static electricity, so then we had to find a wire to get rid of that. Then we lost the wire, and finally somebody came by and took us back to Boise City, and we stayed until the next day. (Laughs) It was things like that that really—and it bothered the animals, too. The birds, when a storm like that would come up, they would just go wild. They'd just fly like... Everybody had it a little bit different, but I think those two black dust storms were the most scary things when it's total darkness.

Larson *How did the cattle and sheep do through those? Did they get away?*

Jameson They didn't do well. Most of the ranchers had hospital herds where they had to tail up the animal to get them to get up to eat the next morning. The government did help them a little bit. They paid a dollar an animal, and they took the animal, usually, out behind a hill somewhere that had a big hole and just did away with them. They were too poor and skinny to eat. They survived just barely. We were kind of fortunate. On our ranch

there were spring-fed creeks, and they never did go dry. They got low, and they quit running, but there was water in those creek holes. We had a little spring. Our house, we had two windmills, and the wind blew enough that there was water there, and it pumped. Those things had these two big redwood tanks that hold about twenty-two thousand gallons. We'd water the garden and the orchard, and then you have your chickens and stuff. We didn't feel the drought and the Depression like a lot of people did. That's the *Grapes of Wrath* people that really loaded up and lost everything when they went to California.

Larson *I guess that brings back—how many people from your neighborhood or the surrounding ranches, or even Boise City, how many people did you know who left?*

Jameson Well, I thought maybe that example of just six kids in a school in '35 would show you there was only three families that had children, up and down the river, that should be going to school at the Garrett school. There were a lot of them left. As a child you don't pay too much attention to what's going on around you like you should, but I knew a lot of people did go. And then a lot them when they got out there couldn't find work, and it really made it kind of worse.

Larson *But none of your good friends or relatives left?*

Jameson No.

Larson *Just speaking of the Garrett school since we haven't talked about that too much on the recording, you'd mentioned that when you were going to elementary school, I mean, it was a one-room school house that used to be the post office, I understand?*

Jameson Yes, and a lady by the name of Martha Garrett was the first post mistress. It was a post office for about twenty-one years, but then it was closed. I don't know how long it was closed before it was opened up as a school, but it was always called the Garrett. That was known as the Garrett Community because there is a Garrett cemetery out on the ranch where all of my relatives, and everybody like that that's up and down the river, have been buried there. Now several people are asked to be buried there that come in off of the flats out around Boise City.

Larson *Okay. You said it started out, when you first went to the school when you were younger, when you were starting school, that there were a number of people there. How many years do you think it took for that population to dwindle down?*

Jameson Well, several of them had several children. Now, I remember there was

one family, the Gillases. They were old-timers there, and his children lived there. One daughter married a man by the name of Quackenbush, and they had several children. Esther Quackenbush was my good friend. She was one I had in my class. I don't know when they moved away, because it got to be I was the only one in my class. Right now, I am the only living alumni of the Garrett school. Everybody else that ever went through Garrett school has died, including my brothers and everybody else.

Larson *Did it close after you and your brothers left for high school? Do you know?*

Jameson Soon thereafter. Soon thereafter, yes.

Larson *Because if you were the youngest of that group about the time they got through…*

Jameson Yes, because it wasn't long then until they started running school buses out into the rural area. See, the school buses didn't run then.

Larson *When you were going to high school, the school buses weren't running out to the ranch?*

Jameson No.

Larson *And you said you and your brothers moved into town.*

Jameson Yes, right. That was an experience. It was good for us to learn to take care of ourselves and fix food and so forth. I don't regret it a minute.

Larson *Did that work out pretty well for the most part, do you think?*

Jameson Oh, yes. I don't know how we would've gotten an education at that stage of the game if it hadn't have been that way. The first year, my oldest brother worked for a family that had a grocery store. He would stock groceries after school and just lived in their house for room and board. They didn't have any children. Then the next year, my dad got this little two-room house. It was just a block from school. Of course, there was no school cafeteria or anything, and they went to school. Then the next year, we just put a double bed in and put a single bed in the bedroom, and we just got along fine. We never fussed until we went home. (Laughter)

Larson *Well, you were all in it together. (Laughter)*

Jameson Yes, right. Mother said, "I don't understand how you can get along so

well at town, and come home and fuss."

Larson *Well, when you were in high school, what were your favorite subjects?*

Jameson Oh, my favorite subject was basketball. (Laughter) Lord, I lived and ate basketball. I loved it. Athletics have been my cup of tea all my life. If I'd have been a boy, I'd have been a football player. We had a good basketball team. The year I was a senior, we went to State. We didn't win, but we got close to winning. We got in the semifinals, and I made All State then. That was when all the towns in the state—the big schools didn't have basketball, but the little schools, all the smaller schools had basketball. They were all in one class. Now you have A, B, 2A, 3A, 4A, 6A. Then, it was just all one thing, but it was fun.

Larson *Were there other sports available for girls at the time?*

Jameson No—oh, softball.

Larson *Softball.*

Jameson We played softball, but we just played different people at the schools around. There were several. There was Plainview, and there was Keyes, and there was Felt. They were in Cimarron County, and we just had county tournaments for that.

Larson *Were there any teachers who had a big influence on you in high school?*

Jameson Well, probably my basketball coach. He was just a dear person. He wasn't married at the time, and, of course, a bunch of girls loved to embarrass him. You know how that was. (Laughter) Then when I went to Panhandle to school, he and the music teacher at Boise City decided to get married. They came and asked me to be in their wedding, so I thought that was nice.

Larson *Oh, that's wonderful.*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *You mentioned after high school you went to Panhandle State.*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *You did that for two years?*

Jameson Right.

Larson *What were you majoring in there before you transferred?*

Jameson Well, when I went to Panhandle State I talked to the president and asked him if he—we were talking about it, and I wanted to be a physical education major. He said, "Dorothy, you just"—Ed Morrison was the president. He said, "You just won't be able to get a job, other than going into a big city because the smaller schools use men as social studies teachers, and they use them as coaches." So, I'd always been interested in home economics because of an aunt, and so I just went that way.

Larson *Yes, because I was wondering what influenced you in that direction.*

Jameson It was interesting, the home ec teacher that I had at Panhandle was head of the department at Panhandle. She basically taught foods, and she had a senior student who taught clothing out there because she didn't like to teach the clothing. But in a smaller school, you did the best you could. Her name was Mary Leidigh. I want to mention that here because she came to OSU and was head of the foods department. I have been told that at the medical center here, the little sandwich bar, they still use—she did a lot of volunteer work at this hospital—that they still use her recipe for chicken salad and pimento cheese for the sandwiches there in that little medical center. So, I think that is kind of nice to know.

Larson *After two years you said you transferred to what would've been Oklahoma A&M at that time.*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *Was it hard to get that far away from home at that point?*

Jameson It didn't bother me. We went home at Christmas. I guess we went home at Thanksgiving. I don't remember because everybody didn't have a car like they do now.

Larson *Did you get to play basketball at Panhandle State? I forgot to ask about that.*

Jameson I played with the boys. (Laughs)

Larson *Well, good for you.*

Jameson They didn't want a bunch of girls, but we'd go down Sunday afternoon or Saturday afternoon to the gym and play, and it was fun.

Larson *So, you kept in fighting shape for it after. (Laughs)*

Jameson Right, right.

Larson *Once you got to Stillwater, though, were you able to play basketball again?*

Jameson Yes. I played intermural. I could tell you kind of a story, but you might think I was bragging.

Larson *No, please do tell. It's not bragging if we ask.*

Jameson Okay. (Laughter) I was a home economics major, but I did well. We had intermurals and did well and everything, especially basketball. I had very few on my team that could even dribble the ball, but that didn't matter. If they could get me the ball, I could usually make it, that type of thing. But that's bragging. Anyway, my senior year, Mrs. [Valerie] Colvin and a bunch of the athletic teachers, girls' athletic teachers, picked an outstanding senior girl and put their name on a plaque. My senior year my name was on the plaque, in 1944.

So, one time when I was up visiting my children when they were in school, after they built the Colvin Center, I called her and was visiting with her she said, "Dorothy, I want to show you the Center." I said, "Well, I am going to meet the kids over there." I said, "They'll show me." She said, "No, I have keys that unlock doors that they can't get behind." (Laughs) So, we went over there, and we had a nice time, visit. They have remodeled it so many times now that I wouldn't even recognize it.

Larson *Well, we'll have to go see your plaque and take a picture that will go with the oral history.*

Jameson Yes, I don't know whether you could ever find it or not because she said they had a lot of trouble deciding what to bring for a certain era, and that was what they chose for that period. The last time I was there I didn't see it, but that doesn't mean it's not there. My eyes are not what they used to be.

Larson *When you were at Oklahoma A&M, did you have any particular teachers that made a big impression? You mentioned Mary Leidigh at Panhandle, who ended up at OSU.*

Jameson Yes, right. Well, I guess Dean [Julia] Stout made a big impression on me, and Bernadine Brock was her secretary at the time. I don't know whether you'd ever heard of her or not.

Larson *I've heard her name.*

Jameson Some of those people, they kept you on the right track and when you stayed busy. When I got an invitation to be on, (I can't even think, now) well, one of the top ten of the class. I can't think of the name of the organization. Boys are in it now. It was just girls, then. I got an invitation to be in it, and I didn't even know what they were talking about. (Laughs) I joined, and I enjoyed it.

Larson *I understand you were a member of a sorority?*

Jameson I was a member of the Chi Omega sorority, and I thoroughly enjoyed that immensely.

Larson *Did you live in the sorority house?*

Jameson Yes. By the time I got ready to come to college, things had looked up on the ranch. I asked my dad. I didn't know a thing about sorority life except what I read in magazines and books. One of the teachers I had at the English Department out there had been a Chi Omega from OSU, A&M, and she asked me if I was going through Rush. So she explained it to me, kind of. Dad said he didn't care, so I did, and I thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed it. It gave me a nice home away from home. I won't say I made better friends there than I made otherwise, but one of the ladies you may know, Kathryn McCollom, was a Chi Omega with me. And then another friend I still have here is Bonnie Smith, whom she was an independent. She didn't go for sororities, but we all played ball together. We had a softball team that played the Waves during World War II. The Waves came in and were stationed there.

Larson *In fact, we interviewed someone who was with the Waves not all that long ago. She talked about some of that. Now, when you were there taking home ec, did they have, I think it was called the Adams House?*

Jameson The home management house?

Larson *Right, it was the home management house.*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *I was thinking it had another name.*

Jameson Yes, I think it did. There were two houses, two home management houses, and I think each one of them had a separate name. Yes, they did.

Larson *What did that entail when you were there?*

Jameson Well, there were eight girls that lived in a house at the same time. You were a cook for a week, you were laundry for a week, you were a housekeeper for a week, you took care of the baby for a week. There were eight jobs that you did that week, and then it would switch, and you would do something else. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Miss [Eva Elizabeth] Lisk was my home management teacher, and I loved her. She was encouraging all the time.

Larson *It sounds like you probably would've had too busy a schedule at this point to do anything else, but were you involved in anything else while you were in college?*

Jameson Just organizations like the Home Economics Club and different things like that. Off the top of my head, now I can't remember everything I was in. I'll have to get the *Redskin* out and look.

Larson *Now, you graduated in 1944?*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *What did you do after graduation?*

Jameson Well, I got my first job in Tucumcari, New Mexico, in the Extension Service.

Larson *Okay. What were you doing with the Extension Service?*

Jameson Well, are you familiar with the Extension Service?

Larson *Yes.*

Jameson Okay.

Larson *I'm a farm kid.*

Jameson Okay, well, good. I did 4-H work, and I did the women's clubs and everything. There was a man that had lost his wife fairly recently, and we had a lot of teenagers there in Tucumcari. They rode horses and so forth. He was a square dance caller so he wanted to teach them square dancing. So we did square dancing, and then they put it on their horses and took it to the state fair. That was a big thing, to go. I carried the American flag.

Larson *That would be no small trick.*

Jameson No. They practiced and practiced, and they did a good job. It was nice.

Larson *You worked for the Extension Service for a while?*

Jameson Yes, and then I got married. Roger went overseas, and then I went home to just help my mother. She'd had surgery. Then when he got back, we moved to Davis.

Larson *How did you meet? Did you meet in college?*

Jameson Yes. He never did think education was very important, but his mother kept pushing him. He had some good friends from Tulsa (he was a Tulsa boy) that were there. He would come to the Chi Omega house and visit them.

Larson *Okay, so that's how you were introduced.*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *So, did you get married before he went overseas?*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *What year was that?*

Jameson Well, it would've been '45.

Larson *What did you do when he got back?*

Jameson Well, we packed up and came down to Davis and started building what we have now.

Larson *Okay. How did you choose that area down around Davis and Sulphur?*

Jameson Well, his folks—his dad was an attorney. Before I came, he had gone into partnerships with another attorney in Sulphur and John Powell, who then later went on and was appointed by [Governor Roy] Turner to the Criminal Court of Appeals here in Oklahoma. So that's how we got started.

Larson *Can you tell us a little bit about that ranch, as well?*

Jameson Yes, it has been kind of interesting. In the beginning I had a few head of cattle, about twenty head of heifers, that we moved down there and kind of started a little herd. We were going along pretty good. Roger had stayed in the Army Reserve, Officers Reserve, and so, of course, he was called back. Well, he thought I ought to take those two children, small

children, and follow him around an army camp. I didn't think so, so I just stayed there and kept things going, which was a blessing that I did, I feel, because once you destroy something that you start, then you may never get it started again. It's worked out just beautifully not only for us, but for my family. John and his wife live out there now and raise cattle and horses. All the grandchildren enjoy it.

Larson *How many acres on the ranch?*

Jameson I believe there are about fifteen hundred now.

Larson *How many head of cattle were you running back in the day?*

Jameson Oh, when he was gone?

Larson *Yes.*

Jameson When he was gone, just running about fifty, but now we don't have too much land. It's dry down there right now, but he has about 150 now.

Larson *Okay. Your kids would've been pretty small at the time?*

Jameson Oh, yes. John was about four, and Judy was about two. Yes, very small.

Larson *Did you hire on help, or did you do most of it?*

Jameson Well, a little bit of help. There was a boy that had just returned from Army duty, a neighbor boy. He would come up, and we'd go feed every morning. There wasn't so much to do that we couldn't get it done.

Larson *That's no small thing, trying to get the ranch started and having all those responsibilities and the kids at the same time.*

Jameson If I hadn't have grown up on a ranch, I wouldn't have had a clue what to do, but it certainly did help me know a little bit about it.

Larson *You said your husband was from Tulsa so he probably wasn't a farm or ranch kid.*

Jameson Yes, he wasn't a cowboy. Spit and whittle. (Laughter)

Larson *Now, I understand you taught school for many years.*

Jameson Yes, thirty.

Larson *What can you tell me about that?*

Jameson Well, I taught vocational home economics there in Davis for twenty years. Then Roger and I divorced after thirty years of married life, and I felt like the attorney gave me the lion's share of everything. He really helped me out. So then by the time I wanted to go back the next year, they had hired a home ec teacher, so I went into fifth-grade science and thoroughly enjoyed it and taught for ten years until I retired.

Larson *So you were out of the Davis school system the whole time?*

Jameson Yes. Then I was out for two or three years, and the principal of the middle school called me and said, "Dorothy, could you come back just two periods in the day, the first two periods of the morning, and teach middle school science and do whatever you want to do? The first class will be eighth-grade girls, and the next is sixth-grade boys." Well, that was fun, did my own curriculum, and we kind of did mini home economics stuff. We sewed on buttons, and we did cooking stuff, and we did breakfast foods. This one boy, he was a twin. I never had his twin brother, but I had him, Jeremy. We practiced doing a lot of different breakfast foods, and then we drew to see how well they remembered what they were supposed to do and how to do it. He drew making French toast in a waffle iron. He loved it so. He told me the other day—not the other day—about he graduated from Manhattan, Kansas, this spring, and he said, "I'm still making French toast in the waffle iron."

Larson *That's not a bad idea.*

Jameson Yes, it makes it nice and crisp and everything.

Larson *I'll have to try that. (Laughs) We'll have to think of Jeremy when we do.*

Jameson Yes, right.

Larson *What can you tell me about how you feel the field of home economics changed over the years?*

Jameson Oh, I wish you hadn't asked me that.

Larson *Oh, okay. Well, I can take it back if you want. (Laughs)*

Jameson Well, I tell you what. I felt like when I was teaching I taught things that helped the girls the most, so that's what they got. So much of the stuff is not applicable to everyday living. Maybe I'm living behind the times. I don't know, but if it is, I still think they need to learn how to sew, sew on a button, do this and that, alter clothes to fit. Even though you don't wash and iron everything you have now, you still need to know that.

There's just so many things. And while I was teaching, we built a new economics department, and we put in one of these beds that folded up in the wall and double doors. I forgot what they call them.

Larson *Murphy beds?*

Jameson Murphy bed, yes, because I had been taking a twin bed. I had to teach home nursing. How can you teach a patient in bed if you don't put them to bed? Anyway, I did that, and, oh, the kids learned a lot in home nursing, just simple things. One little girl said "Well, I'll never take care of anybody that's sick in bed. I'll either put them in a nursing home or in a hospital." I said, "Now, wait a minute." Later, after I was out of teaching home economics, I was on the school board and went back to an open house one night, and the new superintendent was there. I said, "Have you been to the home economics department?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, let's go over there, and I'll show it to you." Well, low and behold they had taken that bed out and put shelves in. I don't know what they did with the bed. I said something about it, and she said, "Well, we never did use it." Oh, my. That, and then they took the washer and dryer out, the dishwasher, and all of that stuff, and turned it into a music room. They just really—but I think the superintendent we have now, he is thinking about how important it is for them to come back and have home economics.

Larson *Now, I know when I was in eighth grade, both boys and girls had to take half a year of shop and half a year of home ec. Did they do that where you were, or did you have groups of boys?*

Jameson No. The only way we did that was not half, but for two weeks I would take the ag boys, and he would take my girls, but that's a good idea. Girls need to know how to use a screwdriver and a hammer and all of that.

Larson *I was going to say, having grown up on a farm, I knew the screwdrivers and hammers, but it was the woodworking equipment with the lathe and things like that that used to scare me, but I learned how to use them.*

Jameson Right.

Larson *How do you think the students changed over the years? You were there for a long time. Did you see any trends?*

Jameson I can see a change now, but I tell you what makes me feel good is when I go into a store, I may not recognize the person because they're maybe bald-headed or gray-headed or something. They'll say, "Oh, Mrs. Jameson, how are you?" and come up and give me hug. That's showing

self-respect for a teacher. You don't see that done very much anymore to them. I don't know what it is. Everything is changing. I don't know if we don't handle the drug situation better than we are, we're still going to be in it. Sex has gone rampant. You can't even listen to a TV program anymore if it isn't something about somebody exposing themselves or something.

Larson *Well, now, I understand you've been really active in the community, too, in different organizations. Can you tell me about some of the things you've been involved with?*

Jameson Well, yes. I've been very active in my church. It's the First Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Sulphur. Then, when I first came to Sulphur I was a Girl Scout leader. I have served on the Soil Conservation Board and have received a plaque. Several years ago I signed up for a five-year program and outlined what I wanted to get done within five years and got it done. They gave me a nice plaque as Woman of the Year.

Larson *Ah, excellent. Congratulations.*

Jameson I got the Outstanding Teacher of the Year for Murray County. Just things like that.

Larson *That made the Boise City newspaper…*

Jameson Oh, did it?

Larson *…when you were teacher of the year.*

Jameson Teacher of the year? (Laughs) Good.

Larson *I found that when I was looking online. I guess to just end up everything where we started, back on the Strong Ranch, is the ranch still in the family?*

Jameson Yes. Now, my parents have died, and both of my brothers are gone, but my oldest brother's daughter, oldest daughter and her family, have moved out there on it. Her mother is now in a hospital. They are running the ranch and doing real well. If it would just rain. It needed that. They have a house in town that's a four-bedroom house. When she moved down from Colorado Springs, they got that house. The kids were still in school and all, and they needed it. Now she has turned that into the Branding Iron Bed and Breakfast, and that is the neatest place. If you ever want to stay at Boise City, stay at the Branding Iron.

I had some good friends in my church, and the one that moved the dairy herd from up by Lake Arcadia down to Sulphur, he'd never been in that area, so last fall we went on a little trip. We went up there. We stayed there, and then we went out to Black Mesa and up to Kenton. Kenton is the only town in the state of Oklahoma on Mountain Time. We saw the dinosaur tracks and all of that. They had traveled a lot in the Holy Land, and they were so amazed at how much the rock formations and the trees and everything in that area of the panhandle looked like what they saw around Jerusalem and so forth.

Larson *Well, it's high and it's dry, I guess.*

Jameson Yes.

Larson *It's a beautiful area. I was impressed when I was out there.*

Jameson We were kind of surprised when some of the people in Boise City bought a retirement home in Kenton. (Laughs) I guess you can really retire out there. There isn't anything to do. (Laughter)

Larson *Well, are there any things that we didn't talk about that you wanted to touch on?*

Jameson Oh, probably tomorrow I'll think of a lot of things, but right now I just don't think of much.

Larson *Okay, if you do, we can finish up. We can do a little more of an interview later on.*

Jameson Okay.

Larson *Thank you so much for your time and for talking with us and giving us your stories.*

Jameson Yes. Well, I tell you what. John and Cathy, that is my oldest son and his wife, are promoters here at Oklahoma State. They are pretty good donors, and they're in the Alumni Association and all of this and that and so forth, so they will probably be giving you tips or something. (Laughter)

Larson *Well, we'll see what they've got to say. Thank you so much, and we really appreciate it.*

Jameson Well, thanks for going to the trouble to come down here and see me while I've got a bad leg.

Larson *It's our pleasure. Glad it's feeling better.*

------- *End of interview* -------