**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Lillie Embry**

Interview Conducted by

Tanya Finchum

March 15, 2016

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

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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 the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Lillie Embry is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on March 15, 2016.

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**About Lillie Embry…**

Lillie Newville Embry was born in Lexington, Oklahoma, in 1926. She was one of eight children and her parents were farmers. At the age of four Lillie lost her mother and after a while her father, Harold John Newville, remarried. Lillie attended grades one through eight at Springhill and grades nine through twelve at Lexington High School, graduating in 1944.

Soon after graduating from high school, Lillie’s father drove her, along with an older sister, to Norman where they took a Civil Service test. She passed the exam which took her to Tinker Field where she accepted a position as a clerk typist. World War II was underway at the time, in 1944, and Lillie was doing what she could to help on the home front. As a clerk typist her duties included keeping track of airplane parts as orders were requested from across the United States and filled there at Tinker Field.

In October of 1945 Lillie married her high school sweetheart, Vernon Embry. Vernon had served in the Navy and was discharged prior to their marriage. Lillie ended her employment with Tinker Field after marrying Vernon. They soon began their family and had three sons, Harold, Marty, and Gary. Two sons served in the military. When all of her sons were in school, Lillie returned to the workforce first at Federal Reserve Bank. After five years there, she took a position with the City of Oklahoma City in the Water Department. Lillie retired from the Water Department in 1984, with twenty years. Vernon retired from the banking business with twenty-five years.

Lillie has fond memories of being a “Rosie the Riveter” and is enjoying being a grandmother of four.

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| **Lillie Embry**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Tanya Finchum  March 15, 2016  Oklahoma City, Oklahoma |  |

**Finchum** *Today is March 15, 2016. My name is Tanya Finchum. I’m with Oklahoma State University, and today I’m in Oklahoma City to speak with Lillie Embry. This is part of our* Rosie the Riveter *series, so thank you for having me today. Let’s begin with having you tell us when and where you were born.*

**Embry**  I was born in Lexington, Oklahoma, 1926. Where and when I was born?

**Finchum** *Do you want to give our birthday? Month and…*

**Embry**  September 7, 1926.

**Finchum** *So coming up on ninety.*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *What did your parent do for a living?*

**Embry**  My dad was a farmer. He inherited this farm from his parents. His parents had made the Run in Oklahoma and that’s how they acquired the Newville Farm there in Lexington.

**Finchum** *Where had they come from?*

**Embry**  Let’s see, my grandparents came from—my dad was born there on the farm, but his parents came from…I believe it was Wisconsin, maybe.

**Finchum** *Okay, what did he raise?*

**Embry**  My dad had cattle. He had a lot of cattle. Oh, we had cotton. He grew cotton and all kinds of hay, baled hay, for the cattle. All kinds of grains—wheat. I remember we used to have…all the neighbors would come in and have threshers, they called them, when they did the crops. The mother—well, all the women in the neighborhood—not neighborhood, but farms, they’d come and all cook for those men when they’d get through with the harvesting of the wheat.

**Finchum** *And they just moved from farm to farm?*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *The threshers?*

**Embry**  Yes. When they’d get through with one of the farms, they would go to another one.

**Finchum** *Did you have to help your mother cook?*

**Embry**  My mother passed away when I was four years old. My older sister, she sort of raised—there was eight of us children. She sort of took over the mother role. My older brother, too, helped, and my dad. My dad later remarried and so at ten years old I had a stepmother. She was very good, a great stepmother that I had.

**Finchum** *So eight children. Where were you in the order?*

**Embry**  Next to the youngest.

**Finchum** *Almost the baby.*

**Embry**  Yes, my youngest sister and I are the only ones left. She’s two years younger than me, and so she was only two when my mother passed away.

**Finchum** *That was hard, wasn’t it?*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *What did she pass away by?*

**Embry**  It was just appendicitis. She was only thirty-four years old when she passed away.

**Finchum** *They just didn’t know soon enough. That happened a lot back in those years. Well, did you have to help pick cotton?*

**Embry**  Oh yes. Yes I picked cotton, I milked cows.

**Finchum** *Is it hard to learn?*

**Embry**  Yes, well I guess. Growing up with it I don’t remember it being hard. I know later after I was married and had children, we’d go back down to the farm, and they’d take my boys and my dad would always try to teach them to milk. He was always kidding around and squirting milk in their eyes. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *What was your dad’s name? His name?*

**Embry**  My dad’s name was Harold John, Harold John Newville.

**Finchum** *That was your maiden name, Newville?*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *That was the name of the town too?*

**Embry**  No? Lexington was…Lexington, Oklahoma.

**Finchum** *Okay.*

**Embry**  Some year my grandparents or great-grandparents or something came from France. They originally came from France, and there’s a little town in France that’s called Newvill [Neuville]. I think they left off the “e”, N-E-W-V-I-L-L. We always spelled it with an “e” on the end.

**Finchum** *I’m not sure where Lexington is.*

**Embry**  Have you heard of Purcell and that bridge? You know there was a lot of writing about that bridge in the paper not long ago, when they were fixing it. It’s just, walk across the bridge from Purcell and just twenty miles from Norman, Oklahoma.

**Finchum** *So what county would that be?*

**Embry**  Cleveland County.

**Finchum** *Can you describe the house you grew up in?*

**Embry**  Yes, it was a two-story house. Later, when I was—I think I was still in elementary school there, and the schoolhouse, the little grade school, my dad had given them the land for that schoolhouse to be built on, Springhill Schoolhouse. It was three miles east of Lexington, the farm was. When they quit having school there, I don’t know what year that was, and they bussed all the children from out in the country in to Lexington’s grade school. My brother, one of my brother’s, eventually made that schoolhouse into his home; raised his family there.

**Finchum** *Is it still standing?*

**Embry**  It is, but barely. It really needs to be gone, but it’s now belongs to somebody else. It’s not in the Newville family.

**Finchum** *How many years did you go there? What grades?*

**Embry** It was through the eighth grade at Springhill, and then Lexington was the high school and we went nine through twelve there. We were bussed to Lexington High School.

**Finchum** *What year did you graduate?*

**Embry**  Nineteen forty-four.

**Finchum** *Right during the war.*

**Embry**  Yes. My husband also lived out in the country with his mother and family. Course we were high school sweethearts and we got married in ’45. He went through the Navy. He joined the Navy when they were doing the drafting. He wanted to be in the Navy, so he just joined the Navy.

**Finchum** *High school sweethearts.*

**Embry**  High school sweethearts. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *What would you do for a date in high school?*

**Embry**  For a date? We would—let’s see, we’d go to the movie. There was a theater there in Lexington. Sometimes we’d walk across that bridge, Vernon, my husband, and I. We’d walk across that bridge sometimes, and it was a mile long, and go to a movie in Purcell, because Purcell was a little bit bigger town.

**Finchum** *Did a lot of walking. He didn’t have a car?*

**Embry**  No, he didn’t have a car.

**Finchum** *Or a horse?(Laughter)*

**Embry**  No. We just rode the bus, but sometimes one of his friends would have a car and we’d double date or something.

**Finchum** *So his name was Vernon Embry. Did you have a favorite subject while you were in high school?*

**Embry**  Oh, I had some favorite teachers like typing and shorthand. We’d do that old fashioned shorthand, that was kind of my favorite.

**Finchum** *So when you graduated from high school, what did you do?*

**Embry** When I graduated from high school my dad took me and my older sister to Norman and we took the Civil Service test. That’s when I went to work at Tinker Field. I got that job, which now we call it “Rosie the Riveter,” that I did there at Tinker Field. I was a clerk typist. We just kept track of the airplane parts, from the warehouse, in the office. They were listed on a big file cabinet, all the parts of an airplane. They’d call from different states that had these Air Force bases and [told] what they needed, in other states, to build the airplanes.

**Finchum** *Did you get to choose what job you would do or did they assign you?*

**Embry**  They just assigned me. I guess, I don’t remember. I was just so glad to get away from the farm to the big city and go to work. My sister and I, we had a room, we just got a room with a family that rented out the bedroom with kitchen privileges. We lived there during the time that…and she went to work at Douglas. I went to work—I don’t know why we…I guess they chose those, on that test we took or something, where we went to work. I was just so happy to go to work.

**Finchum** *Your dad made the decision to take you or did you ask him to take you up to take the test? Do you remember?*

**Embry**  I don’t remember. I guess we found out about the test and of course we always depended on him. He was a very strict father and we did what he said. (Laughs) I think that—it was more…I was ten when he married and then I had my stepmother.

**Finchum** *So what was your sister’s name that went with you?*

**Embry**  Lela, and she’s deceased now.

**Finchum** *She was younger or older?*

**Embry**  Older.

**Finchum** *Older than you, and you shared a room. A room in someone’s home?*

**Embry**  Yes. Here in Oklahoma City.

**Finchum** *How would you get from there to work?*

**Embry**  A bus, we rode a bus. Later, we’d find [out] my neighbor was working at Tinker Field. The neighbor that lived where we had the room in the house. We would just share a ride with him, with the neighbor. I think we just paid him so much and he drove his car.

**Finchum** *Did you have to send some money home or could you spend it however you wanted?*

**Embry**  I just spent it the way I wanted, which I spent it. (Laughs) My dad was always saving, but I didn’t. I just didn’t use my raisings, I guess. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *When you were at home working on the farm, did he pay you an allowance or something like that?*

**Embry**  No.

**Finchum** *So it was the first money you had to do something with.*

**Embry** Yes.

**Finchum** *You said he was strict. Was church an important part of growing up?*

**Embry**  They had church on the farm where we lived, in the schoolhouse. On the weekends and Wednesday nights, Sunday nights, we always had church there. My dad didn’t go, but he made us go and my oldest sister was a big influence. She was really into the church. She was really a Christian lady and she just…

**Finchum** *What denomination was it?*

**Embry**  It was a Baptist—Freewill Baptist.

**Finchum** *Would he discipline you if you got into mischief?*

**Embry**  Yes, he did. I know one time I told him I was going to a movie, but I wanted to go with Vernon. We had plans. I told him I was going to my sister’s house. She lived [in Lexington] after she got married, my older sister. I had a stepmother there, but she didn’t have much say. She let him do all the raising of us or something. She was just a sweet, kind lady. I told him I was going to my sister’s house, and I asked him if I could go out there and spend the night and ride the bus that went that way instead of to our farm. So he said I could go out there that night and just come back to school the next day on that bus. Anyway, I spent the night with my friend, but Vernon, we met them and her boyfriend. We went to the movie and my older brother happened to be in Lexington. The town Lexington they had a theater there then. He saw us and he told my dad. (Laughs) So he disciplined me then, because I had fibbed to him, which I deserved I guess. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *What did he do?*

**Embry**  He was going to whip me with a switch…

**Finchum** *I had a few of those, so yeah.*

**Embry**  …and seemed like, as well as I can remember, he was holding one hand and trying to switch me. I was just crying and screaming. I can’t remember it ever touching me, but I thought it was anyway. (Laughs) I don’t remember telling him any more stories or lies, or whatever they were.

**Finchum** *With that many children, how did you do clothes? Did the stepmother sew for you, or did your sister sew?*

**Embry**  Yes, my stepmother sewed for me, and my older sister—I think she did because from four to ten she was—until I was ten my older sister saw to it that I had clothes and I guess she made them. But my stepmother did make…and I remember the prom at Lexington High School, the junior-senior prom. That’s when Vernon and I really—I didn’t hardly know he was in the school until my junior and senior year. Mostly senior I guess, it was the end of the junior year that we kind of really got serious and dated.

After we graduated he went to the Navy and I went to work at Tinker Field. Course we corresponded all the time he was in the Navy, but he developed rheumatic fever in the Navy, in the hospital, after about a year. He was in about a year, I guess, before he—and he was in the hospital at the time there when they got through with boot camp. He was stationed in Farragut, Idaho. He had rheumatic fever, so he was in the hospital about a month there before he got to come home and then he got a medical discharge. So he wasn’t in service too long, just about a year.

**Finchum** *You all decided to wait until he got out before you got married?*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *How did he propose?*

**Embry**  I guess we just sort of talked about and then he agreed that we were going to get married. I know he was going to tell my dad—ask my dad, but we were like twenty-years old then. Yeah, I guess twenty. Anyway, he went to ask my dad and my dad was real kind. I was always was just sort of afraid of him, scared, more fear from my dad, but Vernon wasn’t. He just went and told him and asked him to come to the wedding. My older brother and sister-in-law were married and we got married in the church they did here in Oklahoma City. He asked him to come to the wedding, but living in Lexington you didn’t ever come to Oklahoma City, hardly ever. Except he did come now and then to bring a load of cattle or something to sell.

**Finchum** *So he didn’t come to the wedding?*

**Embry**  No.

**Finchum** *He didn’t come?*

**Embry**  No, just my sisters. My two, one older and then the youngest one, came to the wedding. They were at the wedding, and my best friend that I graduated with. This friend—well, one of my friends she passed away just a couple of years ago. Her name was Laverne Odom and that’s [the one Marcia] Marsh is [related to]. She was a cousin to them or something. The other one was Dorothy Kelly, that’s the one that lived in the town of Lexington that I was supposed to have stayed all night with that night and I did, but I didn’t go to my sister’s. (Laughs) She lives in New Jersey now. I guess it was about three years ago this other friend of mine, Laverne Odom, and I went out and spent some time out there with her, and they took us to New York. She lives in New Jersey, but her and her daughter, they took us to New York. We took the bus tour there and everything. It was really a great trip.

**Finchum** *Good friends. Did any of your brothers have to serve in the war?*

**Embry**  Yes, my brother that—he was in the Army and he was over in France and that’s where he saw that—they went through this town called Neuville in France. He kind of got to checking and found out that the grandparents did originally come from France.

**Finchum** *That’s pretty interesting. You mentioned that you corresponded with your husband. It was through the mail, I’m assuming, while he was in the war—military.*

**Embry**  Did it what?

**Finchum** *You wrote back and forth in the mail?*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *Someone said the paper was real flimsy, was it? Back when they had to ration things?*

**Embry**  Yes, because I think I still have some of those letters that he had written. They’re in a box somewhere. I should’ve got those out, but I didn’t.

**Finchum** *You kept some though, that’s good. Did you discuss with him when you were going to go to work, or since you weren’t married it was really your decision?*

**Embry** It was my decision.

**Finchum** *When he got out and you got married, did you continue to work?*

**Embry**  No. I quit work at Tinker Field. It was in ’45 when we got married, in October of 1945. Seems like at Tinker Field then you couldn’t just leave. You had to have a reason and I think I put on there when I resigned or whatever—because they had you still doing work there and they needed the people I guess, or something. I told them I was going to start to—I don’t know why I didn’t tell them I was going to get married, but I just told them I was going to start going to OU, I was going to start to college, which I never did. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *At Tinker, was it mostly women working in your department there?*

**Embry**  Yes, mostly women.

**Finchum** *Who was your boss? Was your boss a male or a female?*

**Embry**  Female, I she was a real pretty lady. I thought I could remember her name, but I can’t now. There was a lieutenant that was over her I guess, but she was the supervisor. This lady was, but I can’t remember her name. She was a real pretty blonde, and she had a boyfriend that was a lieutenant, and he was something over that supply division or something it was called.

**Finchum** *How was the pay?*

**Embry**  Golly, we were trying to think. I can’t even remember.

**Finchum** *More than you were getting on the farm though.*

**Embry**  It was a fortune to me. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did you get paid weekly or once a month, do you remember?*

**Embry**  I believe once a month, and I always had a bond taken out. I always had a twenty-five dollar bond come out of every paycheck, but I believe it was once a month. I’m not sure, it might’ve been every two weeks.

**Finchum** *How would you do lunch? Would you take your own or did they have a cafeteria?*

**Embry**  We took our lunch. At one time I worked the swing shift that was from three until eleven at night.

**Finchum** *Swing shift? Okay. I hadn’t heard it called that.*

**Embry**  Swing shift, yes.

**Finchum** *I guess as opposed to night shift Night shift would probably be eleven to seven then?[Graveyard]*

**Embry**  I guess. I can’t remember.

**Finchum** *Would you get paid more doing the swing shift?*

**Embry**  I don’t even…

**Finchum** *Don’t know?*

**Embry**  Don’t remember.

**Finchum** *Would the job change or the same type of work?*

**Embry**  Just the same type of work all the time I was there. When the soldiers would—they’d leave the base ever so often. I guess they did training there, the soldiers. On a train they would—you know when they were shipped out to go somewhere else, everybody and all of us in the office would go see them off. Wave bye to them or something. We got to know some—I did, I got acquainted with a soldier out there. What was his name? I can’t remember now what his name was. We kind of corresponded, too, for a while. He was from Indiana, I know. But then when he shipped out that was the end, but Vernon was still in the background. He was still…

**Finchum**  *In the picture. Did you feel like you were contributing to the war effort by working there?*

**Embry**  I just don’t—I didn’t realize what the war was. I guess I was just so young and so immature or something. Now looking back…but I remember knowing my brother was in the service and overseas and everything. It seemed like I knew the danger or something, but Vernon was always here in the states and then he got sick and was in the hospital. I didn’t realize what the war was really about.

**Finchum** *He didn’t have to go into active duty? He didn’t see combat?*

**Embry**No.

**Finchum** *He was going to, though, if he hadn’t got sick?*

**Embry**  Yes, well in the Navy—on the ships I guess, aren’t they? All the time.

**Finchum** *They might see some though. They probably would’ve seen some kind of action. During that time period things were rationed. Sugar and flour, and that sort of thing, did you have to worry about that?*

**Embry**  No, not really.

**Finchum** *Nylons?*

**Embry**  Yes, nylon hose. I kind of remember that. They were really hard to get.

**Finchum** *Fabric for clothes or had your sister prepared you? You didn’t need any clothes during that year?*

**Embry** While I was working I would just go down to downtown and buy me new clothes. That’s what I liked, you know. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *That term ‘ready-made’.*

**Embry**  Yes, ready-made clothes. (Laughter) Not homemade, but ready-made.

**Finchum** *Did you have to dress a certain way for work?*

**Embry**  I don’t think so.

**Finchum** *Being in the secretarial-supply area, probably not.*

**Embry**  I don’t remember. I can’t remember wearing hose, but I guess we did to work, in the winter time anyway. But I can’t remember what I wore.

**Finchum** *Did you know any of the women that worked in the plant doing mechanical type stuff?*

**Embry**  No, I didn’t know any of them over in Douglas. I can’t remember how far that was apart, where Douglas—I think it was real close to Tinker Field, wouldn’t it?

**Finchum** *I don’t know.*

**Embry**  I know we rode, my sister and I rode this same bus when we had the same hours.

**Finchum** *What would you do after work for fun?*

**Embry**  Sometimes we’d go to a movie, the old Criterion Theater, downtown. Go out to Spring Lake with some more friends and…

**Finchum** *They had USO [United Service Organization] things?*

**Embry**  They had that—when I was in high school in Norman they always had that, you know. A lot of my friends went to those USO dances in Norman, but my dad never would let us go. We never could go. My sisters and I couldn’t go, because I guess we’d just meet too many people there or something. Wouldn’t let us go.

**Finchum** *Did he let your brothers?*

**Embry**  Yes, he was pretty…they were…

**Finchum** *They got to and you didn’t.*

**Embry**  I remember that they got to—they could use his car and go to Lexington or Purcell on the weekend or something.

**Finchum** *But he wouldn’t let the girls?*

**Embry**  No.

**Finchum** *Did you learn how to drive?*

**Embry**  No.

**Finchum** *Not till later?*

**Embry**  Not until after I got married and Vernon and I got a car.

**Finchum** *Did he get to use the GI Bill for anything when he got out?*

**Embry**  I think he could have, and he was going to go to school. He was going to start school at OSU. He was going to go there. I remember we went up there, I guess this was after we got married that he went up there and I don’t know, money was a big issue then. I don’t know, he could have used the GI Bill though, I’m sure, then if he had. For some reason he didn’t start to school. He got a job at first with the Wilson Plant, Wilson Packing Company, and then he went to work for Liberty National Bank. He worked there of twenty-five years.

**Finchum** *He probably got to process some GI loans then.*

**Embry**  Yes, probably so. They had a—I think they called it the 52-20 Club or something when they got out of service, the guys did. They got a check every—52-20 that was what it was called. I don’t know what that meant really. Anyway, it was so much a week or something. Maybe it was twenty dollars a week [while they looked for work]. That was kind of like a GI Bill or something, money, from the [government].

**Finchum** *Until they got set up somewhere else?*

**Embry**  When they first got out of the service, they got that.

**Finchum** *You got married, you stopped working and he started working. Right?*

**Embry**  Yes. When we got married I didn’t work.

**Finchum** *Was it his decision for you to stop or you just wanted to?*

**Embry**  I guess I thought I—to get married, I guess I thought I had to.

**Finchum** *That’s the way it was.*

**Embry**  I just stopped working. We had three sons…

**Finchum** *That kept you busy.*

**Embry**  Yes, so I didn’t go to work. I went back to work after they were in school. After they stated school I went back to work—well, I first went to work at Federal Reserve Bank. I worked there for five years, then I went to work for the City of Oklahoma City and I retired from there after twenty years.

**Finchum** *In what department?*

**Embry**  It was the Water Department. We called it the Water Department. It’s in the office with—taking water contracts, and we did it all by hand back then. What year did I start working? Sixty-four I think, 1964 there and worked until 1984. We’d get the customers signed up of with the addresses where they were moving to. Finally, the last few years we kind of was sort of on a computer, but it was not a computer compared to today. We could get everybody’s address, was on file. We’d key it in on the computer.

**Finchum** *They were a lot bigger then too. I think back around 1990 is when they really came on, but early in the mid-80s they were starting to show up. A lot of people chose to retire because they didn’t want to deal with the computer.*

**Embry**  I retired in ’84, in 1984, and I was just getting on to those—we’d just gone to those computers. I really kind of liked it, now looking back, but I was ready to quit, ready to retire.

**Finchum** *Having worked at Tinker, did that help get you that position?*

**Embry**  I don’t think so.

**Finchum** *Just curious. You had a little bit of work experience.*

**Embry**  It might [have]. I’m sure I put it on my application when I [applied]. Kind of looking back now it was kind of like what we did at Tinker, by those airplane part numbers.

**Finchum** *Worked with numbers, a lot of numbers. Where was your first house when you got married?*

**Embry**  When we first got married we just lived in a little apartment, got a little apartment on Southwest Thirty-first Street. Close to where my sister and I had had that room with that family. The first house we bought was on Southwest Forty-fifth and that was—can’t remember the year we moved there. I guess it was shortly after ’45. It was probably ’47 or something. Then we moved to several different houses after that. We moved a lot. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Just finding a place you liked the best.*

**Embry**  Yes, just looked a little better. A little bigger, a little better or something.

**Finchum** *Where do you consider home?*

**Embry**  Well, here [Oklahoma City] now. This is home.

**Finchum** *I didn’t know if it would be back to Lexington or Oklahoma City.*

**Embry**  Kind of the home place, I guess we’d call it. We still have mineral rights to the farm down there, you know. Have a lot of relatives still there. It’s still like an old home place. I guess we’ve always called it the old home place. My nephew (well, it’s my brother really, now that my parents adopted him), he has the farm now.

**Finchum** *Still in the family. Is it a centennial farm?*

**Embry**  Probably is.

**Finchum** *The Historical Society will designate it as a centennial farm if it’s been in the same family for a hundred years. It sounds like it might be.*

**Embry**  I’m sure it is.

**Finchum** *If it was your grandparents, and then your father’s, and then theirs. You’ll have to check into it. I’ll try to send you the paperwork. You can pass it on.*

**Embry**  Okay, I’ll give it to him.

**Finchum** *You just have to be able to prove that it’s been in the same family for a hundred years. Probably still producing something? Does he lease it out, or have cattle, or something?*

**Embry**  Yes, we have leased it out. In fact, just a couple years ago. There hadn’t been any leasing in a long, long time, but just a couple of years ago we leased it again to some company out of Blanchard. Some gas and oil or oil and gas or something. I guess since the drop in that field it’s—I don’t know. They’re not doing much anymore, I don’t guess.

**Finchum** *Some people lease it out and let someone else farm it, too, and have cattle on it.*

**Embry**  This brother that lives there now is—he has since acquired some other land around there, and he still has cattle. I don’t know whether he’s doing any farming or not. He may be doing some grains and things to feed the cattle. Not sure whether he does that or not.

**Finchum** *So they adopted a ninth child?*

**Embry** Yes.

**Finchum** *You had a houseful then.*

**Embry**  We were all gone, that was years later. My stepmother…she never had a child of her own and so they adopted him.

**Finchum** *A lot of love to go around, I guess.*

**Embry**  Yes. (Laughs) He has a really nice family now and built a new home there. Not new now, but several years ago he built a home there.

**Finchum** *It’s still in the family. When you were working at Tinker, was there a favorite part of that experience? What was your favorite part? Or least favorite?*

**Embry**  (Laughs) I remember going to the training school that we went to, you know. We went to a training school when we first went to work there. It was in really hot summertime, and we’d have these classes and it was so hard to stay awake. I can remember it was so hard to stay awake during that training session that we had to go to. I think that probably lasted six weeks, maybe, before we really started to work.

**Finchum** *No air conditioning?*

**Embry**  Probably not, no, because I remember how hot it was and sleepy. I guess that’s why we got so sleepy. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *How early did you have to be to work?*

**Embry**  I think eight o’clock.

**Finchum** *Eight to five or four-thirty?*

**Embry**  Eight to five.

**Finchum** *And then on weekends would you go back to the farm?*

**Embry**  Most of the time, yes. We’d ride the bus back home to Lexington.

**Finchum** *One suitcase for both of you?*

**Embry**  Yes, I think so. (Laughs) I can’t even remember that.

**Finchum** *Typically, you didn’t have many clothes with you just for the weekend. Have to go back and help with the chores?*

**Embry**  No, I didn’t after then.

**Finchum** *Did you learn how to sew?*

**Embry**  I learned how to embroider. My stepmother taught me how to embroider, but I never did learn how to sew. I watched her a lot. She sewed for us too. I remember she made a prom dress for me when I would go to the prom. When I was a junior she made that prom dress for me.

**Finchum** *Where did she get the fabric?*

**Embry**  They had a little store in Lexington, you know, little fabric store. I think they called it a variety store then or something.

**Finchum** *What color was your dress?*

**Embry**  Blue. Blue with white lace.

**Finchum** *Sounds pretty. Match your blue eyes?*

**Embry**  Yes. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did she quilt?*

**Embry**  I think she did. After I married, I know we’d go back a lot after we were married, and she always had a quilt on those quilting frames up in a room. She did quilt some then.

**Finchum** *You didn’t?*

**Embry**  No.

**Finchum** *Didn’t have a lot of time, did you?*

**Embry**  No.

**Finchum** *Not with three boys.*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *Did any of them go to OSU? Your sons?*

**Embry**  Yes, my oldest son graduated from OSU.

**Finchum** *Go Pokes!*

**Embry**  Yes.

**Finchum** *When? Do you know what year?*

**Embry**  He graduated in 19—was it 1964? I think 1964. Maybe that was when he graduated from high school.

**Finchum** *You said ’64 was when you went to work at the Water Resource place.*

**Embry**  At the city, was ’64.

**Finchum** *So did he finish high school that year and go to college? Trying to help you with your timeline there.*

**Embry**  Let’s see, I believe ’64.

**Finchum** *What year was he born?*

**Embry**  He was born in ’47.

**Finchum** *So forty-seven plus…*

**Embry**  ’64 would be…

**Finchum** *Seventeen, eighteen years old. That’s be about right when he would graduate from high school.*

**Embry**  You know during the last two years of high school—we always lived here in Oklahoma City, but Vernon was [still at the bank]. He was at the bank for twenty-five years. He bought a farm out at Prague, Oklahoma, it was, I think, 160 acres out there. We moved out there for a couple of years. I continued to work at the City during that time for—well, I guess I did quit for one year and then I went back to work at the City after a year. I stayed home out there at Prague for one year and then I went to work back at the City, went back to the city for work. He graduated in—so that would’ve been high school. So from OSU he would’ve graduated in…

**Finchum** *’68*.

**Embry**  …[’69].

**Finchum** *Okay. So when you retired what did you do?*

**Embry**  When I retired from the City, well Vernon kind of retired too from the bank at that time. He went into a lot of other businesses. He was in real estate for a while, because he was real young when he retired after twenty-five years. I guess he was still in his early fifties when he [retired] and he went into real estate, and insurance, sold insurance for a while.

**Finchum** *You get to travel much?*

**Embry**  We did travel some. He had a sister in California and we’d go out there and spend some time in the winters after we retired. We went out there and stayed a couple of months, like during January when it was real cold here. Our children were always here, except Harold. After he graduated he was a pharmacist, my oldest son that graduated. He went to Texas after he graduated. He went to OU to get his pharmacy degree, his second degree, after OSU. He went to Texas then. He married a girl there from—she was there from Texas. They had two children, so two grandchildren. I have four grandchildren in all now. I’ve lost two sons. Harold, the oldest one, passed away at his office. He just had a heart attack in his office. That was in 2002 he passed away. My youngest son passed away in—let’s see, what year was that? It was 1998 that he passed away.

**Finchum** *He was really young then.*

**Embry**  He was forty-six. They had a son, he and his wife had a son, but they developed hepatitis and she later passed away, about ten years after that. She lived about ten years. They just had the one son. He’s working in wind turbines now in California. He just got married. We’re getting off on my…

**Finchum** *That’s okay. Did they ever ask you about being a Rosie? The grandchildren?*

**Embry**  No. You know I just have recently—well it’s been kind of recent that I’ve joined this Rosie the Riveter, went through Virginia Brady. She got me to going to the meetings they’d have here. Did you ever interview Katie Grant?

**Finchum** *No. Do I need to add her to my list?*

**Embry**  I don’t think she’s in very good health anymore. She was the one that always was at the meetings. She was over this or something.

**Finchum** *You’re my first one. You’re the first one I’ve done for Rosie.*

**Embry**  Oh really? So it’s kind of new to you too. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *It is new to me too, yes.*

**Embry**  I’m just wandering here.

**Finchum** *No, you’ve done great. It was an interesting time in our history.*

**Embry**  It brings back so many…talking about it, it just brings back so many memories.

**Finchum** *Do you remember the day the war was declared over?*

**Embry**  Yes, that was 1940—what was it? It was over in—it seemed like I was still in high school then.

**Finchum** *It was declared in ’41, Pearl Harbor was ’41.*

**Embry**  Yes, ’41, so I was in…it seemed like we all went to Purcell in cars, which some of them had cars you know. Course a lot of them were drafted out of high school, because we graduated in ’44. Some of the boys—I know one of the boys that was drafted he was killed almost instantly, Galen Burk [Cleveland County], over there. He was in the Army. He had to leave high school and go. He was killed, I remember, just shortly after he went into service.

**Finchum** *In ’41 you would’ve been fourteen or fifteen. Something like that. Do you remember hearing the announcement that war was starting? Like when Roosevelt came on the radio and said all of that?*

**Embry**  Yes, in 1941…

**Finchum** *Did you have a radio at home?*

**Embry**  Yes, and we went out to—I know my dad and my stepmother and the three youngest—us three youngest were girls. We all went out to my older sister’s. She had gotten married and had a family. She lived out in a little community called Corbett. We all went out there that day, and I remember how sad my dad was or something, because he knew the boys would be drafted, but just one of them was. One of them was drafted, Orville. He was the middle one—no, he was the youngest boy. He was just real sad; I remember him talking and my older sister. They were all concerned about who was going to go and have to go be drafted.

**Finchum** *Had your dad been in World War I?*

**Embry**  No, I don’t think so.

**Finchum** *I was trying to think, probably not. He might not have been old enough to be. That would’ve been 1918, somewhere through there. Off topic. (Laughter) Then fast forward, do you remember much about when they declared it was over? That the boys could come home? Do you remember that?*

**Embry**  I remember that day and I remember we were in—wasn’t there kind of a V-J Day [Victory over Japan Day] and a V-E Day [Victory in Europe Day], wasn’t it? One was before the other. Which was the first, I can’t remember, VE or V-J Day?

**Finchum** *I’m not sure.*

**Embry**  But one of those—I was still at Lexington in 1944.

**Finchum** *I’m thinking ’45 was when it was over, but I’m not sure. Because Roosevelt passed away in ’45. So the next one had to do some of it.*

**Embry**  I was at Tinker Field when he passed away, I believe. I was already working.

**Finchum** *He passed away in April of ’45, and you got married in October of ’45. So you were probably at Tinker, you’re right.*

**Embry**  Yeah, I remember seeing that on—seemed like we had a television at Tinker Field or something. When he died—and he died in ’45, so I would’ve still been working there, I think. Seemed like there was a big tornado too during that time. While we were out there, there was a tornado and it was—I don’t know. We all kind of tried to get in a safe place or something. That kind of ties in with the death of Roosevelt, and I don’t know whether it was real close together or what.

**Finchum** *I think I read that it’s the same day actually. I think it was the same day that they had a tornado through there.*

**Embry**  I thought maybe I was just running it together, but I do kind of remember that. It seemed like it was the same day, he’d already died, of that tornado.

**Finchum** *And April is that time of the year for Oklahoma.*

**Embry**  Yeah, it would’ve been.

**Finchum** *Well, and when it was actually over your husband was already out on his medical—with his medical discharge. It wouldn’t be as important date to remember for you.*

**Embry**  But we were all at Lexington and one of those days—the V-J or V-E one, and I don’t know whether we were—I don’t think I was married then. Anyway, we just kind of celebrating like going down the Main Street of Purcell in cars and honking the horns. I remember doing that on one of those days, V-E [May 7/8, 1945] or V-J Day [September 2, 1945], one. One was ’45 and one was—it wasn’t but a month apart, maybe it was just months apart.

**Finchum** *I should’ve looked before I came. I don’t know. I was reading too something about they gave blue stars and gold stars for people to put in their windows.*

**Embry**  I think we had one of those in our old farmhouse. I think my dad put one for my brother.

**Finchum** *So blue? Yours would’ve been blue?*

**Embry**  Yes, for if you had a son in the service. Very few women—they weren’t drafted then. I don’t think they’re even drafted now.

**Finchum** *Well, I don’t know. They may just volunteer now. Women do serve now.*

**Embry**  Most everything is volunteer now, isn’t it, for the men too. I mean we don’t have a draft for the men.

**Finchum** *Did your sons have to serve like in Vietnam, or Korea, or anything?*

**Embry**  My three sons were due to be drafted, but they joined. My middle son joined the National Guard and served in that for, I think, two years. My oldest son was in the Air Force and he was stationed at Enid and got his wings. He was real proud of that after he was—before he went into his—I guess it was after that that he went to OU and got his pharmacy degree. Then he went to Midland, Texas.

**Finchum** *Enid wasn’t too far.*

**Embry**  No, I remember us going up there while he was in the Air Force there.

**Finchum** *Overall, it’s been a pretty good life?*

**Embry**  Yes, it’s been a wonderful life. I’ve really been blessed. Had a lot of heartaches and heartbreaks, but anyway, I just rely on God to see me through.

**Finchum** *Nowadays, what do you do with your time?*

**Embry**  I go to an exercise class, and church. Our church is going through a big change now, Asbury Methodist Church. St. Luke’s is the bigger Methodist church here, St. Luke’s Methodist Church. They have taken us over and in and we’re a mission church now called St. Luke’s Asbury, and the sermon is on a screen by John Long, the minister over at St. Luke’s. It’s a big change and of course we went to that church for about—well, it’s probably about sixty years. My husband and I went with our boys. So it’s really been a change. Many people are gone, moved away or gone to heaven, a lot of them. I have a lot of nieces and nephews that I’m really close to and really enjoy them. I just have the one son and he’s still here in Oklahoma City and his wife and son, my grandson.

**Finchum** *Do you have to cook for them now?*

**Embry**  No. I used to a lot, but not anymore.

**Finchum** *Not a favorite recipe they make you make?*

**Embry**  No. Well just at Christmas time they always want that Jello recipe made, you know, and pumpkin roll. A few things like that I still make.

**Finchum** *Jello? What type of Jello?*

**Embry**  Oh it’s a cranberry-strawberry Jello.

**Finchum** *Sounds good.*

**Embry**  With whipped cream, and nuts, and pineapple, and all that stuff in it.

**Finchum** *Sounds really good. Thank you for sharing all of your stories with us. Is there anything else you’d like to add before we close?*

**Embry**  Just that it’s been a wonderful life and this good friend of mine, Virginia Brady, she just passed away. We’d always gone to church together too. We’ve shared a lot of memories together, because we’d gone to church over there for many years together too. I guess that’s about all.

**Finchum** *She was a Rosie? Do you know what she did while she was…*

**Embry**  She worked on the airplanes. She has an article in that Rosie the Riveter thing.

**Finchum** *I’ll have to look. So she actually did the guns and she did the rivets?*

**Embry**  Yes, she was really a Rosie the Riveter. She did the—on the airplanes.

**Finchum** *Was she your age or was she a little older.*

**Embry**  She’s a couple years older.

**Finchum** *I’m sorry we missed her. That would’ve been a good one to get.*

**Finchum** *My last question is when history is written about you, what do you want it to say? How do you want to be remembered?*

**Embry**  I would just like to be remembered as trying to help other people. Our church now, we’re going through this Kindness Project, so kindness always comes to my mind. (Laughs) To be kind and love.

**Finchum** *You were kind enough to talk to me today, so I appreciate it. Thank you.*

**Embry**  You’re welcome.

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