**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Avanell Forrester**

Interview Conducted by

Tanya Finchum

March 21, 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 Avanell Forrester is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on March 21, 2016.

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**About Avanell Walton Forrester…**

Avanell Walton Forrester was born April 7, 1918, in Wanette, Oklahoma. Her parents were farmers and she spent her youth helping on the farm, including picking cotton. She attended Boyer School grades one through eight and then went to Wanette High School. In 1940 Avanell married Joe Forrester and they had three children, a son and two daughters.

As World War II was underway, Joe joined the service. While he was serving, Avanell was also doing her patriotic duty at Douglas Aircraft (now Tinker Field) in Oklahoma City. She was a riveter, a true Rosie the Riveter, and largely worked on the left wing of the C-47 planes being built at that time at Douglas. Avanell was so good at riveting that she was given the task to correct the work of others. If a rivet was not drilled in correctly, she would drill it out and put in another one. She worked for Douglas Aircraft for about two years.

Having had a good experience in the workforce, and needing extra income, Avanell found additional jobs. For about five years she worked as a manager at an apartment complex. Then she had an experience that led her into selling, first with Amway and then with Fuller Brush. Avanell also was a seamstress and made custom draperies. For a time she also sold motor club insurance. Her last paid employment was as a certified home health aide. When she no longer worked, she began volunteering for a hospital. It becomes apparent that staying busy was important to Avanell, and just may have contributed to her long life!

It is important to note that Avanell also made time for leisure activities such as pie making and ballroom dancing. For many years she and her dance partner, Al, enjoyed dancing in various locations around Oklahoma City and Edmond, Oklahoma. Her favorite dance was the Viennese Waltz.

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| **Avanell Forrester**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Tanya Finchum  March 21, 2016  Edmond, Oklahoma |  |

**Finchum** *Today is March 21, 2016. My name is Tanya Finchum. I’m with Oklahoma State University. Today I am in Edmond, Oklahoma, to speak with Avanell Forrester. This is part of our* Rosie the Riveter *project, so thank you for having me today. Let’s begin with having you tell us when and where you were born.*

**Forrester**  Well, I was born 1918 in a little three-room house. I had two sisters just older than me and one older brother than them, and the twins.

**Finchum** *Where were you born?*

**Forrester**  That was about three miles from Wanette, Oklahoma.

**Finchum** *And what were the twins’ names?*

**Forrester**  Zonna Fay and Zola May.

**Finchum** *Little bit of rhyme there. And then your brother was?*

**Forrester**  My older brother was named Virgil Johnabee. That was kind of an odd, funny name.

**Finchum** *It is. And what did your parents do for a living?*

**Forrester**  We farmed. We had a big farm. I helped, we all helped on the farm. We had cotton, we had to chop cotton, and then when it was ready we had to pull—you know, pick cotton.

**Finchum** *Did you get paid?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, when we got through my dad—we had a catalog. We didn’t go shopping like we do now. We had a catalog so he said, “Pick out the dress you want.” I wanted a red one of course. (Laughs) My sisters picked out a couple of—they got some pretty green ones. I was kind of mad later because theirs were a little more expensive, little better quality, but mine was red and I liked it.

Same way with—about that time they had a little oil boom through the country. So my dad got two oil wells. There was a creek running in our farm, and he sold water out of the creek for the oil wells. Sometimes in the summer when it’d get kind of dry and the water wouldn’t run on down, he’d have us take the hoe and with our hoes we’d pull the sand back and let the water run through. He’d let us order a new dress when that was finished.

I grew up there in the country, and of course we had fruit trees, and we had a big garden. We had a lot of good stuff. My mom was the best cook you ever saw. Am I doing alright?

**Finchum** *You’re doing just fine. What was the favorite thing she fixed that you liked?*

**Forrester**  She’d make blackberry cobbler. One day Dad brought, he was on the school board, so he brought a man home for lunch. She thought, “Oh, what will I have.” She made a vinegar pie.

**Finchum** *I’ve never had one of those.*

**Forrester**  She did, and it was good.

**Finchum** *She didn’t work outside of the home I take it.*

**Forrester**  She did sometimes. She’d help us when we’d need to get the cotton gone.

**Finchum** *Would they let you out of school to help with the cotton?*

**Forrester**  Oh no, we didn’t do that. No, we went to school. A lot of kids did, but we didn’t. We lived a mile and a quarter from the schoolhouse. It went through the eighth grade.

**Finchum** *What was the name?*

**Forrester**  Boyer, Boyer School. It just went to the eighth grade.

**Finchum** *One room or two?*

**Forrester**  One room and we had a big, in the middle of it, a big potbellied stove, and the teacher would have us bring carrots, and this guy would bring potatoes, somebody else would bring something else. We’d put it all together and make soup for lunch for the whole school. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Sounds good. How would you get there?*

**Forrester**  We walked. In those days we had snow that was real deep, real deep snows. We don’t have those here now. There was a lady named Ms. Briggs, she had a whole bunch of kids. I think she had about nine. Anyway, we loved Ms. Briggs. She lived about a quarter of a mile from the school, so when it snowed and we didn’t want to get home, she’d have us all come and she’d fix dinner, and she’d have us sleeping someplace (laughs) for the night.

**Finchum** *A teacher wouldn’t do that today either, would they?*

**Forrester**  No!

**Finchum** *Would they have cake walks, cake box—where you would bring your box decorated?*

**Forrester**  Oh, we had pie suppers. Oh yeah, my sisters were so cute. Both of them were so cute. With my pug nose I was always—knew I was the ugly one, duckling, but anyway the boys liked me. They would bid and the boys would—whenever the price of mine would be a little low they’d run around and “Help me” and “Help me.” They’d build up you know, be sure that I got the prize for having the best pie. (Laughter)

I used to play the piano a bit when the teacher wasn’t there—I mean, the lady wasn’t there for church. We went to church in the schoolhouse. By ear, I don’t know the notes.

**Finchum** *You didn’t have lessons?*

**Forrester**  Oh no, but my mom had a push organ, you know with your feet. Those old…and she could sing and she sang alto and that’s what I sing. I sing alto. And my daughter now is the best alto singer. Her name is Carmen Miller. She lives across the street from me. I have a daughter that lives in Plano, Texas, her name Jonell.

**Finchum** *After you, okay.*

**Forrester**  Funny thing, when Jody, we call her Jody, when she was born well both of the grandmothers’ names was Emma. Her daddy’s name was Joe, so you know me. Anyway, I named her Emma Jonell. She hates that name. (Laughter) That got us all in her name, but we call her Jody and she is a wonderful gal.

**Finchum** *So you have two daughters?*

**Forrester**  Yes, and one son. Now he married this lady that had two little boys. He loved those little boys. It didn’t last and so he lives alone. He lives out here east of Edmond. He’s building a house by himself, and it’s a good looking place, too. It’s beautiful land out there with all the trees.

**Finchum** *Let’s back up a minute. When you ordered from the catalog do you remember what catalog it was? Montgomery Ward?*

**Forrester**  Sears and Roebuck, and Montgomery Ward’s had a catalog too.

**Finchum** *Had to go to town to pick up the order or would it come to your house? Would the mailman deliver?*

**Forrester**  I think they delivered it, yes. Pretty sure they did. Man, I’ve been asleep since then you know. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Describe the house that you grew up in.*

**Forrester**  It was a three-room. We had a living room. We had a bed in there of course. Mom and Dad slept in the living room. We had a dining room, and a woodstove, and then we had a bed on the back. The rooms were kind of big. Of course we had three beds in the back room. I call it the back room.

**Finchum** *For the three girls?*

**Forrester**  There was two boys and four girls, there was six of us.

**Finchum** *Okay, so all the children slept in one room?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah.

**Finchum** *It was heated with wood?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah.

**Finchum** *Did it have running water?*

**Forrester**  Oh no, no. It had an outhouse off out there. We had a big orchard, and we had all kinds of fruits, and Dad was really good to plant a big garden. We had sandy land, so anything would grow there. Of course we canned and wrapped apples and put them in the cellar and they stayed good all winter. Course we had hogs and we’d butcher one of those and make sausage. We had a smokehouse and we’d hang up the hams, and we had plenty to eat. A lot of people in those days if you didn’t know how to manage, you know, I guess. But we never were hungry.

Of course Mom sewed and people said that we looked better than any of the kids in the country. A lot of it was from feed sacks. My twin sisters and me sang at different places. They had what they called singings through the country on different days. Finally, we got on the radio up in Shawnee. They both sang soprano and I sang alto.

**Finchum** *Remember a good song or a favorite song?*

**Forrester**  They were church songs. Oh yeah.

**Finchum** *Have a favorite?*

**Forrester**  I like them all really. I don’t know.

**Finchum** *“I’ll Fly Away”?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, I love that. My Mom loved it too, she loved singing that song.

**Finchum** *You want to sing a little?*

**Forrester**  I tell you I don’t sing much anymore. Have you heard it?

**Finchum** *It’s been a long time.*

**Forrester**  (Singing) Some glad morning when this life is over, I’ll fly away. To a land with hmm, hmm, hmm, I’ll fly away. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *That’s pretty good. Much better than I could do. Thank you.*

**Forrester**  But when we’d go—I belonged to the Church of Christ. I tell you if you want to hear sing some good singing—I don’t know. The people, we don’t have any stage and have different people to do different things. Everybody has a songbook and everybody sings, and it is the most beautiful singing you’ve ever heard.

**Finchum** *And you don’t play by chords, you play by ear? Do you sing that way too or can you read music?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah. Everybody knows the…

**Finchum** *So when you finished the eighth grade at the little school did you go to…*

**Forrester**  Wanette High School.

**Finchum** *And what year did you graduate?*

**Forrester**  I made it almost to the top and then I got married.

**Finchum** *So you didn’t finish the twelfth?*

**Forrester**  No, I’ve always been sorry I didn’t.

**Finchum** *That was pretty common in those days too, wasn’t it?*

**Forrester**  Yes. Mom and Dad didn’t push us, you know. I don’t know. It wasn’t their fault that I quit.

**Finchum** *That would’ve been in the Depression time, too.*

**Forrester**  Yeah and in Depression time we had a book of stamps, and we couldn’t buy tires, and nylons, and sugar. You had to have so many stamps for so much sugar and coffee, but we made it through. Dad was going to have to go to the Army and the war was over in 1918…

**Finchum** *World War I, okay.*

**Forrester**  He was getting ready to go when it was over, so he didn’t have to go. That’s when I was born, April the 7, 1918.

**Finchum** *Did he have brothers that had to go?*

**Forrester**  I’m not sure if they went. He had three brothers.

**Finchum** *Older than him or younger?*

**Forrester**  Now I think he was kind of in the middle of them. One of them—he looked just like Sam Walton with the Walmart, you know, started Walmart. He looks just like him, my dad did, but we never found out. We don’t know if we were in that line.

**Finchum** *Where were your parents from?*

**Forrester**  Arkansas. We thought, well maybe we were in that line, but we don’t know.

**Finchum** *What brought them to Oklahoma?*

**Forrester**  I really don’t know, but they were in Oklahoma when I was born of course.

**Finchum** *Were your grandparents in Oklahoma too?*

**Forrester**  They were in Arkansas.

**Finchum** *Maybe they came for the land or the oil.*

**Forrester**  Well, and do you know that it’s the funniest thing. It’s been a little while since I’ve had a little oil check, but all the years they keep coming. We sold the house of course, but we still have the royalty. I’m the only one left now.

**Finchum** *Kept the mineral rights.*

**Forrester**  The last check I got, it was after I moved over here. I’ve lived here about six years. It was eighty dollars, the last one I got. I keep looking and thinking maybe there’ll be some more.

**Finchum** *It’s hard to keep up with, too. So how did you meet your husband?*

**Forrester**  When school was out this lady picked up all the girls in the country and we went to Maud where there was a little school of a lady showing you how to do laundry, how to set the table, how to—all this good stuff, for girls. We had a big dormitory, we all slept in this. So one night she had a little dance for us. So here comes these guys with their guitars and things. There was one guy that played the bass fiddle, you know that big thing. After it was over some of them went home, and I was fooling around there, and he came over. I was over by the window looking out, he came up and he said, “Would you like to go see the moon?” I said, “I can see the moon from here.” (Laughs) So I didn’t go see the moon that night. Anyway, he came back so…that was my husband. That’s who that was.

**Finchum** *What was his name?*

**Forrester**  His name was Joe Forrester.

**Finchum** *And what would you do for a date?*

**Forrester**  We’d go to the show. The shows were real cheap then.

**Finchum** *Where, what town? In Wanette?*

**Forrester**  Wanette had—yes…

**Finchum** *Had a movie theater!*

**Forrester**  …and of course it was Tom Mix. Let me see, mostly western stuff. But everybody went to town on Saturday and that’s when they had the ten cent shows, I think they were. The kids went to the show while the parents shopped.

**Finchum** *Your dad or your mother would give you the dime to go?*

**Forrester**  After we got our cotton done, I was going to tell you, we’d get over and help the neighbors and they paid us a little, see. We were all good workers really.

**Finchum** *Was that hard to pick cotton? I mean I’ve never done it. Is it hard?*

**Forrester**  It’s hard on your back. You know, you’re down here and you have to pick them over here, and over here. You can pick one row, but we would pick two rows at a time. A hundred pounds a day was pretty good for us little kids. We were just kids.

**Finchum** *What would you have on when you were doing that?*

**Forrester**  We didn’t believe in pants at that time. We just had our dress, but Mom did let me wear my brother’s overalls to the garden. I mean to the field.

**Finchum** *Would you have on shoes?*

**Forrester**  Well yeah, we had shoes on.

**Finchum** *Some people have said that they didn’t. In the summertime, especially, they wouldn’t wear shoes.*

**Forrester**  We went barefooted, of course, through the summer.

**Finchum** *Do you remember getting your first money? Actual in your hand?*

**Forrester**  I think it was a quarter and in town they had this—in the window I saw this tam. You know what tams are?

**Finchum** *No*.

**Forrester**  They’re just a little round cap and this one was white with a little—it was angora stuff, kind of fuzzy all over it. A quarter was quite a bit, but anyway, I don’t know if I got a quarter all at the same time. That’s what they wanted—no, they wanted fifty cents, I remember, for that. My sisters fussed at me. They said, “You’re not going to spend all your money for that are you?” I said, “Yes.” I wanted it and I got it. It was cute. Just a little tam, you know, for your head. I still have a black one and I wore it not long ago and they laughed at me. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Sounds like you had a pretty good relationship with your sisters.*

**Forrester**  Oh yes, we had little fights every once in a while, but we loved each other. It was a good family.

**Finchum** *How would you do bath time?*

**Forrester**  We had a big washtub that we washed clothes in. We had a rubboard, a scrub board they called it—or a rubboard. Which was it? A rubboard I think it was called. That’s the way we washed our clothes. We had a line, and we hung them outside on the line. We had to draw water out of a well you know. So the one that drew the water got the first bath. (Laughs) Of course there was parties in the country about every night so we’d get this tub, fill it full of water, get our baths, and then the next day we’d do the same. We’d throw it out, so yeah sometimes I was the last one to (laughs)…but we didn’t think anything about it, you know.

**Finchum** *How would you get it warm if it was…*

**Forrester**  We sat it out on the porch and let the sun warm it. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *It worked.*

**Forrester**  It worked, yes. (Laughs) Those were the good old days.

**Finchum** *And your mother made your clothes or most of them. Except the ones you ordered. Would she make underwear too and pajamas?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, I guess. Well, I’m not sure. Oh yeah, I know she did. They were called bloomers. (Laughs) My first year in high school my English teacher was called Ms. Bloomers. (Laughs) She liked the boys, I remember that.

**Finchum** *Did you have a favorite subject while you were in high school?*

**Forrester**  No. My dad didn’t get much schooling and in fact my mom did, before they were married. She taught him how to read and all. When I’d have trouble with geometry I could take it to my dad, he could figure it out. How he did it without the education, but he did. He was a—he was, after we got through with the farm, he was a builder. When he died he was building a building for the Bluebirds. The Bluebirds were girls in—you know, like Boy Scouts, in school. I have a little, he’ll be eleven the fourteenth of next month, he is a Boy Scout.

**Finchum** *Bluebirds, I haven’t heard about those.*

**Forrester**  Yeah, they were Bluebirds and there was something else. What was it called, for the girls—and I can’t remember what they were called. Boy, this is taking me back.

**Finchum** *That’s okay. In high school did you play any sports?*

**Forrester**  I played basketball. I had to keep my A’s up to play on the main team and I did because I loved to be on the main team. I was good, I loved it.

**Finchum** *What was the mascot? Was it the Wanette—what?*

**Forrester**  Let’s see, what was it.

**Finchum** *I can think of panthers, or what.*

**Forrester**  I can’t remember.

**Finchum** *What were the colors? What were your uniform colors?*

**Forrester**  You know I can’t remember that, but I remember I was pretty chesty, and my best friend was named Charlotte, boy she was big. And laugh, she had the biggest mouth. We had more fun. We had to wear those little pinnies, they call them, when we were playing basketball (laughs) and that was fun, oh boy.

**Finchum** *What position did you play?*

**Forrester**  I made the goals and I played what was called the forward, in the middle. I was pretty good at it.

**Finchum** *Would you go to other schools and play them?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, oh yeah. We’d get on the bus and go to Maud and to, I don’t know, different ones all around.

**Finchum** *Were the courts inside?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, oh yeah.

**Finchum** *Like they are now.*

**Forrester**  We didn’t have basketball—I mean football, then, but they did have basketball.

**Finchum** *Would the circus come through town?*

**Forrester**  Well, through our town? I don’t remember that. I remember Bob Wills—do you remember Bob Wills?

**Finchum** *I’ve heard his name.*

**Forrester**  Oh boy, I was a dancer. I tell you, one afternoon, one Saturday afternoon they all came to town and played music in the back of a big truck. I remember that. A lot of people liked Bob Wills.

**Finchum** *And you danced.*

**Forrester**  I was dating this fellow named Glen; he didn’t have a car. This little guy, little freckle-face red headed guy had a car. Glen would have him to take him and get me and take us to places. I think he paid him. Anyway, one night Glen wanted to go skating and I didn’t skate around—it was over in Asher. He and I had sat outside there and while we was sitting out there waiting we kept thinking, “Well let’s go. You’ve had enough.” Finally, he said, “They’ve got a Bob Wills dance over in Tulsa tomorrow night, would you like to go?” I said, “I sure would.” (Laughs) The funny part, his name was Darrell something and he lived on the other side of where Glen lived. So every once in a while Glen would see him go by, and when I finally saw Glen he said, “I wondered where he was headed, why he was going down that way.” Anyway, he beat Glen’s time because he was a cute little guy and real nice. We didn’t have pot and stuff like that then like they do now. One time my sister and I had a date with a couple of guys—am I talking too much?

**Finchum** *You’re doing great.*

**Forrester**  They stopped at Asher. They picked us up and they stopped at Asher. They were dying laughing. I think they went in to get a bottle of something to drink. Boy, we didn’t drink. Dad didn’t—we didn’t have that at our house. We talked and we said—so we had them take us back home. We didn’t want to go with them and them drinking.

**Finchum** *Raised right. So where did you go in Tulsa to the dance?*

**Forrester**  It was a big place to dance somewhere in Tulsa. Right now I don’t know where it was.

**Finchum** *Was it the Cain’s Ballroom? Was it there then?*

**Forrester**  Some big ballroom, but I don’t remember.

**Finchum** *I just wondered. Cain’s is about that time I think.*

**Forrester**  It wasn’t Tulsa, it was Seminole. I don’t know why I said Tulsa. It was over that way. It wasn’t Tulsa at all, it was Seminole and that wasn’t very far from where we were.

**Finchum** *What year did you get married?*

**Forrester**  In ’40.

**Finchum** *The war was getting started about that time. Did your husband have to serve?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, he had to go. When he had to go—my brother had bought a house. He was going to get married. He bought this house, and he said if we would come and live in it—we didn’t have to pay a lot for rent, just to take care of it until he got back and got married. He was in the Merchant Marines. Then my husband had to go.

My Mom and Dad was on the farm of course. They had two big black mares. Dad farmed, and one night lightning struck the tree that they were under and it killed both of them. When his team was killed we told them to get off the farm. We wanted them to come to town, so they did. They moved to Shawnee first and then finally they moved to Oklahoma City. I forgot what I was going to tell you then.

**Finchum** *When your husband had to go, which branch of the military did he go?*

**Forrester**  He was in the Army. So they came up from Shawnee then, when he had to go. We lived in Oklahoma City, right off of Classen. That’s where—on Fortieth Street is where the house was that my brother bought. I’m kind of nervous I guess. They came and so they had this big plant making airplanes. It was called Douglas. So when we moved in the house—of course up until that time we didn’t have any furniture. So this house was sold with all the furniture in it. So we bought the furniture, so about that time is when my husband had to go to the service. I went to what is now called Tinker Field, but it was called Douglas then. They made airplanes you know. So I made the part of the left wing of the C-47. They carried merchandise and stuff for the boys.

**Finchum** *How did you get that job?*

**Forrester**  Everybody was working at Douglas then. It was pretty good pay and I thought, “Well I’ll work until I get this furniture paid for and then I’ll quit.” (Laughs) One day when the lead man came to bring our checks, oh that place was noisy. It was huge and all the machinery and everything was—oh it was so loud, you couldn’t hear anything. He came and he hugged me up and he said, “Where are we going tonight, Babe?” I looked around and I said, “We’re not going anywhere tonight, or any other night!” About that time, they turned the switch and it got quiet. It was lunchtime. Everybody around heard part of what I said. His face turned red. (Laughs) I remember that.

**Finchum** *Did you have to take a test in order to get that position?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, we had to take tests. The test—a nice lady I met, she and I were working together, and it was up on Broadway here in Oklahoma City. It was where we had to go to take tests. After the first day out there she didn’t like it and she didn’t—after she’d gone through all these tests. She went downtown and got her a job in an office, but I stuck with it. You know what we call the—these big, just a big frame that you put a skin on, they called it. You riveted that together with—somehow, I don’t know how they did that. Anyway, I’d go get the skin and put on. Of course I was good with my rivet gun. I got so good that when any of us got a rivet in there that wasn’t just right, it was turned a little bit or something, we had to drill it out and put another one in. He gave me that job. I felt kind of important. We’d rivet this skin on this and then it had a track and it rolled on down. We had to wear steel-toed shoes because if you had your foot on the line and it went through, it’d cut your toe off. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Are they pretty heavy? The steel-toes?*

**Forrester**  Well, not real heavy, but they were heavy enough that they protected your toes.

**Finchum** *Did it smell funny in there, too?*

**Forrester**  I don’t remember that, but seemed like it did. Smelled like oil.

**Finchum** *I think with all those guns going it might smell.*

**Forrester**  I don’t remember about the guns.

**Finchum** *Would you get dirty while you were working?*

**Forrester**  We had to tie our hair up because if you were reaching over here and your hair got caught in the drill, you know. I’ve got that picture and my son wants it to put in his office. I can’t find it. It’s where we got our hair tied up and I kind of look like that picture with my arm up. You’ve seen that?

**Finchum** *Yes.* *How did you learn to operate the rivet gun?*

**Forrester**  They showed us how to do it.

**Finchum** *You got really good at it.*

**Forrester**  I was always kind of strong, living in the country doing farm work and all.

**Finchum** *Were there very many men that worked around you?*

**Forrester**  No, not too many. It was mostly women in my department. Of course there was a lot of men out there. My sisters worked there, one of them, two of them did. My younger sister worked in the office. My older sister, they had her putting this glue on something and you had to put it on your hands. She looked at that man and she said, “I’m going to quit. I don’t like this,” getting her hands in that glue. He said, “Oh no, don’t quit. I’ll give you a better job.” He did, I forgot now what he gave her, but she liked it and she worked on for a while.

My younger brother worked out there. My older brother died when he was twenty-one. He was married and working in the oilfield and he got cold. He was sick for quite a while and finally turned into pneumonia and he died. But they had a little boy. He was about three months old when my brother died, when Virgil died.

**Finchum** *How long did you work at Douglas?*

**Forrester**  It seems like I was out there maybe about two years. The funny thing, there was a couple that lived around the corner from where we lived. My sister, younger than I that worked out there, lived with me when my Mom and Dad came up. Was living in my brother’s house. This couple just lived around the corner and they both worked out there, so we had a ride there and back. Course we paid them, but that’s the only way we could’ve gotten here.

**Finchum** *Would you have to take your lunch or was there a cafeteria?*

**Forrester**  Did we? I think we took our lunch. We took our lunch, yeah.

**Finchum** *What would you do for fun after you worked all day and the week? What would you do for fun?*

**Forrester**  Let’s see, then? I don’t know. We lived in Oklahoma City and I think we just got our dinner and went to bed. Waited until the next day. There was swing shifts and there was—and I remember working from eight until—well, eight hours. That’d be five, wouldn’t it?

**Finchum** *An hour for lunch. Would you get paid once a week or once a month? Or two weeks?*

**Forrester**  We got paid out there. I remember the lead man he’d come by and give us our check. Seemed like it was maybe once a week. I don’t know, I can’t remember now.

**Finchum** *And the main reason you went to work was to pay for the furniture?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, boy, I did too. I paid for that.

**Finchum** *Wasn’t for patriotic duty?*

**Forrester**  Well, it was a job.

**Finchum** *Did you work up until your husband came home from the military?*

**Forrester**  Oh no, I quit a long time before then. He wasn’t there long, though, I don’t think. Three or four years I guess; I don’t remember now just how long that was.

**Finchum** *Do you remember anything about the day the war started? Like Pearl Harbor Day, do you remember any of that?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, I remember that. Roosevelt was our president then, when that happened.

**Finchum** *Do you remember where you heard it and how?*

**Forrester**  I’m trying to think. Seemed like I did. Later, there was a family that— after my husband came back we built a new house up in Wildewood. That’s out a little bit west of the zoo. Real nice edition, built a big nice house. The people next door were at Pearl Harbor when it happened. He was some big general or something. She said that those Japs would fly so low and they’d laugh and said you could even see their teeth. They would just have their mouth wide open laughing. I thought to myself, “Well how come you out looking at them?” But that’s what she told me.

My brother-in-law was there at the time, but he wasn’t hurt. He was down a little ways in another division, and he was on his way to church when that happened. It was Sunday morning when that happened. He was fun to talk to and telling about things. That was terrible how they did us, and now we’re friends with them.

**Finchum** *Things change.*

**Forrester**  I remember I was—I got a job at the Willow Walk Apartments and the lady ahead of me there, wouldn’t lease to anybody if they were Japanese or anything. After she quit I was the manager there.

**Finchum** *So after Douglas you went to work somewhere else?*

**Forrester**  Yes, at the Willow Walk Apartments in Oklahoma City, yes.

**Finchum** *How long did you do that?*

**Forrester**  About five years.

**Finchum** *That’s a good time. Then after that?*

**Forrester**  To start with, back up. When my husband left, for another something, I thought, “What will I do?” I was looking in the ads for—to sell. I thought, “Oh I don’t want to sell anything.” Anyway I called and this lady came out. She was way overweight, but she had the most beautiful smile. She was the sweetest lady, and she had a new car she had bought. So I said, “Oh no, I don’t want to sell.” She said, “Oh come on, go with me.” And lived in Oklahoma City at that time. So she brought me up here in Edmond, and it was Amway is what we were selling. Now it’s a real good product, but it wasn’t too well-known. Paul Harvey hadn’t gotten a hold of it then, you know. He loved…what’d I say?

**Finchum** *Amway.*

**Forrester**  Amway, so I knocked doors you know, and people were gone or they wouldn’t open the door, and I wasn’t making very much money. I told my lady, I said, “I’m going to have to do something else.” Somebody said, “Go with Fuller Brush. Everybody knows what Fuller Brush is.” So anyway, I got me a job with Fuller Brush. Real nice lady, she and I palled around. We dated and went places. She took me down on South Twenty-ninth and Walker to start with and she said, “Now you do that side and I’ll do this side.” I said, “Oh, I don’t know how to do downtown.” She said, “Go on.” I had more on my book than she did when we met at a certain place up there. I had sold a comb to a baldheaded man. (Laughs) Boy, did they laugh at me. (Laughs) Oh boy, those days, I tell you.

But anyway, I lasted at that for a while. Made a manager and I had people working for me. Some of them would work when I’d get with them and go out. So then I quit that job—well, I hurt my back. I sold so many big cases of window cleaner and stuff that they use in, what do you call it? Downtown?

**Finchum** *Office buildings?*

**Forrester**  Yeah…

**Finchum** *Close enough.*

**Forrester**  …down in Southwest Oklahoma City. What was that called? Capitol Hill. So my neighbor across the street had a drapery shop in her garage. When I got my little kids off to school, when my husband left my daughter was eleven, my son was thirteen. Is that right? Or maybe…I’m not sure about that. Anyway, they were going to Millwood School. It was about a mile. They had to walk, of course, like I did. When they got off to school I’d go over to my neighbor, and one day she handed me something to hem.

She saw that I hemmed real good and she said, “Would you like to work for me?” I said, “Oh no, I don’t have to work. My husband’s making good.” I’d go back just to be—she was my neighbor and you know I finally got in with her and we made drapes. I thought, “Well I’ll just sew long enough until I can make my own drapes so I know how to do that.” I did that and then we got to making drapes for the banks and big office buildings. We were on Parade of Homes. So after she died I kept it for a while.

Then at that time I was wanting to travel. After so long I gave that up. Then I got into insurance. I sold motor club insurance for a while. That was kind of fun. I don’t know, I was just doing, selling after I found out I could sell. Then finally I took my training to be a home health aide nurse. That was my last—I’m a home health aide registered nurse. That was my last job.

Funniest thing, my son’s friend said, “I’ve got to get something with my mother.” And my son told him, said, “I bet my mother could do that.” And I hadn’t done it, you know. Anyway, I went over there and they couldn’t decide what they wanted to pay me. They wanted me to stay all night. She still worked in the office, but her son didn’t want her to be alone at night. Okay, so I go and fix her dinner, and sleep, and take her to the office, and then I go home. Next day about dinner time I go over and pick her up from the office and come back, fix her dinner, and she didn’t know how to play dominoes. Man, before long she knew. She loved it and so that’s we did every night. Anyway, they paid me five dollars an hour. That added up pretty fast because I wasn’t doing anything but fixing her lunch and then when she woke up I’d fix her a little bite of breakfast and take her to work.

The only time…I was there about, oh, I think that lasted about three years. The only time that I had to get up at night was when she had fell and hurt her head and it was bleeding. She hit her table or something. Her son happened to be out of town. I think he was in California at the time or something. I was going to call the ambulance and she said, “Oh no.” She didn’t want her friends to know. I took her in my car to the emergency and got her sewed up. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *You’ve always worked sounds like.*

**Forrester**  I worked, I did something. I never sat around.

**Finchum** *And people-oriented it sounds like. You have good people skills.*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah. I have lots of friends. Then while I was at the gym a lady came over and said, “Does anybody want to be a volunteer?” I raised my hand. So I went over to the Baptist Hospital, and when I went in a lady named Nancy looked at me and said, “I think you’d be good delivering the mail.” I said, “Okay.” That’s what I did over there. I worked—I was there about…I worked for a while in Oklahoma City, where we lived. I didn’t live too far from Baptist then. I continued after I moved here until just—oh, it’s been about, I guess it’s been about a year ago now is when I quit. Maybe not quite that long. I could still do it, but it’s quite a little drive from here back to the Baptist Hospital. But I loved doing the mail for the patients. I made a lot of friends.

**Finchum** *And it all started with working at Douglas?*

**Forrester**  I guess.

**Finchum** *Getting off the farm.*

**Forrester**  I guess, that was my first job that was…yeah, I didn’t work...

**Finchum** *Besides picking cotton.*

**Forrester**  (Laughs) Yeah, I’m a cotton-picker.

**Finchum** *When you were at—no, you probably left Douglas before the war was over then, if you didn’t stay long.*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, yeah.

**Finchum** *Your husband was out before the war was over, too? Did he finish his duties?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, he came home. When he did, then we bought a little house over in Crescent Hills, and he worked in the lumberyard not far from our house. Finally, he got another better job with something and then we built a new house, like I told you, up in the Wildewood.

**Finchum** *Using a GI loan?*

**Forrester**  Yeah.

**Finchum** *Did he use the GI Bill to go to college or anything?*

**Forrester**  No, but my son did. He enlisted. He was so torn up when his daddy left and all. When he got—he wasn’t old enough to go. I think he must’ve fibbed, but when he came back—he wasn’t through high school when he left. When he came back he finished and went to college here in Edmond. My daughters went to Norman and my granddaughter went to Norman. Then my youngest daughter lives across the street over here in this nice edition. Her daughter lives just around the corner, and she has this little boy that’s going to be eleven the fourteenth of next month. Her husband left her so she’s alone. She went to OU.

**Finchum** *No OSU people?*

**Forrester**  No. My son went there in college. No, we’re against OSU. We’re for OU. One time I went with some friends to OSU, and of course I had my red jacket on and I was hollering for OU. (Laughs) We’re all for OU.

**Finchum** *That’s okay. Did you ever think you’d make it to ninety-eight?*

**Forrester**  No, I think I was taking better care of myself. I don’t know what I could’ve done. I’ve always liked to eat good things, and I try to eat right. Of course I like to exercise and I still go even. They laugh at me up there at the gym. A lot of them know my age. (Laughs) They’ll come up and, “Boy, you’re sure doing good. My, I wish I could live that long.” I don’t know, it’s just a number with me you know.

**Finchum** *When people ask what your secret is.*

**Forrester**  I tell them—I told them one day, “I just try to do unto others before they do it to me.” (Laughs)

**Finchum** *You said your sister lived to ninety-six?*

**Forrester**  Ninety-seven. Yeah, she died at ninety-seven.

**Finchum** *What about her twin?*

**Forrester**  She was over here, not far, in a rest home for a while?

**Finchum** *Did the twin sister live that long too?*

**Forrester**  No, she died at twenty-seven. She had some kind of spells we called it. She would just say, she’d have a tickling in her hand. A lot of times she’d just rub her hand and if she could rub that out then she was alright, but if it ever got past her elbow then it went all over. She’d just fall and her mouth would open. Oh, it was terrible. Mom and Dad took her to every kind of doctor. Something was said about epilepsy. I guess that’s what it was. She died when she was twenty-seven. She wasn’t married.

**Finchum** *How long did your parents live?*

**Forrester**  My dad died at seventy-six. I took Mom in to live with me and the kids. I had teenagers, you know, then. She lived to be eighty. She died the day before she would be eighty. She died up here in Edmond in the hospital. She had finally gone, after a while she got—she fell and she broke her hip. It was getting hard for me to lift her in the tub and there was a little rest home just about a quarter of a mile from where I lived. She didn’t want to go, if it were to do over I wouldn’t take her. It hurts sometimes when I think about it. One evening she had a real bad pain in her stomach and they gave her a shot. But anyway, the nurse said, “I believe I’ll put her in the hospital.” She just lived a week in the hospital. I was with her when she died. She had cancer, and my dad had cancer.

**Finchum** *The children didn’t. That’s curious.*

**Forrester**  None of us.

**Finchum** *And growing up you had pork and chicken?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, we had lots of chickens. I’d get one, wring its head. Like that, you know? Wring his head off. I’ve seen my mom do it.

**Finchum** *Would she fry it or bake it?*

**Forrester**  Fry it. Oh yeah, we’ve had fried chicken, that was one of the main meals. In those days people would just come to see you. They didn’t call and tell you they were coming, but—and that’s the way we’d do. If we decided to go see somebody, well we’d just go. Of course we always had a lot of fruit, and potatoes, and stuff. So, man, we’d get in there and cook dinner for them, and they would us too.

**Finchum** *That was the days when front porch sitting was a good thing, sitting out on the front porch.*

**Forrester**  Yeah, oh yeah. Talk old times.

**Finchum** *What would you kids do for fun? What kind of games?*

**Forrester**  We’d just run around in the yard and I don’t know, hide and seek?

**Finchum** *When it was so hot in the summer, how would you stay cool?*

**Forrester**  We didn’t stay very cool. I remember sleeping outside a lot of times. Of course we didn’t have air-conditioning.

**Finchum** *Have a pond on the farm to go swimming?*

**Forrester**  We had a little creek that ran through our farm. There was places where we’d swim. Where I learned to swim was at my aunt’s. They lived in Fayetteville, Arkansas, Mom’s sister. We’d go down there and White River runs close by their house. It was so clear you could see the bottom everywhere, you know. I was eight years old when I learned how to swim, in White River. I went down Snake River out in California one time in a kayak with a bunch of friends. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *That must’ve been fun!*

**Forrester**  In Snake River—yes.

**Finchum** *I’ve seen pictures.*

**Forrester**  Yes, I’ve got lots of pictures.

**Finchum** *So you’ve exercised all along. Maybe that’s part of your secret.*

**Forrester**  I love God and I’ve tried to be a good girl all of my life.

**Finchum** *And you have a good sense of humor.*

**Forrester**  Yeah. One time I had this date with this guy. This friend of mine—well, she wasn’t a friend until I knew her. Until she came down. She had a whole bunch of kids, little kids. She asked somebody and said, “I need somebody to help.” Somebody said, “There’s a family that lives down here that’s got some girls.” So she came down one day and said, “I’m looking for someone to help me with the kids and all.” Of course she picked me. So I went up and for three dollars a week I lived there. I had the front bedroom. She had a big, pretty house. She had a bathroom and running water. Okay, and so anyway for three dollars a week, it added up. Let me think now, what was I going to tell you about that, that was funny. What was I going to tell you about that?

So I helped take care of the kids, and I cooked the meals, I cleaned the house. She had a little store down the way where she had to be, and her husband worked in the oilfield. Oh yeah, and this friend of his, that worked with him, one day asked me to go to the show. So “Okay, okay,” and then we went to a ballgame. When we went to the ballgame we took my sister, Zola, just older than me. She was a twin. I was watching the game and they were talking. All the time they were talking he was making a date with her. He had to come by my house to get her. I was sitting on the porch swing one day and I saw them go by. I said, “Hey.” Anytime anybody—if they didn’t want me, I didn’t want them. I didn’t crack up about it. I said, “Poo.” (Laughs) I’m acting silly now.

**Finchum** *Let bygones be bygones.*

**Forrester**  Oh boy, those were the days.

**Finchum** *Did you have a victory garden during the war? A lot of people did.*

**Forrester**  A victory garden, now what’s that?

**Finchum** *They would just plant it during the war. Some planted it in their front yard or wherever they could get it so they could have food, extra food. Must not have if you didn’t know what it was.*

**Forrester**  No. We had the big garden when I was a kid.

**Finchum** *And she canned?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, we canned a lot of stuff.

**Finchum** *Did the home demonstration ladies come out?*

**Forrester**  The Jewel Tea man would come by selling different things. If Mom didn’t have the money to pay for something, like pie filling and different things he’d have, she’d give him a chicken for it. They did that! They would take anything.

**Finchum** *And it was what kind of man?*

**Forrester**  The Jewel Tea man. It was the name of the—he had a big truck. He had everything. He’d go through the country selling stuff, and he had the best coconut pie filling. Oh, it was good.

**Finchum** *How often would you get a new pair of shoes when you were little?*

**Forrester**  When we needed it, I guess.

**Finchum** *Your dad had extra money from the oil and all of that. Wasn’t as hard.*

**Forrester**  That paid off pretty good and he sold some royalty and at that time six thousand dollars for an acre of land was a good buy. That’s what it sold for, so he sold not very much—no, we still had when it was…when there was—we still have the royalty.

**Finchum** *Did he start with 160 acres?*

**Forrester**  Yes.

**Finchum** *Was the farm 160…*

**Forrester**  Well no, we had eighty acres is what we had, but we had a big place. We raised peanuts, we had a pecan tree down in the…it was kind of like a hill.

**Finchum** *You went to church in a wagon or did he have…*

**Forrester**  We went to church in the wagon at the schoolhouse.

**Finchum** *Do you remember the first car?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, it cost 380 dollars is what our first new car—we had a car before then. That was a Chevrolet. It had these isinglass curtains for the windows, you know. I remember Mom’s sister lived in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and that’s where we liked to go. There was six of us kids and Mom had…when she was young she—her mom died and she had to live with her grandma and then she married. She married—no, it was her mom that married this man that had these three boys. So they were Mom’s half-brothers. Okay, and I remember one time one or maybe two of them…we were all stuck in that Chevrolet.

I remember Mom heating bricks. She’d get them real hot and wrap them up to keep our feet warm because we didn’t have any heat in that car. (Laughs) It was quite a little ways to Fayetteville, Arkansas, from where we lived there. I think about 300 miles. Maybe not that far, but anyway we were so cold and it was snowing and it was cold.

But we were all stacked in this car sitting on top of each other and I remember Dad stopped and making a fire. He got out in this someplace. Then when we finally got to town we stopped at a hotel, and I remember this lady was so sweet with us because we were all—our hands were cold and we were cold. She had one of these what I call a potbellied stove and it was warm in this big hotel. It wasn’t so big then, but she made sure that we all got around, got warm, told us how to find my aunt’s house.

There was something out there the other day and I thought, “Now I better make some tips,” because there was something I remembered that I’m sure going to tell you and now I can’t remember.

**Finchum** *About what time would that have been, in the ’30s, ’40s? Probably ’30s.*

**Forrester**  In the ’30s. Oh yeah, that was in the ’30s. Maybe ’28 or something like that. See I was born in ’18. I remember it, but I was just a kid. I don’t know if I was eight years old at that time or what.

**Finchum** *It would’ve been in the ’20s then. Did they have quilting parties? Did your mother participate in quilting parties?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah! And we had these things—we didn’t do it on our laps. These things were hanging down from the ceiling. You could roll the quilt. It was, you know, how was that? Anyway, we all got around it and I remember I was just a kid, but those women were telling jokes, and of course I didn’t know a thing and boy, I’d listen. (Laughs) That’s where I learned to quilt.

**Finchum** *Piece by hand and quilt by hand.*

**Forrester** Oh yeah, oh yeah.

**Finchum** *Where would she get her fabric?*

**Forrester**  We had fabric. We had a little store in town that sold fabric.

**Finchum** *And then Maud was the closest bigger town?*

**Forrester** No. Wanette was a town that we shopped in. We were about three and a half miles from there.

**Finchum** *Was Maud bigger than Wanette?*

**Forrester**  Little bit, yes. Maud was where I learned how to set the table and where I learned how to do laundry and everything. That’s where I met my husband. That was Maud.

**Finchum** *Maud’s on that county line, isn’t it? Pottawatomie County and Seminole County kind of straddles the line there.*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah.

**Finchum** *I remember that.*

**Forrester**  Where were you from? Were you…

**Finchum** *Tennessee. And you like to dance?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah. Well see, I didn’t dance, my husband didn’t dance. So here I’m sitting here and I cried until I had bags under my eyes. I finally went and had that fixed. So finally a friend said, “Let’s go dancing!” Of course I knew I’d have to sit on the line, but before I knew it—I’ve kind of got a little rhythm. Before I knew it I was dancing, man! Finally, I met this man who had a few lessons. His wife died and there used to be a place downtown called Gautschi’s. I was at the Willow Walk Apartments at this time. That’s where I met this nice gal. She had a beauty shop in her garage. I met her and that’s where we got really acquainted.

So she and I, it was one Sunday afternoon, we went to Gautschi’s. Okay, we danced with different ones. I was standing over by a pole somewhere. At that time I had—looked kind of light red hair. It wasn’t really red, it was kind of…just kind of…this guy, he was older than me. He looked at me and he thought, “Oh she won’t dance with me.” I was sitting in the booth and my friend was dancing and I was sitting there. He had been dancing and he wasn’t having any fun, so he started home. This guy, his name was Al. He looked over there and he said, “Do you want to dance?” I said, “I sure do.” Do you know he wouldn’t turn me loose? After we danced around the first time—I like to dance fast. I don’t like this slow stuff. He liked to dance fast. Here we’re going like “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Around the Old Oak Tree,” you know. So when we got through he said, “Would you do another one?” I said, “Yes.” So we did another one.

In a little bit everybody—there was a place down on Walker and when this place closed, this was just records here at Gautschi’s. They were all going to this place down on—it was down south, quite a little ways south of town. I’ve forgotten now what it was called. He asked me—well, two or three times he said, “Let’s go get some coffee!” “No, no.” So we kept dancing and finally he said, “Wouldn’t you like to go get something to eat?” “No, no.” Finally, the third time I said, “No, I’m with a friend!” He said, “We’ll take her too.” And we did. (Laughs) He took us to the nicest hotel way down south on Meridian, real nice place. We had a sandwich and then we went to this dance that everybody was going to.

It just got started and he said, “They’re having lessons over here, not far, tomorrow night. Would you like to go?” I didn’t know if I did or not, but after he told me a little bit about it and all I said, “Okay.” He never turned me loose. I went with him for twenty years. To start with, he built these little airplanes. They’re called…anyway, he and his brother had a little airport out kind of a little bit north on I-35. It was called…boy, that’s been so long ago. Anyway, the first day he was going to take me up to show me around. We got in the plane and I think he had to start it. He had to—I think he had to turn the propeller. It started and here I’m sitting in here and it started rolling. Here he was out there and shoot, I didn’t know how to stop an airplane. (Laughs) What happened, we hit a tree. The wing hit a tree and stopped it. Otherwise, I’d have been up here by my… (Laughs) Oh, that was fun.

But we went quite a few places, and he was the nicest man. The last time I saw him, he lived with his son, and he called and said, “Ava, can you come over? Dad said he didn’t know me.” I said, “What?” He didn’t know him. “Can you come over?” And I said, “Yeah.” So I went over there and he said, “Well, maybe y’all can go shopping. Dad needs a new belt.” So I took him and we bought a belt. He said, “I could lay down on this floor and just go to sleep.” I said, “Are you sleepy?” He said, “Yeah.” I said, “Well, let’s go back to my house and I’ll fix lunch and you can take a nap.” He did, I threw a pillow on the sofa. He laid down and went to sleep.

I remember I had some potato salad so I fried some bacon and made a BLT and had some potato salad. We ate and I was going to take him home because that day I had promised to take my sister to—she had a little cancer on her leg and I was going to take her to do that. So I had to take him back home. When I did, well he was looking and there was big used cars on this side going south. He said, “Well that was over here.” He was turned around. I knew something wasn’t just right. Anyway, I took him on home and left. I said, “I’ll come by in the morning and we’ll go to breakfast.” He’d gotten to where he didn’t drive much and I was doing the driving. The next morning his son called and said he had had a stroke and he put him in the hospital. The next morning, he called and told me that he had died. Boy did I miss him, you know.

**Finchum** *I’d say you did.*

**Forrester**  I’d dated several guys, but most of them get a little—you know. And they want to go to bed. But Al was—he was—I sure…but he didn’t want to get married. I told him I wasn’t going to bed, and that’s when I first met him, right off the bat because usually I’d go with them for a little bit and that was it. I went with a little doctor and man could he could dance. Oh, I loved dancing with that doctor. That didn’t last long either.

**Finchum** *Mostly ballroom dancing or…*

**Forrester**  Yeah, we went out to—now what was that called? It was out in west of Oklahoma City. There was a big ballroom. Al Good played. Al Good was a real good orchestra. There’s several nice orchestras that came out there, but mostly Al Good. We did everything, the cha-cha and all that stuff.

**Finchum** *Foxtrot.*

**Forrester**  Yeah, we did it all. I loved doing the Viennese Waltz, but not the slow ones. I love the fast. The Viennese Waltz was really my favorite, and he’d twirled me around.

**Finchum** *So you had to have pretty dresses for this?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, and I sewed then. Whenever I would make me a dress—and I like full skirts. I like a full skirt. I was the first one that started that and then several of them caught on to that. When I’d make a dress, I’d make him a tie to match my dress, (laughs) and a little hanky.

**Finchum** *So do you watch “Dancing with the Stars?”*

**Forrester**  Yes, but that’s not—yeah, oh yeah.

**Finchum** *You’ve seen a lot of changes in Oklahoma City and Edmond. Were you in Oklahoma City when they had a streetcar?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, oh yeah, and they came just a little ways from where I lived there on Fortieth, from Classen. I remember one day we were downtown and this little boy was selling these dogs. They were a white—not a Pekinese, but cutest little white dog. He wanted ten dollars and he only had one left, and he had to sell t because he was late catching the streetcar. I had six dollars in my pocket is all I had. My daughter just had a fit. She was about three I think. She had a fit and finally I bought that dog. (Laughs) I know one time when she would be asleep I’d carry her from the streetcar to the house and not wake her up. Oh yeah, that was fun.

**Finchum** *Delivered milk with the milk bottles on the front porch?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, Borden’s delivered for us. Buttermilk and—he’d come in, look in the refrigerator and whatever I needed he’d put it in there.

**Finchum** *Didn’t lock your doors?*

**Forrester**  Oh no. Back then you didn’t have to lock your doors. It’s not like it is now. You never locked the door. Nobody ever bothered or…

**Finchum** *The milkman just came in and stocked it up.*

**Forrester**  Yeah. Since I moved up here I make the pies. People fuss about how to make pie crusts, and it’s the easiest thing in the world to make pie. Do you make pie crust?

**Finchum** *No.*

**Forrester**  You just put a little flour in here, a little salt, and put your shortening in there, and I have a little chopper thing that mixes it up. Put a little water, cold water, and I put a little vinegar in it and put it in here, mix it up, and I use gloves. I put gloves on to get—because I don’t like stuff under my fingernails. I get it all together and roll it out like that, get it on the pie pan. There’s nothing to it. I come in and turn my oven on to 450. By the time the oven gets hot I’ve got the crust made. Then I make—mostly they like lemon. Everybody likes lemon. But I make coconut and I make a lot of cherry. For Easter—I mean for, not Easter, but the last holiday. What was that? Green…

**Finchum** *St. Patty’s Day?*

**Forrester**  I made a key lime. They all like mine. I’ve had men come up and say, “Boy I like your pie crust.”

**Finchum** *Do you have a recipe for it or you just measure it out?*

**Forrester**  I just dip it out. (Laughs) My mom let me, when I was a little kid. Her cabinet had a thing that came out that she had the flour in, then it’d go back, you know. That’s where she kept her flour. On top of it was—the top is where she rolled out her pie crust. I wasn’t big enough to reach up there so she’d give me a little stool. I had a little stool to stand on. She’d let me finger in that pie crust. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did she make biscuits too?*

**Forrester**  Oh, Mom made the best biscuits. She was really a good cook.

**Finchum** *Can you make yours like hers?*

**Forrester**  No, I don’t make biscuits.

**Finchum** *I don’t know what the secret is. There’s some secret.*

**Forrester**  Yeah, there’s something about it. We had big—then, everybody took their lunch and ate it together. Sometimes we’d have to put it on the ground in the park or someplace. The men all got around quick to get Mom’s biscuits. She was so good at making all kinds of desserts.

One day she was cooking a pot of beans and the fire was about to go out. We had to have a woodstove. She run out with her apron, and she picked up some chips out of the woodpile. She came back and rather than take the lid off the stove to put this in the stove, she took the lid off the bean pot and put the chips in the bean pot! (Laughs) Dad was bringing somebody home. He was on the schoolboard, and he was always bringing somebody, some man home for lunch. (Laughs) She thought, “Oh, what am I going to do now?” She said she emptied it out and washed the beans off and finished cooking them because that was what they was going to have was beans. We ate a lot of beans back then.

**Finchum** *Brown beans?*

**Forrester**  Brown beans, oh yeah. I still like them.

**Finchum** *How do you get brown beans?*

**Forrester**  They come in—you can buy them.

**Finchum** *No, but when you grow them. Was it like…*

**Forrester**  We didn’t grow brown beans that you cooked like that…

**Finchum** *I wondered.*

**Forrester**  …you know, the—no, we had green beans, and lima beans, but we…

**Finchum** *You had to buy the brown beans.*

**Forrester**  …bought brown beans, yeah.

**Finchum** *Would you have things like squirrel and opossum?*

**Forrester**  Yeah, we had squirrel. Mom wouldn’t eat squirrel. Dad would and I’d do what Dad did. I liked my dad. I’d eat squirrel. It’s a wonder we didn’t die back then. I loved to go rabbit hunting. My brother would take me. When the snow’s on you know and you can see the rabbits and the tracks. I learned how to shoot a .22.

**Finchum** *Would you dress them or would they?*

**Forrester**  Oh yeah, we cooked the rabbits and eat them. Oh yeah. We’d catch a little fish in the creek and we’d eat them, yeah.

**Finchum** *Turtles?*

**Forrester**  No, no turtles.

**Finchum** *Were there any home remedies that come to mind? Like if something—bee sting or something like that? Did you have home remedies?*

**Forrester**  Mom had Vick’s and Vick’s for a cold. I know one time we had something, and we had to wear a string around our neck with this little bead of—it was called asphidity. Did you ever hear of that? I’ve never heard of it since, but that’s what it was called: asphidity. It was kind of like glue stuff, and she’d mash that around that string, and we had to wear that around our neck for a day or two to get over this cold or whatever it was. (Laughs) We never run to the doctor like people do now. I don’t either. I don’t take any medicine. I don’t take any pills; I tell them that’s one reason I’m healthy. I don’t take any pills.

**Finchum** *Not even blood pressure medicine?*

**Forrester**  Oh no. I was taking calcium. My doctor, quite a while ago, had me on calcium, but my new doctor, she didn’t think much about calcium and my test was I didn’t need calcium. I was a little low on sodium is what she came up with the last time she took my…no, I’ve never had any trouble with blood pressure or anything like that. I’ve never been sick, but I did crack three ribs. One day my daughter and her husband was here from Plano, Texas. They were getting ready to go home and my recorder was acting up, and so her husband, my son-in-law, was standing there fixing that and I said, “Maybe you need more light.” I jumped up here on this footstool to pull that cord up there to make more light. Someone had turned it off. When I did I fell back and hit my back against this chair. This is recliner. It was out like this. Hit my back and cracked three ribs. They said, “Are you hurting?” “No, I wasn’t hurt.”

They fooled around here a little bit and finally they left, and I was in changing beds, and I was tired so I put my pajamas on. About that time, it hit me. My back, I thought I could die. It hurt so bad. I called my friend right over here that’s a nurse. I said, “Kathy, do you have anything stronger than an aspirin? I fell.” She said, “I’ll be there in a minute,” and she was. When she came in I was standing, I couldn’t move, I was standing there. They got me to the hospital and x-rayed.

I slept in this chair for about…my daughter, she was on her way home, but she came back because my other daughter was working at that time. She’s now retired, and so my daughter in Plano wasn’t working. She never worked. Well, she did work a little bit at the school when her kids were little. When they had to go to—they lived in Houston. Anyway, I could not get in the bed. I could with pillows in this chair, I could get up. Boy, when I was getting up it’d just kill me. Then I could walk and go to the bathroom, but when I came back it hurt when I sat down, but I could get comfortable with pillows for my feet up. This is the way I slept for three weeks until that healed. That’s all I’ve had wrong with me that I can think of.

**Finchum** *That’s amazing really. That’s good. Live a good long life, for the most part?*

**Forrester**  Yeah.

**Finchum** *Anything else you want to add before we close?*

**Forrester**  Oh, I don’t know. This is the way I run on when I did that interview for that cookbook, I mean that quilt book.

**Finchum** *When history’s written about you what do you want it to say? How do you want to be remembered?*

**Forrester** Now how would I? I don’t really know.

**Finchum** *As a happy go lucky?*

**Forrester**  I guess. I’ve got a lot of friends. We play this what’s called Rummikub at night. They play here, and I’ve got this big table and I made a deal around it out of slick stuff, you slide the dominoes on, to protect the table. My table is over a hundred years old and my china cabinet there, I’ve got dishes in there in the bottom and my TV in the top. I took out the top shelf and put my TV in there when I moved here. I’ve got a big, to go with it, a big…

**Finchum** *Buffet.*

**Forrester**  Yeah. It’s in my bedroom. This three-piece set is over a hundred years old. My son wants it when I’m through with it. We play games, this bunch likes to play games and every Friday we have potluck. That’s when I get up and make my pie.

**Finchum** *And you go to the gym three times a week?*

**Forrester**  Yeah.

**Finchum** *Three times a week. What do you do at the gym?*

**Forrester**  We have the ball, and we have the band, and weights you know. We just kind of dance around. We have a chair and we’re on our feet though for—it lasts forty-five minutes. We get a pretty good workout. Upstairs they have the machines and I go up and I do my feet this way and push this way on that. Whatever that is. They have a place to walk and I like to walk. I walk three times around it this morning because I was a little later than usual.

One thing, I never look like a good thing when I get there, but I am on time. (Laughter) I learned that from my little cousin. They lived in the field over here in a tent. From my house, I’d have to go to the corner, the road, you know, or I could cut through the field. Cut this part off to go to school so it wasn’t so far. They lived there for a while. He was out of work and so anyway she was about five or six. She was just starting school you know. I’d go by and pick her up and one morning when we got over here to this fence I noticed she didn’t have any pants on. So I had to take her back to get her pants and by the time I got to school I was late. I was embarrassed, oh that just killed me to be late at school. After then I thought, “By golly I’ll never be late anywhere else.” (Laughs)

I don’t like to be late at church. A lot of people come in late at church. I think that’s so—you know. I don’t like that. I’ve always gone to church and this lady moved in—when my husband came back, we bought this house in Crescent Hills. This lady lived over here and she said, “Let’s study the *Bible*.” At that time, I was listening to the radio, we didn’t have TV then. Some guy talking about, you know. All he was talking about was money, but I thought he was great.

When she said, “Let’s study the *Bible*.” I thought, “You’re not going to make a Carmelite out of me.” Here she come and she’d asked me things and I was Baptist at that time and I couldn’t answer it. She’d go home and she’d say, “Okay, I’ll be back tomorrow and you can answer my question.” Man, I dug out that *Bible* and I really showed myself. If you read the *Bible* and go by the *Bible,* you’re right. That’s the best thing you can do is really study it and a lot of times you can just read the *Bible*. But you need to study it and know how to study the *Bible*, because there’s different places, you know.

All of it is when you’re baptized to Christ. That’s what God says, your baptism. My sister still at this— “Well, I was baptized,” but she wasn’t baptized like the *Bible* says. My daughters—both of my daughters have been baptized. My granddaughter was baptized. I’m working on my son; he lives out here east of Edmond on an acreage. He’ll be sixty-seven the same day I’m ninety-eight. When he came I went to the hospital, the little nurse said, I said, “Today’s my birthday.” She said, “Oh, did you take some oil or something to make this baby come on your birthday?” I said, “Lands no. I didn’t know you could.”

**Finchum** *Born on your birthday.*

**Forrester** I was thinking now, before you came, “I’m not going to tell everything that sounds silly.” I get started, I don’t know when to quit. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *We’ve covered a lot, we can quit.*

**Forrester**  Anyway…

**Finchum** *Being a Rosie was a big deal at the time?*

**Forrester**  It really was. Before that was built I was with some friends. When I lived in the country and I was born—no, let’s see. She was born, she lived up the way from me about a quarter of a mile and the doctor delivered her. Her name was Ernestine. Ernestine something. The doctor had just got back to town when Mom called and he had to come deliver me, so we were that close. One day his parents, and I was just a little kid, but I remember this. I was just really so little. We was all driving around out there and he said, “Someday they’re going to build a big airplane factory here.” At that time, it was just level and trees. Then boom! All of a sudden it happened. There I was working in it. I thought that was funny.

**Finchum** *Putting on the left wing of…*

**Forrester**  Yeah, I was good with that rivet gun. One day I took the flu. At that time—when I was born Mom had the flu and the doctor came out, and the north wind was blowing and he said…that wasn’t the day I was born. He came out afterwards for her, I think. She couldn’t talk because she had such a bad, deep cold. They thought she was going to die because she was so bad, but she made it. She prayed to God to save her to raise her kids, until they got grown. I forgot what I was going to tell you when I started all through that.

**Finchum** *That’s okay. Were you working at Douglas when Roosevelt died? Like in 1945?*

**Forrester**  Was it ’45 when he died?

**Finchum** *April of ’45.*

**Forrester**  I guess I was.

**Finchum** *Do you remember? Someone said a tornado came through that same day? Does that ring any bells?*

**Forrester**  I don’t think it did on us. We lived there off Classen. I don’t remember a tornado.

**Finchum** *Were you a fan of Roosevelt?*

**Forrester**  Oh well, I thought he was a good president. I didn’t have anything against him. Boy, they’re having a mess now, aren’t they?

**Finchum** *They are. That’s a topic for a different day, isn’t it?*

**Forrester**  Oh man. Thought of something I was going to tell you but I don’t know what it was.

**Finchum** *You can always add it later. Alright, well we’ll say thank you for speaking with me today. It’s been fun. You’ve been good. Anything else you want to say before we shut it off?*

**Forrester**  I guess not.

**Finchum** *I’m saying thank you for talking with me then.*

**Forrester**  Thank you.

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