

CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, BAKERSFIELD

CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY
The 1930s Migration to the Southern San Joaquin ValleyOral History Program

Interview Between

INTERVIEWEE:	Hazel Fay Mitchell
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Mountain Home, Baxter County, Arkansas
INTERVIEWER:	Michael Neely
DATES OF INTERVIEWS:	May 29, 1981
PLACE OF INTERVIEWS:	Arvin, Kern County
NUMBER OF TAPES:	2
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Preface

Mrs. Mitchell is a tall slender aristocratic lady. She was a careful host and lives in a beautifully decorated and spotless home. She had some difficulty recalling dates, places and specific events. For this reason, we skipped over some areas in the interview and kept the subject fairly general.

Grover Holliday (Interview #115) worked for Mrs. Mitchell's husband, Ray Mitchell, for many years.

Michael Neely
Interviewer

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INTERVIEWEE: Hazel Fay Mitchell (Age: 67)

INTERVIEWER: Michael Neely

DATED: May 29, 1981

M.N.: This is an interview with Fay Mitchell for the California State College, Bakersfield CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY Project by Michael Neely at Route 1, Box 780, Arvin, California on May 29, 1981 at 2:30 p.m.

M.N.: Let's talk about the first thing that you can remember.

Mitchell: The very first thing? Well, I think it was when my second sister was born.

M.N.: What was her name?

Mitchell: Velma. We called her Pug.

M.N.: What year was that?

Mitchell: 1918 in Arkansas, down in the holler near Mountain Home.

M.N.: Do you remember what that place was like?

Mitchell: It was just a frame house with a kitchen and a living room. It had a bed in it too. It wasn't much of a house.

M.N.: How old were your parents at that time?

Mitchell: In their twenties.

M.N.: What kind of people were they?

Mitchell: Very hard working people, always.

M.N.: What did your father look like?

Mitchell: Tall, rawboned. Mom was the same way.

M.N.: Did they finish school?

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: How far did your father go?

Mitchell: Not even through grammar school, neither one of them.

M.N.: Can you remember how they dressed?

Mitchell: Just very simply. Mama made everything that she and we children wore. Of course, Dad wore overalls.

M.N.: And boots?

Mitchell: No, more like just a shoe.

M.N.: What kind of farming did they do?

Mitchell: I can't remember the farming in Arkansas. My mother's father raised tobacco and Dad's father had a grocery store. It probably would have been cotton.

M.N.: Did they sharecrop?

Mitchell: Yes. Very hard life.

M.N.: Why do you say that?

Mitchell: They had a very difficult time. We were just poor. We had plenty to eat. We had a garden, a cow and chickens. We raised corn too because Dad would go to the mill and they would grind their own corn meal. They probably exchanged the meal for some flour. We ate an awful lot of cornbread and mush. We loved it then and we love it today.

M.N.: How old were you when your second sister was born?

Mitchell: I was almost four. There was four girls and there wasn't two years between each one of us.

M.N.: Was she born at home?

Mitchell: Yes. She was born at home. I was taken away from home and I think that's why I remember it.

M.N.: What do you remember about being taken away from the home?

Mitchell: We were just taken about half a mile to another lady's house. They called her Aunt Kissie. I think hers must have been a log cabin with a fireplace in it.

M.N.: What's the next thing then that you remember?

Mitchell: Probably the next thing that is really vivid in my mind is that we went from Arkansas to Oklahoma in a covered wagon. I don't remember leaving there. On the trip, my mama had fried chicken for us to eat and had put it in a lard can. She probably closed it up warm. When we got ready to eat that night, it was spoiled. They just threw it out. Our little dog ate it and died. It was very fortunate that they threw it out.

M.N.: Do you remember what year that was?

Mitchell: We went to Holdenville in 1919.

M.N.: What was the next thing then that you remember?

Mitchell: I had another sister born. That was in 1920 after we got there. Then I started to school. The town was Holdenville. We were out in the country. We had moved from Mountain Home, Arkansas to Holdenville, Oklahoma.

M.N.: How long did you live there?

Mitchell: We lived there until we went to Bushyhead.

M.N.: Do you remember how many years it was?

Mitchell: It was probably about five or six years. I finished grammar school in Bushyhead in the eighth grade.

M.N.: Do you remember Holdenville very well?

Mitchell: Not really. We just didn't go to town.

M.N.: What did you do on the farm?

Mitchell: Well, we just worked in the field and did whatever there was to be done. There was cotton to be chopped, corn to be hoed weeds to be cut. We always had a huge garden. My mama always canned and dried everything that she could. People didn't know too much about drying like they do now. We always had cows. We had to milk the cows and churn to make butter.

M.N.: Did you dislike it?

Mitchell: No. I didn't know any different.

I wouldn't dislike it now. We didn't have any modern conveniences so it was really a chore. We were taught to do what was to be done and we did it.

M.N.: Your next sister was born there at Holdenville?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Were you taken away from home that time?

Mitchell: Evidently we were. That's where we went. I can remember being at my mother's brother-in-law and sister's house. I can't remember the actual birth.

M.N.: Was there a lot of sickness back at that time?

Mitchell: Not that I remember. We were always pretty healthy. When we got to Bushyhead my dad was pretty sick. Our family was pretty well as I remember. We had earaches and those kinds of things. There was always a home remedy if something happened. They just took care of you.

M.N.: What was the home remedy?

Mitchell: Warm ash. Put ashes in a bag and put it to your ear. Nowadays you'd use an icepack.

M.N.: Did that seem to work?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Do you remember any other home remedies?

Mitchell: They'd put warm oil in our [ear]. I don't know Mama melted butter. It must have been awful. If your feet would get cuts, they'd make a fire and coals and hold your feet over it. Now don't ask me what it did because I don't know.

M.N.: Well, it probably worked.

Mitchell: It did. My dad chewed tobacco. I can remember on a Sunday we were going to church. I got stung by a wasp. He just took a cut of tobacco and put it on my sting. It drew out the poison. It was sure nasty but it worked.

M.N.: What did your family do on a normal day there at Holdenville?

Mitchell: Get up. Have breakfast. Wash the dishes.

M.N.: What time would you get up?

Mitchell: About five o'clock. A kind of a farmer's life. I know it was always early and we worked all day. We would go home at noon and eat. Then we'd go back out to the field and work. I know when they were cultivating, Mom and we girls would quit early and go in and milk the cows and feed the chickens. We had no boys. Mom and Dad didn't have any boys. The girls were all boys.

M.N.: You had to do the boy's work?

Mitchell: Yes. Well, it didn't hurt us.

M.N.: Did you help with the butchering and slaughtering?

Mitchell: Not too much. That was kind of a neighborhood thing. If your pig was ready to butcher, then neighbors would come in because that's pretty heavy work with the scalding and scraping of them. I can remember them doing it. And grinding sausage and smoking it. They called it curing. Mama would can quite a bit of the meat too.

M.N.: What was she like there in Holdenville?

Mitchell: Tall and thin, very thin.

M.N.: What was her personality like?

Mitchell: Oh, pretty even. She could get mad.

M.N.: Did she ever paddle you?

Mitchell: Oh, goodness yes. They both did. We steered clear of my dad. Dad did very little whipping. If he did, we knew we had had one and we knew what we got it for too.

M.N.: I can't imagine you being bad.

Mitchell: We all were. Four girls together.

M.N.: In Holdenville now what would be the ages of the girls?

Mitchell: I was the oldest. I would have been just five when we got there. I started to school there. The next girls would have been three and the next one--Velma--would have just been a little over one or going on two. Helen was born there in the 1920s. We were young. I was the only one in school.

M.N.: What was that like?

Mitchell: I thought it was fun. It was a one-room school. It was one big room.

M.N.: Do you remember very much of it?

Mitchell: No, I don't. At Christmas time they always had programs and they had a Christmas tree. They always put candles on it. They'd light them. It caught on fire and I remember my dad putting it out. I don't suppose it was too long after that before lighted candles were outlawed.

M.N.: Was it in the country?

Mitchell: Oh yes. And at that point I just walked a very short distance. It was a pretty good-sized building. My recollection the first day of school was that I took an umbrella. It must have been raining. The thing turned upside down on me. We moved to another area there. Dad was still farming. We walked. It must have been two miles or more to school through wooded areas. I can remember we would be so frightened part of the time. You know how tales get out of hand.

M.N.: Nothing ever really happened.

Mitchell: Oh no.

M.N.: Did they have rabid dogs in those days?

Mitchell: They'd talk about wild dogs in those days but I don't know if they knew what they were talking about.

M.N.: Were there other problems of that period that you remember with your family?

Mitchell: No. Not with our family as such. When we were at Holdenville we had a real bad storm one night. The lightning struck a tree near our house and killed Dad's team of horses.

M.N.: Killed both of them?

Mitchell: Yes. It was really tragic because we were so poor. I don't remember how we finished up the crop. Probably the neighbors assisted. We either had just finished his crop planting or plowing. I don't know which it was. He had worked late that night to finish and this storm came up. I'm just terrified of lightning to this day. We went to Bushyhead, Oklahoma from there.

M.N.: How did you dress when you went to school?

Mitchell: Probably in a dress and pants made out of a flour sack. Mama made lots of our clothes. They were printed. They were quite pretty. We thought they were real pretty.

M.N.: Did the other children wear the same kind of clothes?

Mitchell: Oh yes, long socks and high shoes.

M.N.: Did you leave Holdenville about 1925 then?

Mitchell: Yes, along in there.

M.N.: Why did you leave?

Mitchell: Because my father started working as a section hand on the railroad track. He worked there until we came here.

M.N.: He farmed on the side?

Mitchell: Very, very little. It was just a rock hill. Farming was rough there. There is no comparison to what it is here.

M.N.: Do you remember what the place was like there in Bushyhead?

Mitchell: Yes. I remember the house. My folks bought it. I guess they scrimped and saved and got it somehow. It was a smaller house. It was two lots on a corner in the town of Bushyhead. It's a little town. They got a chance to get the other house and Dad moved them both together on one lot and made a larger house for us. It was a fairly big house for that day and for poor people. We were poor.

M.N.: Did you have your own room there?

Mitchell: I shared it with my second sister.

M.N.: Did you both sleep in the same bed?

Mitchell: Oh yes. I don't think we ever all slept in the same bed except when kids came to visit or something like that.

M.N.: Was it comfortable?

Mitchell: Well, I guess then it was. Now it wouldn't be. My husband and I went back in 1940 to visit some of those places. It was terrible that people were still living like that.

M.N.: What was that school like in Bushyhead?

Mitchell: It was a nice school. Oklahoma was a little more prosperous than Arkansas. The school was nice.

M.N.: Was it bigger than the one in Holdenville?

Mitchell: Oh yes. I finished the eighth grade there. I went into Chelsea for the first year of high school. I had an aunt that lived there. Her husband was a crane worker. He was one that traveled around back and forth. I lived with her and went to school there.

M.N.: That was kind of unusual wasn't it?

Mitchell: You mean for me to go to high school? Not if you knew my mother. It was her determination that her children would do better than they did. That's why we left Arkansas.

M.N.: So that you'd have a better opportunity?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: What was that like?

Mitchell: It was a nice school. It was a two story brick school. Chelsea was a good-sized little town.

M.N.: It's my impression that high school at that time was kind of like college.

Mitchell: It used to be. When I graduated from high school I supposedly should have had as much education as children graduating from college now. I think it's about the same difference. Then, if you had a high school education, you could go out and do something. Now you have to have college.

M.N.: What year did you go to Chelsea to go to high school?

Mitchell: I went to Chelsea in 1927.

M.N.: And you stayed there how long?

Mitchell: Just one year. We came here to Arvin in 1928. I went to BHS [Bakersfield High School]. Good old BHS. I didn't like it either.

M.N.: Why did your family come to California?

Mitchell: I think it was just hoping to improve their living situation. Someone in Oklahoma where they were knew a man in Garden Grove. He told Dad he was sure he could place him in something. So we came first to Garden Grove, California down south. I can remember visiting time.

We came on up here. This man in Arvin first questioned Dad about things he could do. Dad was kind of handy with rough carpentry and that kind of stuff. Mr. Henry Chambliss in Arvin put Dad right to work.

M.N.: You said your father was ill?

Mitchell: In Bushyhead he had pleurisy. They called it double pleurisy then. He worked for the railroad company. They took him from our house by train to the railroad hospital for employees. He was so sick. I can remember that vividly. It was just terrible. It was such pain for him because of the way they had to move him. Before we were born he had typhoid fever and he was really sick. As a matter of fact, they weren't sure they could save him. I had forgotten about that. It probably just weakened him. He wasn't really a strong man but he always worked. He didn't have any trouble doing that.

M.N.: How long was he ill before he got better?

Mitchell: They probably kept him a month.

M.N.: Did he make pretty good money when he was working for the railroad?

Mitchell: More than he had ever had before. I don't remember what it was. The amount wouldn't sound like much now. It was a good amount.

M.N.: Your standard of living improved then?

Mitchell: Oh yes. Each move they made was better.

M.N.: Now, you and the girls were at home during this period of time before you went to Chelsea?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Did you get along with your sisters?

Mitchell: Oh yes. Oh, we fought like kids do, but we would fight for each other too.

M.N.: What were they like?

Mitchell: Well, my sister just next to me was the puny one of the bunch. She was very meek until she married and then she kind of got a little fire. The second sister was a regular tomboy. She's the one Dad always took with him. She was just a tomboy. That's all there was to it. And then the baby was Helen. She's always been a very kind, sweet person. We've got a pretty strong family tie.

M.N.: You were close to your parents?

Mitchell: Yes, oh yes. They're both gone.

M.N.: What kinds of things would you do during this time for entertainment at home?

Mitchell: Well, I don't remember anything in particular that we did only work and then we would go to church on Sundays. I can remember going to some night church things and picnics and families and neighbors getting together and having what they call spreads.

M.N.: Spreads?

Mitchell: Spreads, right on the ground. It would be a picnic now for us but it was a spread.

M.N.: Did you have dances?

Mitchell: No, not my dad. I've never been to a public dance.

M.N.: Your father was a very religious person?

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: Just strict then?

Mitchell: Yes, just was one of his beliefs. I suppose basically because he was what they called the old hard-shelled Baptists although he went to dances when he was growing up. I guess had I not met Ray and married him I probably would have defied Dad and gone to dances, but when I met Ray and he didn't dance, we were very content not to go to dances so that took care of the situation. My other three sisters certainly went.

M.N.: Ray is your husband?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Did you meet him after you came to California?

Mitchell: Oh yes, 1929 I believe it was.

M.N.: What were you like during this time just before you went to Chelsea?

Mitchell: I've always been kind of a spitfire.

M.N.: What kind of things did you like to do?

Mitchell: I don't remember that. Whatever the family was doing. We didn't have any trouble getting along with what we did. Like the house, I liked to help Mama cook and do things in the house. And then my other sister got out and helped Dad do milking. Oh, I hated to milk.

M.N.: Why did you hate to milk?

Mitchell: I don't know. I was afraid of the old cow, I guess.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

M.N.: Did you have a lot of work to do when you came home from school?

Mitchell: Well, I guess. It didn't bother us. There's always a lot of work to do if you have a garden and if you have animals. Mama worked right out in the field with Dad. There was washing and ironing and scrubbing.

M.N.: How did you do the washing?

Mitchell: Well, part of the time on a rub board and then with a gasoline washer.

M.N.: What was that like?

Mitchell: Well, it's like the old-fashioned Maytag with that type of a square or round tub.

M.N.: And it had a gasoline engine in it?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Noisy?

Mitchell: Oh, sure it was noisy and hot and smelly.

M.N.: But it worked?

Mitchell: Oh, it worked good.

M.N.: Well, how was this decision for you to go to Chelsea to high school made?

Mitchell: There was a little bit of trouble with the principal in the grammar school.

M.N.: What do you mean?

Mitchell: Well, he was just a little bit out of line in some of the things that he did and so my folks sent me to Chelsea.

M.N.: So it wasn't just a matter of that was the only school available?

Mitchell: Oh no. There was a high school right there at Bushyhead.

M.N.: But your parents didn't want you to go there.

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: What was your aunt like?

Mitchell: Oh, she was fun, fun, fun.

M.N.: What was her name?

Mitchell: Myrtle Newbrough.

M.N.: What did she look like?

Mitchell: Oh she was dark-skinned with dark hair, not tall but not short either, just average, medium sized person. My sister that I told you was a tomboy, Velma, was an awful lot like her. We called her Aunt Myrt. She was younger than my mother too. I don't know just how old she was but she was just younger and could I suppose relate to us better than the other aunts. She was our favorite, or mine anyway.

M.N.: Did you get along well with her before you moved there?

Mitchell: Oh yes. And then she had children and so I helped with the children.

M.N.: How old were they?

Mitchell: Gee, I can't remember that.

M.N.: They were young?

Mitchell: Oh yes. As a matter of fact she had a child that was born when she was there in Chelsea. So there was a young child and then the boy was probably four or five years younger than me, maybe not that. I just can't remember his age.

M.N.: So you could also be a lot of help to her?

Mitchell: Oh yes. I helped and did a lot of work--housecleaning and dish washing and things like that.

M.N.: As the oldest girl in your own household, had you taken extra responsibility?

Mitchell: Yes. I was parked at the end of the cotton row while Mama would go up and down the cotton rows picking cotton and I watched the children.

M.N.: So it really wasn't hard for you to make that switch?

Mitchell: No. It's never been difficult for me to take care of children.

M.N.: You remember going to Chelsea? What was that like?

Mitchell: Well, I didn't mind at all. I went home on weekends and I guess the folks came and got me. I didn't go home every weekend either. It would have cost too much money to drive back and forth. When my aunt got transferred out of there, I stayed with a family who had a store. So in that place I didn't go home every weekend because I helped them on Saturdays.

M.N.: In the store?

Mitchell: Yes. Not clerking, but dusting and you know how in stores there's always folding and refolding things and all that kind of stuff. And then I also helped her with the cooking. She'd do a lot of the preparation but I'd finish it up and I'd wash the dishes and set the table and all those things that have to be done.

M.N.: How did you come to stay with these people?

Mitchell: I don't know. We were talking about that last night. I don't know if my folks had bought things in the store and knew them. I just don't know. They were certainly lovely people though.

M.N.: What was their name?

Mitchell: Culp.

M.N.: What were they like?

Mitchell: Oh, just great people. I don't know what nationality they would have been but they were more robust, stout people. They had two grown boys. They were ahead of me in high school. One was just a very good looking boy and the other was just, oh, he was ugly. But they were sure nice people. I really enjoyed them and I enjoyed the opportunity that I had of working with them because she was really what I would call a lady. They evidently had or at least I thought they had a lot. For instance, their home was nice and then their table settings and all those kinds of things. I think she taught me more about how to do [that] than Mama did.

M.N.: Kind of got your finishing school there.

Mitchell: Well yes, I felt so.

M.N.: Then was it hard for you when you found that your family was going to come to California?

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: You were in Chelsea living with the Culps?

Mitchell: Yes. Well, they didn't come till the end of the school year.

M.N.: They just told you we're going.

Mitchell: I just don't remember how it came about that they decided to come [to California]. I'm sure they didn't just spring it on us but I don't really know.

M.N.: Did you have your own room there with the Culps?

Mitchell: Yes. As a matter of fact, the rooms were up over the store and I had a room of my own which was kind of scary. These rooms upstairs were like an old hotel. It might have been at one time. Of course, when I got in that room, I locked the door and didn't go out until the next morning. Now I wouldn't do it.

M.N.: Why not?

Mitchell: Oh, I'd be afraid.

M.N.: But there was no one there.

Mitchell: Well, how do you know where there's someone? Why is all this meanness going on now?

M.N.: Were there problems like that in those days?

Mitchell: No. Not that I knew of anyway. Of course, Mrs. Culp had told me not to ever open the door and things like that. They were right across the hall from me.

M.N.: Were there other people who lived there?

Mitchell: No. Just her and her two boys and they had their rooms.

M.N.: Was there anything else you did that would be of interest during that period when you were in Chelsea in high school?

Mitchell: I played on the basketball team. In those days girls played basketball and they are now again some. But we thought we were pretty good. We were. We won the thing in our high school and so we got to go down to Claremore and play in a regular tournament-type thing.

M.N.: How did you get involved in basketball?

Mitchell: Well, I suppose it was the same as P.E. [physical education] would be now in school and I guess I just liked it and took to it. I don't know. I just did.

M.N.: You really enjoyed it?

Mitchell: Oh, I loved it. I just really loved it. And I'm not athletic either. I'm very poorly coordinated but I guess I did all right in that because I stayed on the team and it was a lot of fun when we went down to Claremore.

M.N.: Did you make friends that way?

Mitchell: Oh yes.

M.N.: What was it like when you went to Claremore?

Mitchell: Well, just lots of people, lots of kids and everybody playing and having fun and hoping we'd win. I don't remember if we won or not. Now that's bad too.

M.N.: Did you go on the bus?

Mitchell: I don't remember that. I would presume that we went in cars. I don't think we had buses.

M.N.: At the end of that year was it hard for you to leave the Culp's?

Mitchell: Oh yes. I hated to leave them. As a matter of fact, they came to California and moved down to Gardena. I visited them many times after they were over there. I went down and visited with them. And Mrs. Culp come up to visit us.

Oh, it was family, just like family. I'm sure she treated me just

like I was her own daughter and expected me to respond the same way. And I did. I just loved her. All of them, but her in particular. Her oldest son married one of the girls here that I knew at high school. She was the sweetest thing. She got a good daughter-in-law, a lovely daughter-in-law.

M.N.: Was it hard for you when your Aunt Myrt left?

Mitchell: Yes, very hard.

M.N.: Do you remember how you felt about living in with the Culps?

Mitchell: Well, it was hard because the whole living situation was completely foreign to anything that I had ever done. I don't know if I had ever eaten out in my life before. I just don't think I had. And then to go there and to be in a room all by myself. And when work was over at night I went to my room and I was alone then until the next morning. It was kind of lonely.

M.N.: You were a pretty brave young lady.

Mitchell: There wasn't nothing else to do. I don't remember that I wanted to go back to Bushyhead and go to high school. So I must have been able to accept it okay.

M.N.: And you made a lot of friends there.

Mitchell: Yes. It was a nice sized town. I don't remember what courses I took in high school but I know one of them was what we call home economics now and I don't know what it was called then, but anyway it was cooking and I really enjoyed that. They seemed to do things for the teachers. They would put on a luncheon and those types of things. It was really fun.

M.N.: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Mitchell: No. Not by name. These people that talk about their teacher. You know, I don't remember mine. I don't know why.

M.N.: Do you remember their personalities?

Mitchell: I just remember that I liked them very much. They were very kind. They seemed to be as I look back now, very considerate of those of us who I know knew very little. She was trying to teach us the little simple mannerisms of daily living. I don't know. Maybe that was just a good start to my enjoying housekeeping and cooking and those kinds of things because I certainly have.

M.N.: As I mentioned earlier you have a beautiful house. She must have made a strong impression.

Mitchell: She did. She really did.

M.N.: What kind of person had you become during this experience?

Mitchell: Well, I don't know what I was before. I know I wanted to go on to school. I certainly wanted to get more schooling.

M.N.: Were you bright?

Mitchell: Oh, just mediocre I guess.

M.N.: You don't look mediocre.

Mitchell: Well, I wouldn't say that I was bright.

M.N.: Did you like school?

Mitchell: I loved grammar school and the first year of high school but I didn't like BHS because it was too big and we had to ride [the bus]. I left home a little after seven to go into high school. I don't recall the time I got home but that seven o'clock certainly left an impression on me. And the kids were really cruel to us kids from Oklahoma. Of course, I fought. I was a fighter. I didn't take it and that's all it took to keep them going. If I had accepted it and kept my mouth shut it would have been fine. And I had good days at high school but I was glad when it was over. I did not want to go on.

M.N.: But you enjoyed it when you lived with the Culps?

Mitchell: Yes. I enjoyed the school there. The whole situation was just good. Before Arvin High School was established out here I think the people that had to go to Bakersfield High School missed so much. My parents couldn't take me back in to participate in anything. As a matter of fact, Mom and Dad didn't go to my graduation because Mama was packing plums. She was a working fool is all I can say.

M.N.: So your parents then came and picked you up at the end of the year?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: That's when they told you that they were going to California?

Mitchell: No. I don't remember that. I'm sure it was because school would have been out in June there or maybe a little bit earlier in May and if I remember right it had to be about the middle or last of June because we cut apricots.

M.N.: Do you remember doing that?

Mitchell: Oh yes. We lived under a tree.

M.N.: You lived under a tree?

Mitchell: We came to Arvin and Dad got the job on the Doc Hill Ranch right

down here northwest of Arvin and Mr. Chambliss told him he was pretty sure that we could get work out there cutting apricots and so we went on out. We parked under a tree and Doc Hill that was the man's name who had the apricots got a tent of some sort there and let us have it to use. But we were primarily under a tree for a while.

M.N.: I get this impression of a very good girl living with nice people in a nice home with the Culps there in Chelsea and trying hard in school and enjoying. It seems so normal and so nice and then we make this jump to California and things changed.

Mitchell: We were still happy though.

M.N.: You were still happy?

Mitchell: Yes. Well, I wasn't happy in school. I'll say that, but that didn't affect my home life.

M.N.: Would someone seeing you living under a tree here in Arvin realize this was the nice little girl that lived in the nice house and was a good student and enjoyed basketball in Chelsea?

Mitchell: Well, our home there as such was all right but it wasn't, well, I don't know.

M.N.: It seems to me too that would be pretty disorienting to go from the stability of Chelsea and what you had there.

Mitchell: Yes, but our family was together.

M.N.: And that made a difference.

Mitchell: Oh, I think so.

M.N.: Do you remember getting ready to come to California?

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: Do you remember the trip out?

Mitchell: The only thing I remember about the trip out was in Phoenix that there was a terrible, terrible wind and sand storm. We had to lay over in a little motel-like thing and the folks were so worried. I suppose it was money that they were having to spend on the rooms there. It finally let down and so we come on and then we got into Flagstaff I believe it was and the mosquitoes nearly ate us up. As we came over Oatman Hill we came upon this commotion up on the hill. There was a bus and a car. They were arguing over the right of way. They had traffic blocked going both ways. That part I remember.

M.N.: Do you remember crossing the border into California?

Mitchell: Oh yes. They took my dad's cotton sack.

M.N.: Why did they do that?

Mitchell: Boll weevils in California. We could have gone out there and washed it and stayed until it had been washed and gone through their fumigation or whatever they called it.

M.N.: Did they go through anything else in your car?

Mitchell: Oh yes. They went through the car. That's the only thing that I can remember them taking because that was just terrible to take his cotton sack.

M.N.: Were they nice when they confiscated the sack?

Mitchell: Oh, I'm sure that they were. I don't remember that my folks thought they were out of line. They just thought they shouldn't have kept their sack. They understood but they just didn't waste that much time.

M.N.: And it was just your family in the car?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Do you remember arriving at Garden Grove?

Mitchell: I don't really remember arriving but I remember the people and it was nice. That many years back little towns out of Los Angeles in the suburbs were still nice little towns. Now it's just probably one bit thing I presume. But it was just a nice little house and garden and yard. It probably had some fruit trees. I don't recall but I presume they did. They were nice people. We didn't even know them. We'd come from the neighbor of ours in Oklahoma who had told Dad about them. We stayed overnight.

M.N.: It takes a lot of faith I guess.

Mitchell: I still don't know how we did it. My sister and I was talking yesterday. I wouldn't have that much courage today. Another one of the things my sister was telling me about. She said, "We were driving along and there was a tomato field and Mom wanted Dad to stop and get tomatoes and he wouldn't do it." He said that that would be stealing. She said, "As many tomatoes as there are out there, I'm going to stop and get some for my children to eat." So she just insisted that he stop and she said, "I don't call it stealing either. I think God will forgive me." I remember the incident about the tomatoes but I don't know how she came out on it. I know we got them and so I guess that she won out.

M.N.: Did you stay in Garden Grove?

Mitchell: Just overnight as I remember. I'm sure that's all because we didn't know them and I don't think Mama would have imposed on people.

M.N.: But they were hospitable?

Mitchell: Oh yes. Very, very much so.

M.N.: And you had heard about the person?

Mitchell: He is the man who told my dad about Mr. Chambliss in Arvin. So we came on over the hill and Mama and we three girls walked the Grapevine and Pug rode with Dad.

M.N.: Why is that?

Mitchell: She was afraid.

M.N.: Do you remember it?

Mitchell: She just stood at the top of the hill and just prayed and cried and said, "Dad, oh Dad, he'll never make it. He'll never make it."

M.N.: Was it that bad?

Mitchell: No. I don't think so. I guess he'd had some trouble with the brakes supposedly from this deal in Arizona where we was held up when we had to stop with the two parties having trouble. I don't know why she was so nervous. Dad made us get out with Mama. That was it. I don't think Mama would have made us. My sister next to me and my baby sister walked and the other one rode.

M.N.: That probably lightened the load on the brakes.

Mitchell: I'm sure.

M.N.: What happened after that?

Mitchell: Well, we came on down to where the Weed Patch Market is up here now. That used to be Parish Grocery Store--an old fashioned store with a porch all around it. We stopped and went in and got a loaf of bread and a pound of bologna. Then we went on to Arvin and looked up Mr. Chambliss.

M.N.: How did you find Mr. Chambliss?

Mitchell: I don't know. I guess Dad just stopped in the street. I don't know if we were fortunate to just stop right where he was working or if someone referred us to him but I know my dad went to work that afternoon. So that's how fortunate we were.

M.N.: Do you remember what your father was paid for that work?

Mitchell: No, I don't. I wish I did.

M.N.: What kind of work was he doing?

Mitchell: Rough carpenter work.

M.N.: So he wasn't assigned to the fields?

Mitchell: No, but he did as soon as that job was over. The man where we went to cut the apricots hired him and he worked for I don't know how many years for Doc Hill.

M.N.: Where did you live while your father was doing this rough carpenter work?

Mitchell: Well, I think we moved into Arvin and rented a little place and then when Dad got the job from Doctor Hill, he had a house there on the ranch and we moved out into that house. Then we lived there until my folks borrowed some money and we bought a house on what is "C" Street in Arvin now. Uncle Heinie Yaussy loaned us some money.

M.N.: What kind of name is that?

Mitchell: German.

M.N.: Did you start to school here right away?

Mitchell: Yes, in September.

M.N.: And you really liked school.

Mitchell: No, I didn't like it.

M.N.: How did it go?

Mitchell: I just didn't like it.

M.N.: I mean how did you start? Do you remember starting school?

Mitchell: We just went out and got on the bus. We knew the day. They didn't have pre-enrollment then like they do now. You go in on the first day and spend I guess most of your day, maybe half the day, in getting into the classes you belong in. You just started out from there.

M.N.: Did you have any problems with children here in Arvin?

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: So everything was okay until you got to BHS.

Mitchell: Well, some of the kids on the bus were ornery but that's just normal for kids. You know, if I hadn't fought back they'd have left me alone. They just would have.

M.N.: Ornery in what way?

Mitchell: Oh, they would call me things. I guess I wore a blouse the first day that had a pocket, probably similar to this one and they called me High Pockets. Now I don't know where the name came from. I can't remember where the name came from. It just was something that made me mad.

M.N.: What would you do?

Mitchell: Oh, I would fight back.

M.N.: Physically fight back?

Mitchell: No. Just with my mouth.

M.N.: You made some enemies?

Mitchell: I don't think that I made enemies. I think the one boy in particular that was so ornery always liked me all right but I just didn't like that kind of treatment. But the kids in BHS were really cliquish I thought.

M.N.: That were in like a social group?

Mitchell: Oh yes. Well, they were the top in Bakersfield at that time. They did have the Stockdale Country Club and maybe they lived out there. No, I think they lived on Beech or Cedar somewhere over in one of those beautiful homes. It wasn't as bad as I thought it was really.

M.N.: It was still hard for you.

Mitchell: Well, it was hard for me but it's just too bad that children can't realize that children are cruel. And they are. There's nothing any more cruel than children or any more plain spoken.

M.N.: How were they cruel to you?

Mitchell: Well, just the remarks they would make about the Okies and the Arkies. I don't remember what the remarks were so you know it couldn't have been too bad.

M.N.: You obviously disliked being called an Okie.

Mitchell: Yes, I did and I still do. I just hate to hear the remark. It's the same way in relation to the Mexicans. Now I try not

to say the Mexicans although they really get under my skin. But I don't think we should. I mean they are Mexican, the same as we're Caucasian. They can't help it. And there are lovely Mexican people. Oh we have some of the loveliest little kids down there at school. I just love them. But there's others just like there is bad everything.

M.N.: So the term Okies had a bad meaning to you?

Mitchell: Oh, yes it did.

M.N.: What did it mean?

Mitchell: I don't know--trash, I guess--and I didn't feel like I was trash.

M.N.: Were there some children who maybe deserved to be called that way?

Mitchell: No, I don't think anyone deserves to be called it regardless of what they are.

M.N.: That was a slang word?

Mitchell: Well, you're just degrading someone and maybe you have some things that's just as bad wrong with you. I just don't believe in labeling people. I don't think it's the thing to do.

M.N.: But you don't like the term Okies?

Mitchell: No, [I] don't.

M.N.: But people have different feelings about that.

Mitchell: Yes. I'll call myself an Okie but I don't want anyone else to call me one.

M.N.: Were there other problems then at the high school?

Mitchell: No.

M.N.: You mentioned not being able to participate.

Mitchell: I did nothing outside of the class. I went to class and I came home and went to class and I came home. Never any plays or assemblies. You would go if it was a class period or a thing like that but we never went to any night thing. It was tiring. It was tiring, hard days. And not only that, I had things to do when I got home too. It wasn't just coming home and goofing around like kids do today. We must have not gotten home before six o'clock because school used to go until four o'clock.

M.N.: So you went from being active in Bushyhead or in Chelsea and playing basketball and then you came out here and that was all ended.

Mitchell: Yes. They didn't play basketball here and I hated that old P.E. they had. You know, you had to get out there and do those warm-ups every day.

M.N.: Did your sisters have difficulty adjusting?

Mitchell: Not as much as I did because you see they went to grammar school for a few years and they took their own little group of friends. You know, the kids in their eighth grade class went right on into high school. They went with them. Now several of the girls that lived out here we'd all eat lunch together on the same spot in there which is now between Harvey [Auditorium] and the cafeteria. That used to be kind of a mound and we'd sit on the side of that. I carried my lunch and they did too. They had the cafeteria but we couldn't afford it.

M.N.: You did have some friends.

Mitchell: Oh yes. I had friends then. Lots of kids. We'd walk downtown occasionally at noon but we had to hop along to get down there and get back.

M.N.: So it wasn't all bad was it?

Mitchell: No it wasn't. It wasn't just all bad.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

M.N.: So you went ahead and finished high school at BHS?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: And what year did you graduate?

Mitchell: Let me get my little piece of paper out so I can give it correctly. 1930.

M.N.: 1930. Do you remember the Depression?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: Can you tell me about it?

Mitchell: Well, the Depression actually started in about 1932 or 1933, didn't it? Or was it before that?

M.N.: I don't know. I'm asking you.

Mitchell: Well, because we were married in 1932 and I didn't really think there was--I thought the Depression came later than that.

M.N.: The reason I say that I'm asking you is that the history books say

that the crash was in 1929 but the people who I've interviewed have all had different ideas. The people on the farm had a Depression later.

Mitchell: See, that's what I'm relating to I would presume. I don't remember that. I know that my folks were doing well for what they were doing. Dad was still working on the ranch and Mama was keeping borders. We got married in 1932 and had a nice little four-room house in Arvin. We just thought it was a castle.

M.N.: You and your husband?

Mitchell: Ray and I. Well, Mom and Dad had the house that they had bought there on "C" Street. It was just added onto but it was a nice house. But I feel that the Depression came after that. About 1932 I felt. But now I don't know. I don't think I felt the Depression. That's why I say I don't think I'm the right one for you to interview.

M.N.: How did you come to meet your husband? Was that after you graduated from high school?

Mitchell: No. Church, in Christian Endeavor, That was the youth group of the church.

M.N.: When did you start that?

Mitchell: The Christian Endeavor you mean, or when did I start church? Oh we started church as soon as we moved to Arvin.

M.N.: And then you got right into that?

Mitchell: Yes. See that's why I say Arvin has been good to me. But I didn't like Bakersfield High.

M.N.: So you met your husband within the church?

Mitchell: Yes. There was an evening meeting every Sunday and then they did lots of things. Oh, they would go and have like watermelon feeds and ice cream feeds, go to people's yards and have--not exactly a potluck--but games and then have refreshments afterwards. I don't remember that we went swimming because all we had was the canal.

M.N.: I can't imagine you in the canal.

Mitchell: Well, I was. It was pretty cool water too I'll tell you. We didn't have coolers then you know.

M.N.: So the church really replaced the social activities that you missed in high school.

Mitchell: Well, you had to. If you didn't you wouldn't have had anything.

I wonder what would have happened to me had I not become involved in the church. My first sister did the same. My second sister was never very active in church and she had a little problem along the way too. Then the baby sister also took to the church.

M.N.: Did your parents go to church with you?

Mitchell: Mama did. Dad didn't always go but Mama went.

M.N.: How did your father do in this period of time up until you were married? Was he just working as before? Did his health stay good?

Mitchell: Well, yes.

M.N.: Your mother was okay?

Mitchell: Yes. Well, they just worked whether they felt well or not. That was my parents.

M.N.: And did you work on the side when you were going to high school?

Mitchell: Well, let's see. I can't remember if I started working in the post office before I graduated from high school on weekends.

M.N.: There in Arvin?

Mitchell: Yes. I had to go into the cotton field when I got home from school and pick cotton whenever there was cotton. You know these people that write about their hardships of having to go out now and work I don't have any sympathy for them at all. I don't! That's what they need! Really, that's what's wrong with our young people today. If their parents had something that they could take them out into the fields and work with them and take them home so tired that they wouldn't be out getting into these problems that they are now. They just couldn't. And one of the women that I'm working with now was talking with her mother. She's having some trouble with some of her children. She said, "Well, you know, when you children were growing up you had chores to do. You'd come home from school and you did your chores and we had supper and you went to bed. You wasn't tearing around all over everywhere getting into trouble." But of course time passes. It doesn't stand still. I guess that's what I did. I went to work in the post office on Saturdays. But that was a long day and then I helped Mama a lot in the house.

M.N.: You were a very busy young person.

Mitchell: Well, we all were. I mean, she had work for all of us to do. And she kept boarders and if there was anything that she could get out and manage to get--like you know how it is around here--things that you can get for practically nothing. Many times for nothing.

She was canning it or doing something trying to preserve it to keep it to feed us and feed the boarders.

M.N.: How many boarders did she take?

Mitchell: When they first moved there she didn't have very many. Then they bought another lot and they built what they called a dining room, more like a bunkhouse type of a thing. And she got to where she had thirty or more at lunch time. They weren't all sleeping there. A lot of people would come there and eat that didn't sleep there. And then she had the Lion's Club. When they organized there in Arvin she fed them when they first started. I guess she fed them when they sold out and then moved back to Redlands.

M.N.: What year did they move back to Redlands?

Mitchell: I can't tell you.

M.N.: Was that much later?

Mitchell: It was probably about 1941 or 1942 because I know our son is 40 and it was after that.

M.N.: You seem very young.

Mitchell: I'm not. Well, my daughter is 45 or will be in August. I have granddaughter who will be 24 and my daughter's 44 or 45.

M.N.: Your personality is so lively, it's deceptive.

Mitchell: Well, that's why I want to keep active.

M.N.: Well, you were active even at that time. Now you met your husband and you were married in 1931?

Mitchell: 1932. I worked a year after I graduated from high school. I worked in the post office for a year.

M.N.: How did you decide to get married?

Mitchell: I just wanted to. I wanted a home of my own.

M.N.: Was he a nice man?

Mitchell: Oh yes.

M.N.: What's he like?

Mitchell: Oh, very even-tempered, easygoing. Well, I know how far I can push him. But he's still easygoing. He's the leveler in the family. I mean, I'm flighty and he isn't. He's very slow and easygoing.

M.N.: You just moved into a house in Arvin?

Mitchell: Yes. A little house in Arvin. We lived there a year and then we moved to the second house west of the Sunset School. We lived there until we moved here.

M.N.: When did you move here?

Mitchell: 1947.

M.N.: Well, how did things go from the time that you were married in 1932? Financially, did it go well?

Mitchell: I think they did. We've had some hard times. We've had good years and some rough years. His dad came here in 1914 and they established a little shop down there. Ray didn't like school. Well, I guess he liked school all right but he was never good in books. He just didn't take to them. That's all there is to it. There's nothing wrong with his mind but he just couldn't do the book work. He couldn't settle down in. So Ray took over in the shop for his dad and then they finally just outgrew it. Now they have across the street there, that E.O. Mitchell shop, is theirs. Then Pop just went from very small farming to very large farming before he passed away.

M.N.: Your father?

Mitchell: No, no. Father-in-law. No, not my poor dad. And then the boys, Ray and his brother, bought land south of us here in partnership. They dissolved their partnership and we had sold our land, the land south of us here. I don't know how much you know about farming. You know you can have good years and you can have bad years. About nine years ago I thought I might have to eat part of it. But anyway, he pulled it out thank goodness. We don't farm large now at all.

M.N.: But he still stays active? How old is he now?

Mitchell: Seventy-two.

M.N.: How old are you?

Mitchell: Sixty-seven.

M.N.: And you're still very active?

Mitchell: Yes, I work four and a half hours a day down at the school cafeteria.

M.N.: Do you enjoy that?

Mitchell: Oh, I love it. I like working with the people. I think I have a very nice group of people that I work with. They've been very

good to me. I love the children. I started out as an aide and in the cafeteria. There was an opening of both at the same time and so they let me take the cafeteria and then I was an aide part-time.

M.N.: How long ago was this?

Mitchell: Ten years ago.

M.N.: Oh you've been doing it a long time.

Mitchell: Yes. I'm quitting this June so there's just another week.

M.N.: Quitting?

Mitchell: Well, yes I am. I was pretty sick at Christmas time and the kids and him together--he didn't want me to go to work in the beginning but that's the time when I thought we was going to lose everything that we had and he did too. But anyway, it was just a godsend that I got the job because that way I wasn't pestering him. I mean I worked and I was tired when he got home and not only that, my mind was occupied during the day instead of sitting around here worrying about him and everything else. But I just love working with food and the children. And I enjoyed the aide work only some of the teachers I didn't enjoy as much.

M.N.: You're really not on your own when you're doing that.

Mitchell: Well, no. I'm very glad that I did quit at the time because it has become so much more difficult. There's so much paper work. Just all of this silly stuff when you could be working with the children if the teacher just told you what to do and you'd do it instead of recording everything they do, right or wrong. But that's the way it is and that's the way it will be.

M.N.: Yes. It's probably going to get worse rather than better.

Mitchell: Everything just does all the time.

M.N.: Well, now what do you plan to do when you quit?

Mitchell: I hope that we do a little traveling.

M.N.: Start running around.

Mitchell: I don't know. He's still working.

M.N.: Is he still the same Ray that you married?

Mitchell: Oh yes. A little like me--older and slower.

M.N.: When you look back over your life, what is the most important thing?

What had the most influence for you?

Mitchell: You mean my whole life? Well, I think it's our family. I think that's the basis of what you are. Strong family ties and you make friends and the closeness of them. We have three children and nine grandchildren and we have a lot of fun. We have had a lot of fun. We still have fun. The boy's up north in Tulare now and the girl lives in Bakersfield. They both have families and they get involved with their families and so we're not having lots of things or get-togethers like we used to do. Now it's birthdays and anniversaries and Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays and things like that. Otherwise, with kids in school and all, well it's Grandma and Grandpa that do the going instead of them coming home.

M.N.: If there was something that you could have changed, what would it be?

Mitchell: I've always said I would not want to live my life over. I would not. Lots of things if I knew what I know now I would do differently, but you wouldn't know it. So how would you change it? I would have wished for my parents to have had an easier life. They enjoyed life but they could have had a lot more comforts you know, particularly Mama. I don't think Dad cared. He was very content with what he had and he'd probably have been content to sit in Arkansas his whole life on the front porch and watch the people go by on Sundays, but that wasn't Mama. She was motivated.

M.N.: And she made you motivated.

Mitchell: Yes. I think so. It wasn't Dad. Dad was a hard worker but the motivation wasn't there.

M.N.: What effect did coming to California have on your life now that you look back in general and you see what you've become and where you were?

Mitchell: Oh, I think that coming to California has made our family--the four of us. We've had good husbands. We've had good living, good life. We all have children and they're all financially okay. We got one of ours through college. My other sister's daughter started to college. She didn't finish but I think she still will. They have children.

M.N.: Would your life have been better if you had stayed in Chelsea?

Mitchell: No. Well, I can't say about that. I doubt it. I doubt it very seriously. The school system there isn't like it is here.

M.N.: What do you mean?

Mitchell: Well, when I went to Chelsea I paid for everything I had in high school. Now there I know that I paid. I don't remember in

the grammar school. I don't know if Oklahoma has [tuition]--I don't think so. I think California has about the best school system as far as schooling for everyone. There is no reason for anyone not getting an education in California if they want it. There is none.

M.N.: You feel good about that.

Mitchell: Oh, I do.

M.N.: Even though it was rough at BHS?

Mitchell: Yes. Oh yes. Well, I attributed that a lot to myself, not to people there. I didn't have to do like I did either. I could have ignored them. Just like a TV show. Turn it off.

M.N.: After you were married and you were an adult on your own, did you run into any problems because you were from Oklahoma?

Mitchell: Oh no. I wouldn't pay any attention to them now. I might be offended if someone said something but I wouldn't say anything unless it was a person I knew. And then I'd just say, "Take it easy." But no. Well, times have changed too. People don't talk like they used to about the Okies. Some do but not like they did when we landed here.

M.N.: How did they talk about the Okies?

Mitchell: Well, we were just trash, now that's all. You were just white trash out of Oklahoma.

M.N.: That's not true.

Mitchell: I know it isn't true, but that was the feeling. I think that was one other thing about many of the people that lived down here at the camp. Was it torn down before you ever came out here and saw it or anything?

M.N.: I've never seen it.

Mitchell: Well, this side of the Sunset School--do you know where it is? Okay. When you go back to Bakersfield--are you going back this way? Okay. Go down to Sunset--that's two miles up and go straight west. The Vineland School is on the corner. Go right straight on and the Sunset School is on your left. This side of that is the migrant camp. That's where The Grapes of Wrath was born.

M.N.: What about The Grapes of Wrath? Did you read the book?

Mitchell: Oh yes.

Mitchell: Did you see the movie?

Mitchell: No. I had no desire to see it.

M.N.: Why not?

Mitchell: I just didn't want to. I probably should have because of so much controversy over it, but I didn't want to.

M.N.: How did you feel about the book?

Mitchell: I didn't like it.

M.N.: Why not?

Mitchell: Well, I just don't think that it painted a true picture. I don't think. Now, I'd have to read it again to tell you just why.

M.N.: You obviously have strong feelings about it. Why don't you think it painted a true picture?

Mitchell: Well, I just don't think that the people that came here suffered the hardships that that book [had in it] or that they needed to. Maybe some of them did but I don't think anyone and to me there's still is no reason for anyone in California to be hungry, in this area particularly.

M.N.: You feel that they could have found work?

Mitchell: I do.

M.N.: I believe you. Was there anything else in the book?

Mitchell: I would have to go back. I wish I would have had time. I would have reread it.

M.N.: Do you feel that the people were portrayed accurately in that book --the people from Oklahoma and that area? They don't seem to me to be the people that you moved out here with.

Mitchell: They were the same people. The Hollidays* came out and I don't know if you've interviewed anyone else around here but there's many people around here that came. Now the Hollidays lived in the government camp. Didn't she tell you about that? Okay. They were lovely people in there. We would have lived there if we hadn't had a place of our own in that area. If my parents could have gotten into it Mama would have loved to have lived out there and fixed up one of those little places. And gee, our children had beautiful friends from that camp. Their kids went on to school and college, many of them.

M.N.: Maybe it's that in that book and that movie they painted a few from Oklahoma to be Okies.

*Grover and Viola Holliday, Interview 115.

Mitchell: Well, maybe so. I don't know. We really have the same things today with your welfare situation. Now there's many of those people--I believe in helping people who need help and particularly the old people or young people if they've divorced through no fault of their own and they need help until they get on their feet--but I don't believe in making it a life style and there are plenty of them are doing it. And they can work. There's plenty of able-bodied men that are on that. Look when you go through the grocery store the people that use food stamps. Look at their grocery baskets at what they've got in it. They buy better things than I buy and I know that I can afford it better than they can afford it. But you have to learn to live with what you have and make do. Somewhere along the road they haven't learned it and they're not going to learn it until the government gets out of our business.

M.N.: Let's look back on your life. What would be the lesson that you would pass on to me or some other young person about life?

Mitchell: Work.

M.N.: What do you mean?

Mitchell: Well, just work. Strive to keep yourself occupied and be honest. Pursue. If you have a goal, pursue it, and that takes work. I know Mama always told us, "You go get a job and you work. If it's 50¢ a day you work until you can do better and then take that other job. But don't quit that 50¢-paying job until you can do better."

M.N.: And that's the way your life has been?

Mitchell: Pretty much. I've never worked out that much. I would probably just keep staying for 50¢ because I'd be afraid I couldn't get anything else.

M.N.: Have you enjoyed your life?

Mitchell: Yes. Very much. Very much.

M.N.: It's been a good life?

Mitchell: Yes.

M.N.: And what are the best things that you've had?

Mitchell: Oh, I think raising our family.

M.N.: I hear that coming up over and over again--the family.

Mitchell: Well, you know you have your own family. We were close. Our family--my mother and my dad and the four of us sisters--were very close. We're still close. We still live right here. Three are

in Bakersfield and I am out here. And then we each of us have had children and we all enjoy our children. And I think our children enjoy us. At times they didn't when they were growing up. And we try to get our group together--that's the Shearer family--together occasionally or at least once a year for an annual meeting and then other times not all of us. But we try once a year to get everyone there. And I think it's things like that hold your families together too. It isn't just a happening. It takes a little doing I think.

END OF INTERVIEW

Archalden Shearer
b. 1890, Iowa

[His parents from Iowa]

Rilla Rebecca
b. 1893, Hornbuckle,
Arkansas

[Her parents from Alabama]

Hazel Fay Shearer

b. 1914, Mountain Home,
Baxter County,
Arkansas

Education: high school

Church: raised Baptist; now
Arvin Union
Congregational

m. 1932

Raymond Edward Mitchell
b. 1909, Illinois

Judy Rae Hunter
b. 1937
Office work

Alden Otis Mitchell
b. 1940
Rancher

Vicki Lynn Philips
b. 1949
Housewife/mother

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