

Heather Libby:

All right. Hello and welcome. I'm Heather Libby, the Adult Services Librarian at the Knoxville Public Library, and I'm speaking here today with a sibling pair. So if you could introduce yourselves and tell me where you live now. We'll start with that, so-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Okay. Kay Richardson Jensen and I live in Knoxville, Iowa.

Heather Libby:

Okay.

Roy Richardson:

Roy Richardson. I live on an acreage just outside of Knoxville.

Heather Libby:

All right. And today, you'll be speaking with me about your memories about growing up on your family's farm. And so, if your memories are about a place that is here, where you live now, if you could explain where you'll be talking about.

Roy Richardson:

We grew up in Chickasaw County, which is northeast Iowa. Stapleton Township, a little country school on the corner of dad farm was Stapleton number seven-

Heather Libby:

Okay.

Roy Richardson:

... where I started school.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And the town is Fredericksburg where we went to school, but we both went to country school for our beginning grades. I was in kindergarten and first grade.

Roy Richardson:

I went to country school through fifth grade.

Heather Libby:

And so I'd like to hear more about your country school. I know we're going to talk about the farm, but that's intriguing. Can you tell me a little bit about that? How big it was? Or?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

One room school. It had a basement, which was probably unusual for country schools. Number of kids in the school...

Roy Richardson:

Traditionally there was always two in my class, sometimes a third. Tenant farm families would move in April, first day April. I was kind of moving day for a farm and sometimes we gained a third and a couple years later to lose one of those.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

I started kindergarten with three in my class and one student went to parochial school in Lawler, the little town nearby, and then joined us again in Fredericksburg for high school because the parochial school was just grade school.

Heather Libby:

Okay.

Roy Richardson:

The girl I was in class with, lived straight across the mile from us and we ended up starting at kindergarten together and graduating from Fredericksburg High School in 1966.

Heather Libby:

Did you get along? It'd be hard to not get along with your only classmates.

Roy Richardson:

Well, as a fairly small high school, there was 36 kids in my graduating class and it was almost difficult to ask a girl out on a date because you knew her were almost like a sister and it didn't seem quite natural.

Heather Libby:

Right.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

The fun and country school, you got to listen to the other lessons and so you found out what the fourth graders and sixth graders were doing. And recess was really good because in northeast Iowa you have snow. So we built snowman, played fox and goose or fox and geese, whichever. Roy, do you remember the big culvert that sometimes had a couple inches of ice in the bottom? It was big enough that kids could scoot through the culvert and go onto the road. I mean, it was an ice slide. Annie I over played. Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

We built a snowman. It was large enough when I was in third grade, the bottom ball for the snowman was probably five or six feet diameter.

Heather Libby:

That takes a long time.

Roy Richardson:

So we were pretty high up with the top together. I think we cut the larger pieces in the quarters to put them up there. But well into the spring, the remains of that snowman was, I don't know, home plate or something on ball field.

Heather Libby:

That's great. That's fun.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

The Christmas program, there was a little place to hang a curtain on wire, and so there was a curtain across, so everybody was behind the wire and you were supposed to be really quiet, which got all these family people out in the audience and they're packed in. But the Christmas program was really fun.

Roy Richardson:

Fundraiser in the country schools was a box social. The women would make a lunch for two, decorate in a box, and then they were auctioned off.

Heather Libby:

Okay.

Roy Richardson:

And the men were supposed to know whose was whose. So they didn't know if they were buying their wives meal or somebody else's. My dad always said, "He hoped to get so-and-so's because she was a real good pie baker".

Heather Libby:

Did your mom know about that? I love it. Well, I guess that speaking about moms and making pies and all that, if you could tell me then about how your family came to be on the farm in this region of Iowa. How did, if you know-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

The first, and I have several books of records, but somebody in the Richardson family bought land, I think in the 1837 timeframe, somewhere in the Fredericksburg area. It probably wasn't the farm where we grew up, but my great-grandparents came sometime in the late 1850s, 1860s. My grandfather told an older cousin that he remembered coming in a wagon. I don't know if it was a covered wagon exactly, but he remembered coming over terrain that was pretty hilly. And his little kid's mind was, "Where are we going anyway?" Both the great-grandparents, great granddads on my grandma's side and on my grandpa's side were in the Civil War. The farm where Roy and I grew up was bought September 11th, 19... No, 1899, I believe. September 11th, 1899. We've celebrated the Century Farm at the Iowa State Fair a number of years ago.

Heather Libby:

Okay.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

My sister and her husband own just a 40 acres, I think, 40 acres of the farmland, yet. They don't farm it, but one of the neighbors does. They live about 12 miles away.

Heather Libby:

Yeah. I know that the beginning of the interview you told me, you're talking about a farm up in Northern Iowa and now you're both here. How did you both end up in Knoxville, Iowa? I know I'm jumping ahead. We'll go back, but I want to make sure I get an answer to that.

Roy Richardson:

I ended up going to Iowa State University, started out in engineering, and like a lot of students who start out engineering, decide very quickly that that's not for me. So I ended up in industrial technology, which was teaching in industrial arts in high schools or working in the industry. And I quickly changed into that field, graduated and came down here to take a job at Knoxville High School. And then several years later, Kay was needed a place to student teach. And the home ec teacher here in Knoxville was very well versed at the home ec and she was going to live with us and student teach. And about the same time her husband got transferred to Newton with Farmer's Home Administration. She did end up student teaching here. And then several years later when Mrs. Applegate retired -

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Mr. Praither hired me.

Roy Richardson:

Kay got the job.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And we need to back up just to have a second. Roy and John were college roommates. Roy brought him home.

Heather Libby:

Well, he did match-making, I mean.

Roy Richardson:

I think an older cousin said that when grandpa or grandfather came across from Wisconsin, that they did see Indians.

Heather Libby:

Really?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Just an occasional Indian off in the distance. Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

And I never knew my grandfather that well because he died in probably '52 or three when I was three or four years old.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And since I was born in 1952, I don't remember grandpa at all. I remember Grandma Richardson -

Roy Richardson:

I don't know if I remember him specifically or remember from pictures.

Heather Libby:

Right, right. Pictures and stories.

Roy Richardson:

Definitely knew grandma quite well. Yeah.

Heather Libby:

Well, can you tell me a little bit about some of your stories about growing up on the farm?

Roy Richardson:

Well, grandpa and grandma had the farm going, moved on to it I think in 1902, even though they bought it a couple years earlier. And somewhere in the depression years possibly, he and dad started an orchard, put out quite a bunch of apple trees, plum trees, a couple pear of trees. And that was added to numerous times over the years to where we ended up in the '50s with probably 250 trees. We were known as The Orchard.

Heather Libby:

That's interesting. I haven't heard about it-

Roy Richardson:

We sold produce right there on the farm. I probably would've been born on a ladder except I was born in December, so.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

In terms of farming, we had the normal corn, oats, and hay on rotation, milk cows, pigs. Dad also had raspberries and strawberries. When you set out new apple trees and eight acres, nine acres of orchards, we know that there were more than 50 varieties of apples because I think I was about fourth or fifth grade when one of the teachers said, "Okay, how many apple varieties are there?" And I started naming them off and she said, "I think you're going to make a list." So we sat down at supper and started going mentally up and down the rows. And we were up into the fifties on apple varieties.

Roy Richardson:

Well, past the forties.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

Many of those varieties we had maybe 20 or 30 trees of, but there were a lot of them where we had just one or two. Maybe dad tried something and it was okay, but not-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Not outstanding, so.

Heather Libby:

You remember how he found or decided these different varieties? Because -

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Seed catalogs... Nursery catalogs, and he did a lot of reading. The extension service was pretty important for different information. When I was in college at Iowa State, he had an apple that was supposed to be a certain variety, and he knew it didn't turn out that way. You'd plant the tree and a couple of years later when the apple's ripe and nope, this isn't what it's supposed to be. So he had me take apples back to Ed Cot in the horticulture department, and Ed questioned me, "Okay, shape of the leaf. I want to know the angle of the stem on this leaf." And I said, "Oh, I should have brought part of the branch." But he could identify parent strains of different apple varieties by just description. Oh, gosh.

Heather Libby:

That's impressive.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And I remember Ed coming to the orchard one time and doing a pruning demonstration. Different people in the county came and... yeah.

Roy Richardson:

The number of varieties was important on an orchard of that type so they didn't have them all come ripe at the same time. We had apples start probably in late August, and we would pick apples until either we run out or frost damaged the apples.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And if you were driving the spray tractor, Richardson kid always ate apples from late June on. They were pretty green, but-

Heather Libby:

I like them that way but I know it can hurt your stomach. Right?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

I don't ever remember having that.

Roy Richardson:

Anyway, grandpa and dad started the orchard. They put strawberries between the rows, raspberries in a rows for several years until the orchard started to produce. And back in those days, people were plenty willing to come and pick either to get paid for picking or to pick on shares or to cut down expenses for

their fruit. Then we still had, even after the strawberries between the rows that need eliminated, we still had probably a third of an acre of strawberries for a number of years. And the best way to get strawberries going is, wow well, it's good and muddy, wet and take starch from a plant and...

Kay Richardson Jensen:

"It's time to move the strawberry bed." "Oh dad, we have enough strawberries." "Oh no, it's time to put in a new bed." So dig, move the plants. And there were probably three or four different spots that he had strawberries over the years. And you'd start picking early June and when you started on a Monday, you were maybe not all the way through the patch by the time you needed to start over at the other end, you were back at the beginning.

During World War II, my mom's story was that because you couldn't buy sugar, sugar was rationed. People would come because fresh fruit was kind of the dessert. When they were married in the early '40s, mid-'40s, everybody in the family saved the ration coupons to be able to have a wedding cake. Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

Anyway, when dad took over the farm in the late '40s, when he and mom were married, they lived in the same house with grandpa and grandma for two, three years, which was common back in those days. And then they retired to a little town of Alpha about five miles away. And then my older brother was born and I was born next. It was four of us. Kay, and then Nancy. And we became the crew that picked apples and fixed manure and bailed hay and handled all those kind of chores.

Heather Libby:

So, slowly improving but that's still, again, a lot of work for a small family.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Well, it was 80 acres, so same size farm, but just the orchard added a different dimension. We all knew how to set ladders, run, picking. If there were a couple high school kids in the fall, that helped.

Roy Richardson:

Sometimes.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

It wasn't unusual that dad would say, "Okay, Kay, take this person and this person and you're going to go work on this row." It's like, "Oh, these kids are older than I am." And then I'd have to say, "Okay, but I know what I'm doing. I know what I'm doing".

Heather Libby:

Well, that would grow confidence in you. Right? Did this affect what you were able to do in terms of extracurricular activities? Did you have chores in the morning? In the afternoon? Or?

Roy Richardson:

School basically was our social life. That, and church, because we didn't socialize that much.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

4-H club.

Roy Richardson:

4-H club. Yeah. I belonged to FFA for a couple of years, but church was probably the main social contact, along with school. And back in those days before television neighborhoods often oftentimes had card clubs and there'd be 10 or 12 couples, 8 or 10 or 5 or 6, I don't know, that would, once a month they went at somebody's house and they played cards.

Heather Libby:

Nice.

Roy Richardson:

And we were supposed to be in bed, but we'd sneak down the stairs and peek and see what was going on.

Heather Libby:

Yeah. Fun. Did your family raise any animals? I can't remember. I remember you telling me about the crops. I don't recall if you mentioned animals.

Roy Richardson:

Typical farm in Iowa, we had the 20 acres of corn, roughly 20 acres of hay or pasture, 20 acres of oats, 5 acre pasture. And we had 10 cows, milk cows, Holsteins. We had 13 sows farrowed twice a year. We raised one litter and sold them as-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Feeder pigs.

Roy Richardson:

... as fat hogs. And we sold the other litters as feeders. They were 30, 40 pounds... 20 pounds. And then from that larger, the ones we raised, we'd pick out the 13 sows for the next year. It was constant turnover. We had chickens in the early days. I don't know when chickens when they got a chicken business, but it was egg business. We'd take eggs to town on Saturday night, sell them, take the money over to the grocery store and buy the things that we couldn't raise.

Heather Libby:

How much of your family's food was raised on the farm?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Quite a bit.

Roy Richardson:

Two thirds, three quarters.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

I remember 80 or 90 quartz of green beans being canned and probably a hundred pints of sweet corn. Tomatoes, at least a hundred quartz, because we used tomatoes quite a bit. We also had canned applesauce, plums. Didn't do much with raspberries and strawberries. Tried to put those in the freezer, but you had to take that to town because you rented a locker and I think maybe I was second grade or third grade when we bought the freezer.

Roy Richardson:

I remember the first freezer coming to the farm.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

It was a big deal coming. It was a big deal, yeah.

Heather Libby:

Was the difficulty they just wouldn't stay fresh or they get mushy by the time you'd bring them into town or?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

For putting them in the freezer, you basically would clean the strawberries, pack them with a little sugar, and you went to town right away with however many. And at our farm, it was probably 20 boxes of strawberries at a time going to town. It wasn't just one or two. We're talking crates of strawberries-

Heather Libby:

Telling you about the corn. I like to freeze corn after we... So I'm trying to imagine how many ears I'd have to be scraping to get-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

To do a hundred pints? And the deal is that sweet corn is easier to can in a pint, the two cup jar, than it is in the quart because it takes quite a bit longer to process. It's a low acid food. Yeah, green beans and tomatoes. Tomatoes, high acid food so a little less time on the processing. Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

My dad was the youngest of five children. My mom was the oldest of five. We had cousins that were separated in age by about a generation.

Heather Libby:

Oh, my. Do they live nearby?

Roy Richardson:

A lot of them did. Yeah. And two of my dad's sisters died in their, probably thirties, age wise.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Yeah. Died the same day. One died of cancer and the other had a heart attack.

Heather Libby:

Oh, my.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Stress of everything. Yeah.

Heather Libby:

Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

Dad had one older brother, he farmed until the stroke put him out of farming. So dad was the one left of the family to take over on a farm. And then when grandpa died, of course then grandma was the owner of the farm and she died, my dad inherited a third of it, and he had to buy the other third from her brother and sister. And mom's family farm but they were over near Nashville, which was 20 miles away, two hours away. A lot of cousins on both sides. It's common to get together frequently.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Mom's side of the family raised Red Poll cattle and one of the family traditions is Iowa State University, Grandpa Tracy, mom's dad, graduated in 1910 from Iowa State, and I had just graduated from high school in 1970. When he went back for his class reunion, I got to drive him. I got to hear about Iowa State and his point of view back then in 1970 as a granddaughter going off to college.

But one of the fun stories when my sister's son went to Iowa State years later and he headed for the library because they raised Red Angus cattle. Anyway, he is in the library and he's looking for history on cattle. And he called home, "Mom, I found some bloodlines from Grandpa Tracy and Great-grandpa Tracy's Red Polls." Anyway, just-

Heather Libby:

That's so special.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

The Iowa State University Library. Whoa. Okay.

Heather Libby:

That's amazing.

Roy Richardson:

When Grandpa Tracy went to his 60th class reunion in 1970, that was the year I graduated from college. And my mom insisted that I go with him. So I put my shirt and tie on and went. And it was one individual that seemed like he was awfully inquisitive, "What are you studying? And you're graduating this year?" "Yeah." "Have you got a job?" Yeah, I'm going to teach in school, there in Knoxville." "Interesting. Are you married?" "Yes." "What does your wife do?" "Works at bank teller." And unbeknownst to me, he was one of the...

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Officers.

Roy Richardson:

The officers in one of the local banks.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Here, in Knoxville.

Roy Richardson:

And shortly after we moved here, my wife interviewed at both banks and the one where he was on the board, called and said, "We want a second interview." So she worked there for six years, I guess. Took October maternity leave and never went back.

Heather Libby:

That's a good lesson in connections. Right? You never know.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

You never know.

Heather Libby:

It's a small town. Let's see. We spoke about raising your own food, who did what kind of work on the farm? I know we've touched a little bit upon that, but is there anything to add to that?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

When you were old enough to help, you were busy. And then you -

Heather Libby:

What is the age at which you're old enough to help?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Even a little kid can figure out, "Okay, this is a tomato plant and this is a weed. Take the weed." Hay rope is one of the first jobs I remember because to put up, we did a little bit of loose hay, but most of the time it was baled. But the hay forks were at the north end of the barn and the hay rope came out the south end of the barn. So somebody's job was, I remember as a little kid, Babe and Daisy, the horses, and I didn't drive them, but once, but on the hay rope, whoever was doing the team would pull the rope out to the south so that the bales at the other end went up and dumped. And then the little kid's job was grab the rope and take it back and get it in position so it could be hooked up again. And then after dad sold the team of horses, then it was John Deere B.

Roy Richardson:

We had horses until probably '55, somewhere in there. And the horses did a lot of the lighter work, hay mowing, picking up bales, some cultivating, probably using some old, horse-drawn cultivators in the garden. And we had small F12, Ref 14 tractor that grandpa bought in '39. And then I was in third grade at the country school. I remember seeing a huge tractor go by on a truck. And I knew it was coming to

our place. It was an F20, probably in early '30s, vintage. So we ended up eventually with three F20s, two John Deere Bs, and then John Deere 60. It's kind of interesting because one of the grandsons... dad mom's grandsons, has two of the F another F20s. Another grandson has the F14, and I've got one of the B, John Deere-

Heather Libby:

The same ones, not just-

Roy Richardson:

Same ones.

Heather Libby:

Okay. And they're still running?

Roy Richardson:

Well, the one I have is. No, the one, the F12 or F14 is not running right now. Our son hopes to get running.

Heather Libby:

Sure. And so did your family do the maintenance on those? Did you have to have the mechanical skills as well to-

Roy Richardson:

Some. Dad wasn't as mechanically inclined as some farmers. I remember being at an auction one time and there was a F20 tractor coming up for sale. And when the auctioneer got to it, he explained that this tractor needed some work, needed a head gasket. And dad was saying, "Oh gosh, I wonder what that's going to cost to get that done?" And I said, "I can do it." I was probably 13 or 14. So dad bought it and I did the head gasket on and weaved it.

Heather Libby:

All right. Let's see. Well, I think we've covered the work and the division of labor and machinery and technology.

Roy Richardson:

One thing, mom, I don't know, has ever run a tractor, or if she did, it was quite rare.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Mom didn't milk cows.

Roy Richardson:

No. But us kids all learned to drive tractor. And one of the things that we learned early on was driving the sprayer and going through the orchard. Dad was on the end of a hose, was probably 50 feet long out among the trees spraying, and we moved the tractor ahead and turned around. We sprayed about every two weeks, probably 10, 11 times during the summer.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

I would've said 8-10 days was his-

Roy Richardson:

8-10 days.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

... rotation. Yeah.

Heather Libby:

I mean, that raises the question, were there tasks that were most hated or, and conversely ones that you liked or didn't mind so much, what was the worst?

Roy Richardson:

Weeding of the garden was probably the worst.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Weeding the garden, the one that I would say.

Roy Richardson:

Most detested job. Most of the other things, picking apples was just routine. To caring for the cattle, moving hay, things like that. Feeding silage was all kind of-

Heather Libby:

Fine.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

As the younger sister, whatever two older brothers were doing, I wanted to do. I survived. I didn't get left out in the far corners of the world when they were hunting. "You can go along, but no whining, no complaining." Roy, the story of the piano? The farmhouse was built in 1922 and the two would've been aunts, our aunts, had bugged grandpa about buying a piano, and he said off the top of his head, "Yeah, when hogs get to be 22 cents or 25 cents a pound, we'll buy a piano." Sure enough, hogs got to that price and he had to buy a piano. My sister has the piano at her house.

Heather Libby:

And this is a sister who's still...

Kay Richardson Jensen:

In the area. Yeah. She lives in New Hampton. On the edge of New Hampton. She and her husband farm. I remember corn shocks when I was little.

Roy Richardson:

We'd pick corn by hand oftentimes to open a field. And we usually didn't do that all that early in the fall because we were busy picking apples. But we picked corn as we had to for feed. But we'd open the fields picking by hand, and then dad would usually hire a neighbor to come in and pick. In later years, dad got a single row picker. And I can remember running that as a teenager. And then probably by the time I left for college, you get a two row picker pull type and that was modern for us. You asked about the kind of equipment we had on the farm? We were probably tweeners and we didn't know it.

Heather Libby:

Tweeners?

Roy Richardson:

Yep. We never had anything new, but we never had anything old enough you could polish it up and call it an antique, take it at a parade, so we were tweeners.

Heather Libby:

It seems like a fairly comfortable place to be. Right?

Roy Richardson:

We often laughed we were some of the first recyclers. We salvaged the equipment that probably would've headed for a salvage yard if dad hadn't bought it on an auction. We fixed it up and used it.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

We did a lot of bike riding. And back to the TV, mom and dad didn't really think that kids needed a TV. I mean, yeah.

Heather Libby:

Where would you ride your bikes?

Roy Richardson:

We had what was originally a gravel road going by us, and then it became a...

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Blacktop.

Roy Richardson:

Blacktop. Probably in the '50s. And we ride up and down the road. We run to country school.

Heather Libby:

That's easier than on gravel.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Much better. We seined for minnows in the creek. That was probably three quarters of a mile north, just rode bikes everywhere with neighbor kids.

Roy Richardson:

I bought a Quizzard motorbike from a neighbor when I was probably 13 or 14, and I rode it all over the countryside. It was hard on back tires. It was a standard bicycle that just slapped the motor on them.

Heather Libby:

Those are really trendy again now.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

The 4-H club was kind of, because the boys club and the girls club was separate. And so the 4-H club that my brothers were in, did a family, what did you call it when you went around to everybody's project? You went to see their calves or their projects at home? A family day kind of thing? There was a certain name for it. I can't remember. The girls club was more in town meetings, but we did a variety of things. The county fair, the 4-H Fair was at Nashua. So cousins, cousins everywhere. It was fun to see everybody's projects. You got to know kids in different schools because your 4-H clubs didn't go by the school district borders at all because you had kids from Lawler and New Hampton -

Roy Richardson:

New Hampton, yeah.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

... in your club. Yeah.

Heather Libby:

What kind of projects did you do for 4-H?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Garden, sewing, foods, personal development I think was probably one of them.

Roy Richardson:

I had a calf, a dairy calf, raised two cow. And after several years, I don't know, sold it. Had a baby pig I raised, I guess, and it had the litter of little ones. I don't remember a lot of details on that, but 4-H club, oftentimes we did fundraisers and one of them our boys club did is we sold light bulbs.

Heather Libby:

Light bulbs?

Roy Richardson:

Back when a light bulb was a light bulb, you didn't have any choices. LEDs and incandescent.

Heather Libby:

Yeah, it was overwhelming.

Roy Richardson:

But we'd go door-to-door and sell light bulbs because everybody needed light bulbs. And power company, I think was our source of the bulbs, gave us one heck of a good deal on them. So we made some money.

Heather Libby:

Interesting.

Roy Richardson:

Got acquainted with neighbors.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Your FFA group hunted pigeons.

Roy Richardson:

Yeah, there was a demand for pigeons. And so we'd get together and two, three guys would go together and we'd go under the old country bridges and stuff and catch pigeon and put them in sacks -

Kay Richardson Jensen:

In the night. In night.

Heather Libby:

And then just sell them for?

Roy Richardson:

Putting them around in barns and I don't know who bought them or what for, for sure but...

Heather Libby:

Yeah. They weren't wanting you to... for meat or anything like that? Or is it -

Roy Richardson:

Nope.

Heather Libby:

Because they can be a nuisance depending on who you talk to. Or like a French delicacy, if you call it squab.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And this might've been along the lines of not spreading a disease from one farm yard to the next.

Roy Richardson:

Could be.

Heather Libby:

That's interesting. Yeah.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Because pigeons can sometimes carry-

Roy Richardson:

Pocket gophers were always a nuisance for farmers. So we could track... trap pocket gophers and you cut the front feet off and we put-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

After they died.

Heather Libby:

Okay.

Roy Richardson:

... tobacco can, and of course they smelled pretty rank, but we got a few dozen of them and we'd take them up to the courthouse. I can't tell you which office anymore, but they'd spread them out in the counter and take a pencil and count them. And each gopher was, I think 10 cents a bounty.

Heather Libby:

Well, that's an interesting way to make some money.

Roy Richardson:

That's how we made some money. Then we did a lot of work on other farms for 50 cents an hour.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Well, your first tractor driving was across the street or across the road at Joel Hollards because mom -

Roy Richardson:

Actually-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Okay.

Roy Richardson:

Actually Schultz's, they were doing silo filling, and Joel was down there and I was four years old, drove tractor for him.

Heather Libby:

Wait. Four?

Roy Richardson:

Told mom. She was a little concerned.

Heather Libby:

Yeah. Could you even reach anything?

Roy Richardson:

Deal John Deere tractor and all you do is sit on it. Push your clutch forward to go and pull it back to stop. Wasn't putting the foot clutch.

Heather Libby:

Right. Okay. Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

Tractor driving and mechanical stuff was my ballgame.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

I wanted a pony when I was a kid. Well, it was not maybe the easiest thing to afford.

Heather Libby:

Hogs would've had to cost a lot for a pony.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Well, yeah, we didn't have that bargain, but I had a pet cow, Bronco, and I trained her to be my horse. And my dad once or twice said, "Kay, if you're galloping across the farm yard and somebody's going by, you probably ought to not... Somebody's going to crash in the ditch watching you on that cow." I did get my pony, Blaze, little Welsh pony later on so I enjoyed several years with Blaze.

Heather Libby:

That's special. Well, let me check the time. This has been very good. We still have a few minutes if you have more memories to share, but also, we've covered so much ground. This has been fascinating. Anything you were hoping to get to mention today? And I know that we have covered, your sister is still on the farm, the family farm. Anybody else in your family still farming there or elsewhere?

Roy Richardson:

Not the family farm. Not brothers and sisters. No.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

The orchard is not there anymore. We sold the orchard after my dad passed away. We tried 1986 when dad died and two years later, I think, we tried to rent it a little bit and that didn't work so well. You have to grow up knowing apple orchards to know what to do with it. Sold it to a couple who was thinking about it as their retirement deal and they moved to the farm and ran the orchard and then gradually replaced the big old standard trees with the smaller semi-dwarf trees. And gosh, has it been about five years now that East View orchard was... It was hard. Lots of labor, lots and lots of labor.

Roy Richardson:

They modernized quite a bit and they had about 1,200 trees at one time. They decided that was a little bit too much so they dropped down to 1,000 or 800 or something. They run that orchard for probably 25 years.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Yeah, 25 or more. Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

Tried to sell it. Couldn't find a buyer so they pulled the trees out, rented the ground, and they're retired.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

They're still on the-

Heather Libby:

Land?

Kay Richardson Jensen:

... the farmstead actually, for the-

Roy Richardson:

They raised all kinds of pumpkins and squash and things like that and sold. We sold all of our apples on the farm. We put up a makeshift stand and we all basically were on call. Somebody drove in when we went out and sold apples.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

And our kids' project was pumpkins and squash.

Heather Libby:

Nice.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

We would bring in what kind of wagon? Full of pumpkins and squash.

Roy Richardson:

Two-wheel wagon or four-wheel farm wagon.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Yeah. We had a pretty good business in squash and pumpkins. Yeah.

Heather Libby:

Right? Yeah.

Roy Richardson:

And then in the days when they had a lot of strawberries, if they couldn't get them all sold on the farm, dad would just load them up in the car, take them into town with a chair and he'd sit on Main Street, and-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

They'd be gone.

Heather Libby:

Pretty sure. It's hard to get good strawberries now.

Roy Richardson:

We weren't leaders in new technology. That was one of the questions on the form. Our farm tractors were quite old. Finally, the last three farm tractors, I think, did have starter lights. That was kind of a big thing back in those days.

Heather Libby:

Well, yeah.

Roy Richardson:

Are you new enough? You get starter lights.

Heather Libby:

Yeah. Well-

Kay Richardson Jensen:

I think we have covered. Yeah.

Heather Libby:

I know, and I know we should do round two sometime. We can think of more. But this was just really such a fun conversation and I thank you both for being willing to share your experiences about growing up on a farm in Iowa. Thank you for your time.

Roy Richardson:

Thank you.

Kay Richardson Jensen:

Thank you for doing this.

Heather Libby:

My goodness. My pleasure.