

Speaker 1:

Came on and everything. Okay.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Okay.

Speaker 1:

Please tell me your name and where you live.

Billie Jean Shelton:

My name is Billie Jean Shelton, and I live, should I say here? In Webster City.

Speaker 1:

Are you willing to give your birth year?

Billie Jean Shelton:

Yeah, 1950.

Speaker 1:

Okay. If your reminiscences are from somewhere other than where you live now, please share that location.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Oh, okay. It's 1821 360th Street, Stanmore.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So how did your family come to live on a farm in Iowa?

Billie Jean Shelton:

Oh, well, my parents were both World War II veterans from the Navy, and after they were discharged, they came back to visit and my dad decided he would like to farm because he didn't have any other plans. So my grandpa was farming, my mom's dad, and he bought another farm for them after a while to add to the operation. So that's how.

Speaker 1:

Okay. What's your favorite story about growing up on the farm?

Billie Jean Shelton:

God, there's so many.

Speaker 1:

I should have given you the questions ahead.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Yeah, you should have. I just always liked being there when they were making hay, putting up hay or shelling corn or pulling cement, because there was a lot of activity. And there weren't kids around, but it was adults and there was a lot of good food, and there was something going on, so I liked that.

Speaker 1:

What kind of crops did your family grow?

Billie Jean Shelton:

What I remember, I think before I came around, they're mostly corn and soybeans and hay and probably some wheat to get straw. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

What kind of animals did your family raise?

Billie Jean Shelton:

Well, pigs and cattle and milk cows. They had a dairy for some time.

Speaker 1:

Oh, wow.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Did you raise any of your own food?

Billie Jean Shelton:

Oh, yeah. I don't remember that we were strict about it, but we did, a garden and canned things and canned vegetables, and we took one of the cattle to the locker and had it butchered. And the same with pig and pork, I'm sure. I remember my folks, I don't know why they did this, but they would get some pork ground and then season it themselves for sausage. I don't know why. So it was always a big deal. I never liked it much, but yeah. So they grew that.

Speaker 1:

Who did what kind of work on the farm?

Billie Jean Shelton:

My dad did most of it. My mom helped during harvest, and she drove the picker because it was mounted on a tractor, and so she could do that. And the kids did some chores over the years, different times. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, then when they had the dairy, my mom took care of running and separator and cleaning that up, that she hated. And they also had chickens for some time and so we had eggs there, and she didn't much like that either, so we didn't keep doing that for too long. But yeah, we had chickens. I remember that.

Speaker 1:

What farm machinery or technology did they use?

Billie Jean Shelton:

Silly you, not much technology. They used mostly John Deere equipment, but I think it was more of a case of whatever they could. My dad could buy the cheapest, the best, but equipment, and they had a picker and a pull combine, and I think, yeah, somebody else had the baler. Is that what they, is that what they're looking for?

Speaker 1:

Yeah.

Billie Jean Shelton:

I suppose. Oh, two John Deere tractors, of course, a B and then something else, and yeah. Yeah, of course. An elevator and a hoist. Yeah, that's about it.

Speaker 1:

You had the separator.

Billie Jean Shelton:

The separator, yeah.

Speaker 1:

I'm assuming you had to do all your milking by hand?

Billie Jean Shelton:

No. Oh, no. They always had milk machines.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Milking machines, and they would put them up on the cows and I always thought that was fun because I wasn't old enough to do any of the hard work, like cleaning up after, scooping out the manure, but it was kind of neat. I went along and the bunks where they were fit, because there were bunks in front of them, a trough, and then the cows would come in and stand there in the stanchion, and then the food is right there. And my dad would put a scoop of whatever it was, the feed, and then I went along with a coffee can of protein, I think it was something. Anyway, it just went on the top so then it went along like this, put it in. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Are there any members of your family that are still farming?

Billie Jean Shelton:

No, there aren't. No, I cash rent. I have the ground, but I cash rent it.

Speaker 1:

Okay.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Yeah.

Speaker 1:

That is the end of the questions.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Really?

Speaker 1:

Do you have any other stories you'd like to tell?

Billie Jean Shelton:

I remember when my dad would move the cattle from one feedlot to another. Yeah. Oh, and then he would put them in the field after the corn was picked, and then they would scavenge. They could get the corn that was missed. And so he'd get all of us out there, and he'd say, "Stand at that gate, and don't you let any cow get in there." "Okay. Okay. Yeah. Okay, I'll do that. Yeah." And I'd stand there and I was, oh, so sure I was going to do it. And these cattle were big, and they'd get right up close to me, and I'd say, "Okay, I'm out of here." And then they'd go, because I was scared. And then the pasture for them was across the... We lived on a highway, so the pastures were on the side of the highway, and then sometimes he'd move pretty often from the pasture to the barn.

And then we had to stand out there and stop the cars and make sure the cows didn't go the wrong way. So that wasn't so good. Played in the haymow a lot, especially when we had people around to play with it. And that was fun. Yeah, that was fun. And sometimes I would drive the tractor to pull up the bales that would go, somebody would be on the hay rack with a stack, five or six high, put the forks in, the hay forks. And then it had a rope that was attached to the tractor. You back it up, and then that'd pull it up to the big door, and then whoever's on the rack would pull the trip rope after it got far enough in. Somebody who was working inside, getting the bales would yell, "Okay." And then they'd trip it, and the forks would let go and the bales would drop, and then the people in there scurried around and put them where they're supposed to be. And then the person on the hay rack would pull the forks down and start over again.

Speaker 1:

That's fascinating.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Oh, yeah. Yeah. And I liked being out when my dad was milking, and we didn't have a bulk tank, he put it in, don't know, 10 gallon cream can, I guess you'd call it. And kept him cool in a big cooler, it just had water in it that was cooled somehow. And that was heavy work, set it up and down into the cooler, and

the kittens would be right there to get the extra milk, of course. And then in the summer when we got watermelons, he would put them in there to cool. And then usually after we ate a meal, then he would go out and get the watermelon and put it on his shoulder and walk up to the house and cut it up for us. So that was nice. And sometimes bottles of pop would go in there too. That was good. We must not have been big enough, but I don't remember ever snitching. I don't remember going in and getting a bottle of pop.

Maybe I knew I'd be in trouble. Yeah, that was it. That was it. Yeah. I remember one time they were haying and the neighbors would come in and help hay and a relative or two. And I always thought that was fun because there was a lot of commotion and people around. But I remember one day, and it was in the summer, of course, and it was hot, and I was out riding my bike around the driveway. And they all went in and watched, I was sitting down and when I came in, one of the crankier neighbors said, "I don't know why you want to be out there riding in the heat. That's not a good idea." "Okay." So he was cranky.

Speaker 1:

I think when you're a kid, the heat doesn't bother you as much.

Billie Jean Shelton:

No. It must be, he was right. It was silly but I was just riding around, and I'd ride my bike out to the mailbox which wasn't far. I'd wait for the mail, and then I'd go get the mail. And so there was a creek, a dredge ditch that went through the pasture beside the field and so sometimes we'd go and fish, I don't know what we thought we'd catch. And in the winter we'd go and play in the ice in the creek. And the pasture there was a little hill, so we could sled there. So that was nice. Yeah, it was good.

It wasn't bad at all. And the bus would come to the corner on the gravel, and then we could see it from the kitchen window. So it was always, "The bus is coming, the bus is coming", and I would be the second one to get my hair into ponytails. It's usually a ponytail and my mom would be standing behind me doing this, doing that, and we'd be looking out the window. And when the bus was coming, I always thought, she'd take my ponytail and do it like this to get it tight. And I thought it was running out to the road like this. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Billie Jean Shelton:

One of each and I was the middle child. So that's why I am like I am. And so, where's this going out, Dee, to the Heritage side? And then what did he do with it?

Speaker 1:

Thank you for being willing to share your experience about life on the farm in Iowa.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Oh, certainly. Oh, one other thing, when my parents were operating a dairy and selling milk, then they had a milk route. And my grandpa would take one of the routes that went into Stanhope and they delivered at people's houses and everything. And then my dad went to Stratford and he did the same thing and I'm sure they had country people too. And I was pretty little, I hardly remember. And my mom

said, "Well, your dad was always so generous. He'd stop and visit for a while, and then he'd, 'Oh, you got company coming here, take a quarter of cream' or 'You'll need this, do that.'" And then I don't know why, they got out of it all of a sudden. Well, there was a bottling machine even.

Speaker 1:

Oh, wow.

Billie Jean Shelton:

Yeah. And it was in the basement so my poor dad had to carry the ten-gallon cream cans full down and then carry the full up. And I suppose they put them in the cooler. I don't know. So it was a lot of heavy work. Yeah. And then right before they went out of the business, I don't know, I would guess the regulations changed and they just couldn't update enough and get the right cleanliness and all that business because they had stuff down there. They had a contract to supply milk to the school in town in pint bottles. And then, I don't know why, I didn't ever ask. And they probably wouldn't have told me anyway, so yeah. So the milk out was a big deal, had a panel truck. Yeah. And a pickup truck and away they go.

Speaker 1:

Well, thank you again. It's been really nice talking with you today.