

Mary Griffin Oral History

World War II in Carver County Oral History Project

November 5, 1999

Interviewer: Stacy Helmbrecht-Wilson

Interview with Mary V. Griffin

Interviewed by Stacy Helmbrecht-Wilson

Interviewed on November 5, 1999

Stacy Helmbrecht-Wilson SHW
Mary V. Griffin MVG

SHW: This is the World War II Era in Carver County Oral History Project. The date is November 5, 1999. My name is Stacy Helmbrecht-Wilson, and I am the interviewer. I am a staff member at the Carver County Historical Society. I am interviewing Mary Griffin. If you could say your full name and spell your full name we can get started.

MVG: My full name is Mary Viola Griffin.

SHW: Where were you born and when were you born?

MVG: I was born March 10, 1922, in Benton Township on a farm.

SHW: Right about here?

MVG: Right here, yes.

SHW: Were you actually born in the farmhouse?

MVG: In this farmhouse, yes.

SHW: Oh, you're kidding. That's neat. I can't imagine living in the same place my whole life. That would be amazing.

MVG: I wasn't here my whole life. I grew up here, and then when I went to college I went to St. Cloud, and then I started teaching. So then I was away from home for forty-three years, but I always came home on . . . Well, the first eleven or twelve years I didn't come home very often, but when I moved to Robbinsdale, then I came home every week. I was there for thirty-one years. And I've been retired for fifteen years.

SHW: I teach quarter time at Bayview Middle School, sixth grade, as well as working at the Historical Society. Thirty years of teaching is a long time.

MVG: Yes, but it goes fast.

SHW: I love the kids.

MVG: It's a new adventure every day.

SHW: What grade did you teach?

MVG: I taught second grade and third grade, and sometimes I had a combination, and sometimes I had a third and fourth combination. I had straight third grade in Robbinsdale.

SHW: What were you doing in 1941?

MVG: I graduated in 1940. My dad said he'd like to have the whole family together for one year because he knew that the war was coming on. You could tell that. In September of 1941, I went to St. Cloud Teacher's College. Then I stayed home one year. My dad thought that I should stay home one year. Then he'd get to know me. When I was going to school, I never saw him.

SHW: I suppose that makes sense. Were your brothers older or younger?

MVG: Older.

SHW: So they were both on the farm, too?

MVG: Yes. Patrick went into service . . . It must have been 1940. I graduated in June of 1940, and then the fall of 1940 he went into service; he was drafted. Patrick was the oldest, and then my dad tried to get my brother, Joe, deferred as long as he could because he was helping all the neighbors around here with their farms. And they needed the farms.

SHW: It was an essential industry.

MVG: Yes, and it would have been too hard on my mother to have both boys in service.

SHW: Yes, especially after the Sullivan brothers and everything. It just had to be a nightmare.

MVG: It was hard on her. I can remember her crying. She said, "You spend all your life trying to raise the children and having them come up to be good citizens, and then the government takes them and puts them in the army."

SHW: I heard my grandmother say that, too, about the Vietnam War.

MVG: That was so hard on her.

SHW: I bet. How did you feel about all of it, about having your brother gone and your other one maybe getting drafted?

MVG: I tried to help out more on the farm here. I tried to do more of the work that he was doing. My dad said, "With your ability, you're our last chance. You have to go to college." He said the others were good and they knew everything, but when he'd look at my grades on the report card, he'd say, "You're college material. You go to college."

SHW: So you went to college in 1941?

MVG: Yes.

SHW: What was St. Cloud like in 1941? Were there any boys at school?

MVG: There were very few boys in the classes, but the second year I was there the army got in there, and they took over part of the college, and they had classes there. Of course, I just lived in a home that was where a lot of girls lived in the house right next to the college on Second Avenue. Early in the morning, we'd hear the army boys marching up and down the street. It was nice. I thought it was good for the college because you know how the girls go around and they've got that "student stoop" because they've been bending over their books? Boy, when the army came in and they started marching, everybody straightened up! It really was good for them. I thought it was good that they came because it really pepped up the college.

SHW: Were you there for a two-year program or a four-year program?

MVG: Two-year program. Then I went out teaching. I picked up five years after, just going to college and taking correspondence courses.

SHW: Why don't we backtrack for a second and talk about when you became aware of what was going on in Europe and Asia and knew there was a war coming.

MVG: Yes, we knew it was.

SHW: Did you know that before '39 or was it '39 that really changed things?

MVG: I don't remember. It bothered my dad, too, because he was afraid they'd take the boys. It just bothered him, you know. He said he was just getting to the point where he had to help and couldn't go ahead and do things; then comes the war.

SHW: It must have been very difficult.

MVG: My brother was in for five years. I remember my dad saying, "Patrick was one of the first ones to go into the service, and he was one of the last ones to come out." But that was because he was a cook. I know he went all around the world. He was in India. I guess I remember India more than the other places because he had a little Indian boy for a servant when he was over there. The little Indian boy would wash his clothes for him. He was real nice to him. He liked it in India. He sent us a picture—my niece has that—of Patrick sitting on an elephant.

SHW: What year was he there?

MVG: It was between 1940 and 1945, somewhere between there.

SHW: Was he in the army?

MVG: He learned how to cook in Fort XXX, South Dakota[Records show that he went to Bakers School at Ft. Riley, Kansas] so whenever he went to a different station, he had to go along because they had to have a cook. People had to eat, so he was always one of the last ones to go. I think I remember him saying sometimes he heard some shots, but he never saw them.

SHW: That's a blessing. Where was he stationed besides India?

MVG: I don't know the places in India.

SHW: Besides India. Was he in Europe or Asia ever, besides India?

MVG: I don't know. I don't remember that much. I looked for some pictures, and I couldn't find any. After he got married he told me I could throw away all those letters that he had. I guess he picked out what he wanted, because my niece said she has some pictures.

SHW: Do you remember December 7, 1941, with Pearl Harbor?

MVG: Yes. I was in St. Cloud.

SHW: How did you hear about it? Where were you?

MVG: I think I heard about it on the radio. I remember it was a surprise attack. Weren't we fighting in Germany at the same time, and then Japan came over to Pearl Harbor and we didn't expect it?

SHW: Yes, I think Germany and England were already fighting, but we hadn't quite entered the war, but we didn't expect them to attack Pearl Harbor for sure.

MVG: No, it was a surprise attack.

SHW: Do you remember what the reaction was on campus, what people were saying?

MVG: There were so few boys there. I don't remember.

SHW: When your brother was abroad, was it easy to stay in contact with him or did the wartime censors take a lot out of the letters?

MVG: He wrote letters and we got them regularly, but then when he thought he was going to move, he said, "We'll soon be moving, so maybe you won't get my letters on the same day, because it might take a little longer to get home." He said they do censor the letters. I wrote back and said, "We've never had a letter censored yet." He said, "I will write something that I shouldn't write, and they will censor it, and then you'll know what a censored letter is like." So then the next letter we got, he had written something, and they cut out a half of one line and a half of the next line. He didn't send much; he just said something he shouldn't have said. So we knew what a censored letter was like. One time he was home on furlough, and my dad asked

him, "What do they say about the war?" My dad started telling about what he had heard on the radio and things. Patrick said, "We don't hear that." They didn't tell them those things because then they'd get nervous.

SHW: But you always heard from him regularly, so it wasn't a worry.

MVG: Yes, he wrote regularly every week, and I wrote to him every week. Joe wrote too, but I don't think he wrote as often.

SHW: Did you end up writing to or sending packages to any of the other guys in his company who didn't have family?

MVG: I never sent Patrick packages either. I don't know why.

SHW: I guess as the company cook, he didn't really need cookies.

MVG: He was getting well taken care of. We were not that much for fancy stuff at home here, either. We were just the meat-and-potatoes type.

SHW: I know how that is. What was the hardest part of having your brother gone?

MVG: I had to do more work.

SHW: By more work, were you working in the fields and doing stuff like that?

MVG: Yes. I helped all over.

SHW: Before the war did you do any of that, or was that just when the war started?

MVG: Before the war started, my mother always said, "Well, there are two boys outside to do the work." My dad said, "You can stay in and help Mother." Then, of course, we did more canning, and we did more work in the house. After they went into service and Joe was gone all the time helping the neighbors and stuff, there wasn't the need, and then I went to college, so there wasn't enough time to do the canning and all that.

SHW: So you stopped canning during the war?

MVG: We did because there wasn't any need for it at home.

SHW: That's interesting because one of the things I've heard from other people is that they planted victory gardens and they did more canning because it was hard to get canned goods and staples and things.

MVG: But in our case our family was being dispersed.

SHW: That's real interesting. I suppose it's the rural versus urban kind of thing.

MVG: We always had a garden, but it didn't get the care after I left.

SHW: I suppose it couldn't.

MVG: No, because I was gone. The most important part of the garden was in May when you planted it, and I wasn't home then. The next most important part is in August and September.

SHW: And you were gone again.

MVG: Yes.

SHW: Besides having your brothers gone and there being more work, how did the war change your daily life? And that of course would be the biggest one.

MVG: I felt that I had to work away from home even in the summer time. Otherwise, they would take Joe, because they'd say, "You've got the help at home. We'll take him." So I wasn't in the home in the summer. I'd go down to the city and work.

SHW: What did you do during the summers in the city?

MVG: I did sewing one year. Every year I'd do something different. I worked in the laundry one year. I worked at Dayton's cafeteria several years. I liked restaurant work better. It just seemed nicer.

SHW: Did you see a lot of women doing things like being firemen or working for the police or doing other things? Nope? Not around here?

MVG: No.

SHW: Were there any German prisoners of war who worked as laborers around here?

MVG: German prisoners of war working here?

SHW: In some places in the county people could hire them from the prison camps because everyone's sons were gone, but I wasn't sure if that was common around here?

MVG: We never heard of that.

SHW: There may not have been a prison camp anywhere near here. How about rationing? How did the rationing affect you?

MVG: I was teaching in Carver County, and when the . . . was sugar rationed?

SHW: Yes.

MVG: I had to give out slips for people to go and get their sugar. Anyhow, everybody had to come to the school to sign up. I know they came and I opened up the country school and all we had was a kerosene lamp. We didn't have electricity in school. But I did stay one evening with the kerosene lamp, so in case anybody couldn't get in during the day they could come in the evening. I guess we got everybody taken care of.

SHW: Did the school do anything else for the war effort?

MVG: The second year I taught in Meeker County, and in Meeker County I didn't have to take care of any rationing stamps or anything. I don't know who did it, but I didn't have to do it. When I was in Meeker County, we collected milkweed pods. They used the inside of the milkweed pods for . . . what was it they used it for?

SHW: The lifejackets. We've got one in the historical society.

MVG: Have you? It's made with milkweed pods? So that's what they used it for. I had a school there where I had sixteen students, but there were only four of them above the fourth grade. The rest of them were little ones, you know. You don't expect the little ones to do much, but we did collect two big gunnysacks full of milkweed pods. I can't remember how we took them into Litchfield. I didn't take them into Litchfield; somebody else did. But we did collect milkweed pods.

SHW: That's neat. What else did you do at the school for the war? Or how did the war change the school?

MVG: It didn't change it much. In a country school everybody walked to school anyway, so the gas rationing didn't help much. I was lucky. I've always been lucky all my life. I was staying with a retired couple, and they would go to Litchfield once a month. I don't know what they wanted to see there; to visit their son. Then they always did other things, too. Every time they'd go to Litchfield, I would go along with them, and then I could go see the county superintendent and do whatever I needed to do. So I was lucky in that way.

SHW: Especially if you didn't have a car.

MVG: No, there was no use getting a car; gas was rationed. They were glad that I was staying with them because I could get gas stamps to give to them. Then they could take me wherever they wanted to go.

SHW: Did you get gas stamps because you were a teacher?

MVG: I was a teacher, but I could get gas stamps even if I didn't have a car. I could get gas stamps and I could give them to them, and they could take me wherever I wanted to go.

SHW: How did the rationing work? How did the stamps work exactly?

MVG: I don't know. They had to give the stamps up where we bought gas. We were allowed so much gas per month.

SHW: What else was rationed besides gas and sugar?

MVG: I don't think there was anything else rationed.

SHW: No?

MVG: I don't think so.

SHW: Did your school do a war bond drive or scrap metal drive or a paper drive or any of those things, or do you remember any of those happening in towns?

MVG: I can't remember them if we did. We probably did paper drives, but I don't know.

SHW: The first few years you teach are so hectic, I'm sure everything kind of . . .

MVG: It's so long ago.

SHW: Definitely.

MVG: It's almost fifty years ago.

SHW: Do you remember getting involved in any of the other things people did for the war effort, like rolling bandages or making quilts or knitting socks?

MVG: Yes. This was when I was in college. They gave us a nutrition course so we'd have good nutrition. In fact, I thought that was a war thing. Then they also had, because I know I was going to join it, and then I quit, but they did have a group of girls if they wanted to, and there weren't very many, they could knit baby socks and embroider on them. I thought, well, the little babies couldn't see the embroidery; let's do something more valuable.

SHW: That makes sense.

MVG: I don't know very many that did do it, that did join. There were only two there when I was there.

SHW: Did you ever buy war bonds?

MVG: I don't know if I bought any during the war. Yes, I guess I did because I was teaching.

SHW: Was there a lot of pressure to do stuff for the war and to make sacrifices? Were people encouraged to kind of go for it?

MVG: I think people were all sacrificing. Everybody was sacrificing something.

SHW: What was it like being from an area that was so very German when we were fighting the Germans? Was that ever strange?

MVG: We're all Germans around here except me. I don't know. I think it bothered them a little bit, but they never talked about it. We never talked about it, I guess.

SHW: Did anybody ever worry about spies or people being sympathetic?

MVG: [speaking too softly; can't hear]

SHW: My next door neighbor where I grew up, I grew up in Milwaukee, and they had a German spy living next door to them and an OSS agent living in their house throughout the war. So there were some, not many. I haven't heard of any in Carver County, but I wasn't sure if people worried about it.

MVG: I never heard anything.

SHW: I suppose everyone had been here for a hundred years. It didn't really seem quite as big a thing. What do you think the hardest part of the war was for people who were at home?

MVG: The hardest part was getting around because gas was rationed. That was hard. The other thing was getting the work done because we had less help. All the young boys were in the service.

SHW: Were all the boys you grew up with in the army or navy or someplace?

MVG: Yes.

SHW: Was that hard, having all your friends who were boys gone? Did you worry about them, or did you write to any of them?

MVG: No. I didn't write to any because I didn't know where they were. But I know they were all gone. Our neighbor came over and said he sold his farm. My dad said, "Why did you sell your farm?" "Well, I can't get Joe to help me!" Joe was busy helping everybody and he couldn't come over and help Henry.

SHW: And his son was gone?

MVG: Oh, yes, his son was gone.

SHW: So everyone around here was either a woman or older, except for your brother.

MVG: There maybe were some that were . . . I don't know. I wasn't home much, so I don't know who was around here. But I do remember my dad saying Henry sold his farm because he couldn't get Joe to come over and help. Did you ever talk to Robert Anderson?

SHW: No, I haven't. Was he a POW?

MVG: Yes.

SHW: Okay. He's on my list of people I want to talk to.

MVG: He had an article in the paper once. I wished I had kept it. You can get a lot of information from him. He was interesting. He was a POW.

SHW: Did all the girls you go to college with, did they all end up teaching? What happened to all your friends during the war?

MVG: The girls I went to college with all went out teaching.

SHW: And your friends from home?

MVG: I don't know where they went.

SHW: Did anyone you know have one of those wartime marriages where they married ten seconds before the guy shipped out?

MVG: I don't remember. I do remember . . . I think my cousin came home on furlough, and then he got married while he was on furlough. I think that's what a lot of them did.

SHW: Was your brother Patrick engaged when he went?

MVG: He was not engaged when he went into the service.

SHW: Was his wife from around here?

MVG: His wife was from Minneapolis. When he came back from the army, he first went to Tracy, Minnesota. He got a job out there, and I told him, "Why don't you come closer to home?" When I go down to the city—I go down to the city to transfer to come out here—I see lots of signs in the windows, "Cook Wanted." I said, "You come down here," and he came down here to Minneapolis then. He got a job in Minneapolis, and his wife is from north Minneapolis.

SHW: Was there anything else that I've missed that you wanted to talk about?

MVG: [speaking too softly]

SHW: What was it like when the war was over? How did your life change when everyone came back?

MVG: I remember when the war was over. I was in Minneapolis. I was walking . . . I don't know where I was walking, but I was walking past the newsstand. The people were all jumping

up and down, "The war is over! The war is over!" They said, "See, here it is!" The headlines in the newspaper. I remember everybody was happy and jumping up and down. Other than that, I don't remember.

SHW: Your brother came back right after the war and moved to Tracy? Or it took him a while to get out?

MVG: When did the war end?

SHW: 1945. V-E Day would have been June, I think, and V-J Day would have been in August.

MVG: I don't know when he got home, but he was one of the last ones home.

SHW: Did your other brother, Joe, ever have to go? Or did they manage to get a deferment throughout the war?

MVG: He got a card. I guess he got a card every six months that we was supposed to go in. My dad would go down to the courthouse and see somebody that got him deferred.

SHW: That must have been just terrifying having him have to get a new one every six months.

MVG: I think he did. I know he got cards. Dad was always afraid the war would get so bad that they wouldn't defer him anymore. My dad wasn't able to run the farm alone. My mother wasn't able to help him.

SHW: That's just too much work for two people, especially without the stuff everyone has today—the huge combines and stuff that a four-year-old could operate. Back when you had to do all the work by yourself.

MVG: Back at that time, we didn't even have electricity in the house.

SHW: You didn't? When did you get electricity in the house?

MVG: In 1964 or 1966, I guess.

SHW: Oh, wow. I didn't realize people electrified that late out here.

MVG: Everybody else around here had electricity, but we didn't have it. My dad couldn't afford it. He thought he couldn't, but I think he would have been able to. He could have managed. And he was not one for borrowing money. If he didn't have the money, he wouldn't.

SHW: My husband's grandfather, who farmed throughout the Depression, was like that. He didn't want to borrow any money ever. He paid for everything in cash his whole life.

MVG: He said if you start borrowing and then something happens that you can't pay it back, you lose everything.

SHW: Then they take the farm. That's why my husband's father never borrowed anything. Why don't we talk a little bit about the schoolhouses, about the schools you taught in, what they were like regardless of the war. What was it like to teach in a one-room schoolhouse?

MVG: The one-room school that I had here in Carver County, I had three eighth graders; I had a sixth grader; two second graders; and a first grader. You didn't have too many children. You didn't have every grade anyway. It worked out all right. I liked it very well. It was a good experience the first year.

SHW: How did you juggle the four different lessons? I can barely keep one straight.

MVG: My kids were very nice. I can remember the superintendent came to visit. Of course the kids knew that with so many assignments and so many grades, you don't always remember what each assignment was. You have to go and look it up because you have it all written down. The kids were so good. This one little girl, when she came up for class, she put a note on my desk, and I picked it up and read it. It had the assignments written on it. She thought maybe I'd get nervous and forget, so she wrote down the assignments. One of my eighth grade girls, I had a chart up on the wall for every time you read a book. I had Indian heads, and they could put a feather in the hat every time they read a book. You can't do that now.

SHW: No, I suppose not.

MVG: But we could at that time. She went up and put . . . I knew she was always reading; she read a lot of books . . . she went up and put a feather in the hat while the superintendent was there to give the superintendent attention to it. She wanted her to notice that was something that I had done. I don't know if other teachers did that or not, but I did. Then, the state inspector was along. I had asked the superintendent before to tell me when she came out to visit to watch and see which grades I would do better at, because I was planning to move into a town school where there would be more children. I wanted to know what she thought would be the best. The inspector was along. The county superintendent said, "You do better with the lower grade children because your personality changed completely when you walked from the upper grades and went over to your little first grade." Then the state inspector said, "You're doing a good job teaching, but it's more than that. You also have to take care of the building." The little kids were all around listening to her. I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Look at your walls. They need cleaning. The walls need cleaning." You know what I said? I said, "Well, I never see the walls. I just see the children's faces, and they're clean."

SHW: And that's the important part.

MVG: I was more concerned about the children. But I know why the walls got dark. It's because we had this . . . something they had bought before I got there. It was a heater to heat up the food the children brought to school. But it was supposed to have a pipe going out the wall, but they didn't have a pipe going out, so when you wanted to heat up the food for the children, the smoke would go out into the room.

SHW: Did the school have a coal furnace or was it still using a coal stove?

MVG: It was a coal furnace.

SHW: Did you have to stoke that yourself?

MVG: Yes, I did.

SHW: What time in the morning did you have to get there to get the room warm for the kids?

MVG: I don't remember. I think it was 7:30.

SHW: But, I suppose growing up on a farm without electricity, a coal furnace wasn't a real challenge.

MVG: I was used to having it when I grew up in the school here. When I went to Meeker County, they had a janitor who lit the stove. The stove at their school was always warm when I got there.

SHW: Was that a seven-room schoolhouse? Was it a multi-grade schoolhouse?

MVG: It had two rooms that had two classrooms in it, but I only had sixteen children, so I had them all in one room. Sometimes if it was real cold I'd let them go in the other room just to play because I didn't want them going outside. But otherwise we never used the other room.

SHW: So that was all the grades all well?

MVG: Yes.

SHW: What grades did you have at Meeker County?

MVG: I had three seventh graders the first year; a fifth grader; a fourth grader; two second graders; and I had quite a few first graders. The kids were always good to me.

SHW: Kids are fun to work with. How did teaching change? You were in it for such a long time?

MVG: Yes, it changed. When I first started teaching, we could plan things to do. When I first started teaching was when they first started realizing that children should have Phy Ed. Well, how can you have Phy Ed in a country school? The superintendent told us we should go out and play with the children, and then we'd be directing the games. We could play Dodge Ball or relays or whatever. That would take care of the Phy Ed. I can remember when one of the school board members went by and said, "I see you playing out there, and I can't tell the difference between the teacher and the kids."

SHW: You must have been eighteen or something?

MVG: I was twenty-one.

SHW: Twenty-one? Very young.

MVG: But I was always active. I always believed in being active anyway. Then when we went to Meeker County, there there were more children. I didn't have to be outside with them, but I knew what they were playing. But then the second year I was there I had my three graduates again. Out here the only reason I stayed one year was the second year after those three graduates left, there was only five left—first and second grade and a fifth grade. They could have put them in a car and taken them into Belle Plaine cheaper than what they could hire a teacher for. I couldn't see staying there teaching just five children when I have a two-year degree. I wanted to be at a school where they had more children.

SHW: Did you live on the farm with your parents while you were teaching down there?

MVG: No. I stayed down there because I didn't have a car. I stayed down with the family that lived next to the school. Then I walked to school every morning. I'd come home on weekends. My brother would come and pick me up.

SHW: Was it ever tough to board with families?

MVG: No. I [speaking too softly] . . .

SHW: It sounds like you are a pretty easy-going person.

MVG: I get along pretty well. I never had any trouble staying with anybody. You just accept the ways . . . Sure, every family is a little bit different. But you just accept their ways.

SHW: Where did you go after Meeker County?

MVG: After I left Meeker County I went into Waite Park. That's a suburb of St. Cloud. There I had a combination grade—third and fourth to start with. Then when I left I had second. I was there for eight years.

SHW: Was that very different from the country schools and the school in Meeker County? How was that different?

MVG: I had ten teachers with me. We had hot lunch then. The teachers could eat hot lunch. The teachers would go out together in the evening. We'd get together and go places. That was nice.

SHW: Were all the teachers single women? Were you allowed to be married and teach?

MVG: We were not allowed to get married. If we got married while we were teaching in Waite Park, our contract was gone.

SHW: That's horrible!

MVG: There was one gal there who . . . was she the librarian? . . . I think she was . . . and she thought that because she wasn't a teacher that she could get married. So she got married, and on Monday when she came back to school, there was a letter on her desk that her job was canceled.

SHW: Amazing.

MVG: The reason we couldn't get married was because we were so close to St. Cloud Teacher's College. They thought that if the teachers were allowed to get married, then they would get married and stay there, and they'd never be able to get rid of the teachers. So this gave them a little turnover.

SHW: When did that change? When were teachers allowed to start getting married?

MVG: I don't know when it was. It was always that way while I was in Waite Park. That was for eight years. When I came down to Robbinsdale, there it didn't make any difference.

SHW: But Robbinsdale had a more progressive attitude.

MVG: They were a growing district. Every year they would put up a new school. This went on for about twenty years. Then, when they got through building schools, then the enrollment started decreasing, and they started closing schools.

SHW: So you taught all the way through the baby boom.

MVG: Yes.

SHW: I think we basically covered a lot of good stuff, and I found out some neat stuff about teaching, too. Is there anything else you wanted to add?

MVG: There was one thing you asked, "What was the hardest part you had to do as a result of the war?" There was always a decision between want and need. Gas was rationed, so when we went to town, was it because we needed to go or was it because we wanted to go? You always had . . . the need came first. That was hard.

SHW: Did your dad ever do things like take the tires off the tractors because they couldn't get tires for the car anymore, or that sort of thing?

MVG: We didn't have tractors then.

SHW: Oh, you didn't have a tractor. Okay.

MVG: I don't think we did. I don't remember.

Mary Griffin Oral History
November 5, 1999

SHW: You wouldn't have been the only family using horses, that's for sure. My husband's family farm had horses for the plowing a long time.

MVG: We may have had a tractor. I don't know. But I know the first tractor we got my dad was so pleased, the tractor didn't get tired. [laughter] When you had horses, that was hard plowing, so you had to stop and rest the horses. My dad never drove the tractor. My brothers got the tractor. But he said it was so nice.

SHW: I never thought about how much time it would take to plow a field if you had to rest the horses all the time.

MVG: Of course, he was always good to the animals, too. My mother said, "The animals are just like part of the family. You've got to take care of them."

SHW: That makes sense. Thank you so much for doing this. I really appreciate it.

[end of interview]