

West Central School of Agriculture Oral Interview

HAZEL KRUEGER INTERVIEW

April 6, 2005

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[Transcriber's Note: Hazel (Winter) Krueger attended WCSA (fall 1940-spring 1941) as an Advanced Student enrolled in the business course. From 1941-1944, she was secretary to WCSA Superintendent Theodore Fenske. She married Leroy Krueger, raised a daughter, and continued her career as a legal secretary to Attorney Tom Stahler (later Judge Stahler) in Morris, from 1948 until her retirement in 1983.]

Transcriber's Key:

TS: Tara Schmidt, Interviewer
HK: Hazel Krueger
...: Incomplete sentence
[xxx]: Unable to transcribe; dialogue not clear on audio tape

Tape 1: Side 1

TS: First I wanted to tell you a little bit about myself. You know I'm from Brainerd, and I came here for college and I'm a senior now. I'm not going to graduate this year though. I'm going to go study abroad next year in Mexico. That will be an interesting experience. Work on my Spanish a little bit. What I'm going to do with the material that we have from today is that I'm going to write a paper about it. I did some preliminary research. I see you have your yearbooks out and I looked at some of those. So I have an outline here of the things I want to talk about. We don't have to follow it very much, just some things I would like to get your opinion on... How things were, what activities were, the experience you had. My first question is how was it that you got to attend West Central Ag School?

HK: I went to high school about 40 miles from here and I wanted to be a secretary and this was the closest business course. I was considered a special student. You see they had first, second, third, and fourth and this was special. So the only things I took was business.

TS: So you could apply and just take business courses?

HK: Yes, you could just take the one. So it was typing and shorthand, and bookkeeping and how to be a secretary.

TS: So you made the decision, you knew what you wanted to be?

HK: Oh yes, from the first time I saw a typewriter that was it.

TS: You knew it was for you. And where did you grow up?

HK: At Villard, Minnesota, on a farm.

TS: And you went to school, grade school and high school...

- HK: We had a town school, all twelve years at Villard. It was one of the first consolidated schools in Minnesota. It was a good school. So then I came here. It was six months, is what the terms were. Of course, we stayed in the girl's dormitory. That was quite an experience for us country girls. My mother saved my first letter home. I said, "There's running water, and warm and electricity..." Can you imagine, us green country kids? I can't find the letter, but I know that was in there.
- TS: So you decided to go...
- HK: It was my own decision.
- TS: Did you have to pay? How did that work out?
- HK: It was not very expensive. As I remember, I paid \$15 a month for food, board, and education. It was 1940. Money wasn't growing on trees in those days. I enjoyed every minute of it. You get to know a lot of other... It was the girls' dorm. We had a lot of fun too.
- TS: I'd like to hear all about that in a little while. So your parents were supportive of your decision?
- HK: Oh very, very.
- TS: How did you find that money?
- HK: I suppose dad had some grain to sell, or some cattle. When I was a senior in high school I worked at the superintendent's office, there was a government program – NYA, a New Deal program. So I got \$6 a month, and that was very good money. I suppose I saved some. And my sister was working. Of course I worked as a secretary until the day I retired. I just loved it.
- TS: I'm kind of interested in what a normal day was like from when you woke up. What did you do, what did you eat?
- HK: Of course we cleaned up and dressed. Then we went to the dining hall for breakfast. Do you know which building that was?
- TS: I don't know if it's the same anymore...
- HK: Well you know there's a dormitory here, and a building here... It was that building.
- TS: Behmler?
- HK: Behmler I think. Then we'd go right to our classes, and then we'd go back for one meal. And the food was adequate and good.
- TS: What sort of things did you eat for breakfast? Was it a hot meal?
- HK: It was a hearty breakfast -- probably eggs, bacon, toast, and cereal. The milk we had was raw milk from the dairy herd at the campus.
- TS: No kidding.
- HK: They had dairy cows, pigs, sheep and chickens right there on the campus. The milk came to the dining hall. I won't touch raw milk now.
- TS: I'm not sure it's the same now.
- HK: Of course we had our afternoon classes and time to do our homework.

- TS: You were taking business classes – after you ate breakfast, you’d go right to classes. What kind of classes did you study? Because classes were broken up into two classes – morning and afternoon?
- HK: No, I think we stayed in the same building all day long, one class right after another.
- TS: Did you take... Was there a distinction between lecturing, labs... Did you just have one class just an hour...
- HK: They were about an hour. The teacher was there the whole hour, lecturing and teaching. The shorthand was quite a challenge to most of us. Of course, they dropped that a long time ago. Once you learn it, you never forget it.
- TS: My mother knew that. I don’t know how to read that.
- HK: Your mother is older then.
- TS: Yes, she took it in a business school she went to. But nobody reads it anymore. But she writes notes.
- HK: I write my own notes in shorthand.
- TS: So shorthand was pretty tough.
- HK: I found it pretty easy. I’d lie awake at night writing shorthand in my mind.
- TS: Were there any classes you didn’t like?
- HK: I didn’t like bookkeeping. I don’t like working with numbers. My mind, it just wouldn’t... So I never did bookkeeping. At the gym in the evenings sometimes there were games and activities, some entertainment, once in a while a dance... Football games, basketball...
- TS: Were there ever any classes where there were girls and boys together, or was it always separated? Some boys could have taken business?
- HK: Most of the business classes were girls, and the bookkeeping was probably some boys.
- TS: It was mostly segregated?
- HK: Yes. That first winter in November, the Armistice Day blizzard, we were in the dormitory and the only way we could get to the dining hall -- the men that worked with the animals came – we held hands, a whole string of us in the...
- TS: I read that in the yearbook.
- HK: Did you read that? Oh, it was scary.
- TS: I can’t even imagine. It said you had to hang onto hands or you’d get lost.
- HK: We’d get lost. It was two days. We had two meals a day so it was a little easier. You knew that they had the big workhorses out there too. I’m not sure, Percheron... They did some of the farm work out there with those big horses. It was a farm school.
- TS: That’s very interesting to me to know about that stuff. Let’s see...

- HK: We had a lot of free time, too, to walk uptown.
- TS: Did you get to participate in athletics, like intramurals, basketball?
- HK: The boys... There were no girl athletic things. But the boys went around.
- TS: Did you watch them? Did you like going to the games? Was it more of a social event?
- HK: I didn't understand football, but we'd watch it. But basketball was fun. Now did you know about the Home Management Cottage?
- TS: I'd read a lot about it.
- HK: It's gone now. That wasn't for special children, but [xxx]. Every year they had an adopted baby.
- TS: Yes, I read about it. I don't know a lot about it. I was hoping you'd know more. I was interested in hearing.
- HK: You've been reading a lot haven't you?
- TS: I've been doing quite a bit of research. I didn't want to not know what questions to ask you.
- HK: Did you want to know how we got home on weekends?
- TS: Sure.
- HK: My roommate and I were from the same town, Villard. There was the Toonerville Trolley. We'd go downtown and get in the depot, and it dropped us off at Villard.
- TS: A trolley.
- HK: Yes. We'd go home on Saturday morning. It was just an old-fashioned... A few cars and an old smoky engine. Coming home our parents would bring us on Sunday night.
- TS: Did you go home often?
- HK: We could go any weekend we wanted.
- TS: Did you take advantage of that?
- HK: We went home a lot. I suppose it was 25 cents on the train.
- TS: Did you want to tell me about the Home Management Cottage?
- HK: Well I was just wondering if you knew about it. Every year they had a different baby. I don't know if that was good for the babies. But the girls learned how to take care of children...
- TS: Definitely. Was it just the seniors?
- HK: I'm not sure how many years. [xxx] knows an awful lot about that. Do you need an extra name?
- TS: I can jot it down.
- HK: It's Bernice Erdahl. That's Erdahl. She was probably a freshman when I was a Special. She did all four years there.

- TS: She was more in the Home Economics?
- HK: More Home Ec. Same as high school...
- TS: I didn't know about the distinction. In the yearbook it said Advanced Class under your name. I kind of figured you already graduated high school.
- HK: Yes. You were Specials all through high school.
- TS: And the other people who went there for high school. So it was a high school plus...
- HK: It was a high school and one extra year.
- TS: What did you do with your free time, after you got done with your classes? Did you go downtown?
- HK: Sometimes we did. We always had a little clique. It's human nature. Some of us would walk around uptown, or just get together and talk. Same way at the dining hall. We always ran to the same table and the same people. Now I complain... We go to the senior center and they all have the same place and nobody better take it. Until I realized we were doing the same thing – This is our table. The food was brought to our table in bowls. We had really good food.
- TS: So it was served family style?
- HK: Yes, family style.
- TS: I like that.
- HK: Everybody from each table went up to get the food.
- TS: Did you have plays, drama, go listen to speakers or anything?
- HK: I don't remember. I have to show you something. [paging through yearbook] This was a... The auditorium was... This was the building that was there. It had an auditorium, the offices, but that was torn down.
- TS: I love that you marked all those things.
- HK: He was the superintendent. Fenske.
- TS: His name was on a lot of things.
- HK: When I finished my business class, they hired me to be his secretary. Eighteen years old! I got a good beginning, because – I don't know – I must have been well prepared. I worked there for two years, and he came out of the office one day and said, "I finally found a misspelled word" that I had typed. That was...
- TS: So you worked for Mr. Fenske. How did you get that job?
- HK: They came to me and asked me if I would work, because my business teachers had recommended me. So I worked three or four years there and left, and I got married.
- TS: You went to a different job as a secretary and worked at that until you retired?
- HK: Yes, I worked from the time when I was eighteen until 62. I want to show you a picture. You don't need to record this.

- TS: I think the battery is going down.
- HK: After I worked for the attorneys for fifteen years we moved out of our office. These are the shorthand books I went through. Then we had a new office and I went through another 100.
- TS: I'll look at that in a second.
- HK: This was our new office. Probably an open house.
- TS: That's interesting. You said these are all the shorthand books?
- HK: All my shorthand books. I think in about 15 years.
- TS: You wrote in these?
- HK: Every single one.
- TS: What kind of things were you taking down?
- HK: A lot of letters, legal documents, whatever. It was for several attorneys. And I've worn out a lot of typewriters. Do you have to be somewhere else?
- TS: No I don't. I have reserved the whole afternoon, but we won't take that long. One of the things I was thinking about while I was researching is what you learned in school and how you used that knowledge later on in life. And I can see from....
- HK: I'm sure I got as much education as had I gone to the cities to a big business school. This was the one we could afford. Did you know that the boy students that were in the National Guard were called into service during the year?
- TS: 1942? [1941]
- HK: Battery B. Most of them were the boys from the Special Class. It was before the war started but they were called. Here is the Special Class. Most of the boys were gone.
- TS: So was that the first year or...
- HK: That was the year I was in school. It was my January... See we started school in October and by January they were gone. Battery B they were called. It was just about all the boys. [xxx]
- TS: Wonder why this thing keeps shutting off [tape recorder]. It's kind of silly. So when you stayed on weekends, did you do anything special?
- HK: Lots of times there was entertainment of some kind. Music, dances... See there was an auditorium, stage... [paging through book] Every noon hour, the students had to go to the auditorium and sit in those seats. I had to take a run down the aisle to make sure nobody skipped. I have a picture here someplace. That was when I was working there.
- TS: So when you were working there, you had other duties?
- HK: During the summer I took care of the library. Let's see... No, we didn't have much... The janitors and those people, they would always come to the office to see if there were any worksheets for them. Like if a teacher said something was broken, they'd leave a little slip for us and we'd pass them on. They were still burning coal, and Mr. Felt would come to the office every

- day and give us the numbers of the train car. We'd have to keep track of that. It was a different world.
- TS: I've read about some things, like Women's Week. Did you get to go at all?
- HK: That was in the summertime after I was working. We had to register the people and do a lot of stuff.
- TS: Did you get to attend?
- HK: No. Just had to get the stuff ready. Every summer the 4-H kids... They were judging animals. And we had to make each ticket for those animals. When we had to make copies we used mimeograph. Do you know what that is?
- TS: I don't know.
- HK: It was a sort of film, and you'd type on it. Then you'd put that in the mimeograph and you'd turn the crank. [paging through book] Now I can't find that picture. It doesn't matter. It [ag school] was a great place. I guess there have been many thousands of people that went there. You've probably seen this. Have you seen this older book?
- TS: 1963? No I haven't.
- HK: This was the final one before it became a university. Well, I can't remember how many, but it's been thousands.
- TS: That's all the students? Oh my goodness.
- HK: This was in the auditorium. It was Christmas.
- TS: Did you have to do a lot of studying outside of the classroom?
- HK: Not a lot. We had a lot of spare time. When I was working, we had to write the report cards in pen and ink. The teachers brought a list of names and grades and we had to put them onto a form. Everything was by hand. It was fun. I wish I could... Here it is. This is the auditorium. When they came in there they each had their own place. When I was working I had to go down the aisle to see who was missing.
- TS: Was this at lunchtime?
- HK: It wasn't every day. The superintendent would set it and they would have to come. I suppose he'd give them a talking. But this looks like mostly boys though. I told you we had chickens. There was this man, he's dead now... They called him Chicken Art. He was a bachelor, an older man. He lived in the chicken house with the chickens. That was his job to take care of them. He would bring candy bars to us girls in the office. We thought maybe he'd been in the chicken house too long. He was a good guy, but it was just one of those things.
- TS: So you lived in the Girls' Dormitory. How were your rooms? Did you have roommates?
- HK: We had two girls in a room.
- TS: Can you describe a little bit what the room looked like? Do you remember?
- HK: We had one desk. You could sit, one on each side. You had drawers. We each had a single bed. That's about all.

- TS: And then your clothes.
- HK: Our clothes. We must have washed our clothes somewhere but I can't remember.
- TS: Was there a laundry room?
- HK: There must have been a washer downstairs. You know the top story burned off on the dormitory.
- TS: Yep, I knew that. Did you have a radio?
- HK: Radio? Are you kidding?
- TS: I was just wondering. All the things you take for granted.
- HK: We just entertained ourselves. Then our... What do you call the woman that is in charge of the building?
- TS: We call them residence advisors.
- HK: She taught math I think. Her name was Nanna Jelstrup. She was such a dignified lady. She'd give us a talk about our manners.
- TS: She lived...
- HK: She had a special apartment downstairs in the building. And we had a curfew at night.
- TS: How did that go?
- HK: I think it was ten.
- TS: You were always in...
- HK: We were expected to be there at ten. She was just a lovely person for that. Her elderly mother lived with her. There was a big...

End of Side 1 [no dialogue on Side 2]

Tape 2, Side 1

- TS: So he lived all the way over here.
- HK: This was on the campus but it was moved.
- TS: Okay, I get it.
- HK: The one that was there next... One of the professors had it moved. A big brick house, and they actually moved it.
- TS: I wonder where it is.
- HK: The professor, I can't think of his name. When my husband gets home, he'll remember. [xxx] is there one on the campus now? No there isn't, they all live off campus now. Up until the university came they all lived on campus.
- TS: That's interesting. I've thought of one question. What did you do when you were at home on the weekends.

- HK: It was Saturday night. We went to a dance.
- TS: Did that have any bearing on whether or not you went home?
- HK: It probably did. A lot of times we played cards with some other neighbors.
- TS: Did you go to church on Sundays? Was there church?
- HK: A few times we did. You walked everywhere. My friend and I would go to the Methodist Church and that was way over here. So we didn't go too often. We should have gone to a closer church. It wouldn't have mattered.
- TS: Did they have church on campus?
- HK: No I don't think so. I don't remember anyway.
- TS: That's about all I have.
- HK: Are you living on a dormitory at the University?
- TS: I actually don't. I lived my first year in a dormitory and then I moved off campus because it was cheaper to live off than on. They make you have a meal plan, and it doesn't seem to be as nice as the one you had. You have to eat so many meals there otherwise your money is wasted. And so I never ate that many and it just seems like as...
- HK: More meals than you really wanted.
- TS: You couldn't reduce it at all so I moved off campus.
- HK: Are you close?
- TS: It's only about 8/10th of a mile, and I walk. I have a car but I like to walk except when its 20 below.
- HK: When you graduate, what are you going to do?
- TS: I'm supposed to graduate in the spring but I'm going to go to Mexico...
- HK: Oh yes. My granddaughter at St. Olaf, Spanish is one of her big things.
- TS: Yes, it is a big interest for me and I want to do it while I can, go to another country, and then maybe go to another school after that.
- HK: I saw in the paper today where they are going to try to make people have passports to go to Mexico or Canada.
- TS: Really.
- HK: I think that's nuts. By 2008.
- TS: It's changing. So you made a lot of good friends.
- HK: Yes, I'm still in touch with many of them. It was a lot of fun.
- TS: It's good to hear. And you used all your knowledge?

- HK: Oh yes. I suppose it's similar to what the tech schools are now. They teach you... They learn something to do to get a job... The skills...
- TS: So you got married after your worked at the school and you continued working your whole life, and your husband...
- HK: He was in service for a while after we were married. He worked out at the ag school. '57 he started, it was still the ag school. He stayed out there until he retired. He was a plumber the whole time.
- TS: And so you lived in Morris after...
- HK: We've been in this house fifty years. When he first came home from the service... All the soldiers came home all at once and tried to find a place to live. We rented an upstairs, cold-water apartment. You were lucky to have a roof over your head. Talk about baby boomers. Our soldiers came home, that was... Then we found another apartment in somebody's house and that was more comfortable. And then we built this house.
- TS: You built this house?
- HK: Yep.
- TS: So the landscape has changed for you?
- HK: My husband did all the plumbing and heating because that was his business. We did our own painting. Do you have any idea how much this cost us in 1954? \$9,000. And that was a lot of money. And now our real estate taxes list it at \$60,000. It went up in fifty years. That's how times have changed. We just had one child, one girl. You have brothers and sisters?
- TS: I have one sister and she is just 15 months younger than me. We're really close. And that's all I have. One sister.
- HK: Just the two of you.
- TS: Yep, the two girls.
- HK: Did you live on a farm?
- TS: I didn't, but I had a close friend who grew up in Wheaton, so she taught me a lot about farming. They had a tree farm so I got to experience a lot with tractors and things I never...
- HK: Especially during the Depression on the farm you had food, you had a big garden, you had chicken, eggs, and milk. The people in town were the ones who suffered. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had food.
- TS: What year were you born?
- HK: '22. I'm 83 next month.
- TS: Quite an accomplishment.
- HK: It's been a long haul. I'm one of four siblings. Every one of us is over 80. I'm the youngest.
- TS: Four still living...

HK: And healthy, and I think it was that farm. We had wholesome food. And of course we did physical work, so you didn't have a chance to sit around and get fat.

TS: Yeah, you had to do things – chores.

HK: I think it had something to do with our health.

TS: And you had good genes.

HK: [chuckle] Jeans? Girls wore dresses. Girls didn't wear jeans until many years later. Once in awhile they would wear boys' overalls if they were working outside.

TS: I stand corrected. Four siblings, all over 80 years old.

HK: I'm the youngest. The oldest one was 4½ and then there were three more kids.

TS: That was very close.

HK: My mother was... Nutrition was very important to her. "What kind of vegetable should we have tonight?" Every day... She was very conscientious about our food.

TS: And that probably made you very conscientious too.

HK: That's my husband. I will ask him the name of that professor that moved that house. They moved away but he'll remember. When you get older you don't remember these things.

TS: Oh, that's no big deal.

HK: The kitty...

TS: What's your kitty's name?

HK: She's just kitty. At the vet she is Snooky, officially.

End of tape