

Interview Date: January 11, 2007  
Interviewer: Andi Holland  
Subject: **Irene Squires**  
Length of Video: 60 minutes  
Written Summary: Andi Holland

:33 I was born one mile north and two miles east of Breckenridge on March 8, 1924 at home. My mother's father, John Hartman made the run. He settled four miles north and one mile east of Breckenridge and live there all his life. He had been farming around Wichita. He came into the Strip from the south side. I'd like to ask him why. He wanted the opportunity of having land of his own. He was in his mid-20s. The following year he went back to Wichita and married my grandmother and brought her down. It was five years and three children later before they got to go back and visit her family. They lived until their mid-90s and both passed away in 1959. Their first home was a dugout. Grandma told about putting straw in gunnysacks and stretching it tight and that was their floor covering. Two or three years later they built a frame house and lived in it until 1922 when it was destroyed by a tornado. About the only piece of furniture that remains is a piano stool, which I have over there. They ate lots of cornmeal mush in the early years. My grandmother's name was Charlotte Phillips Hartman. They raised four children; two girls and two boys. The oldest girl married Howard Marshall and then my mother married Pat Bird. Mrs. Bird, my father's mother was divorced and she came and bought the rights to her farm in the Strip. She didn't make the run, but she proved the land up so she had all the hardships of having been here in the beginning. She and my dad's father got back together and two more children were born. Both my mother's homestead and my father's homestead are still in the family. The Hartman place went to the youngest son and is now owned by my aunt, his widow. The Bird place is owned by a great granddaughter.

6:48 My mother, Georgia, was the second Hartman child and she was born in 1900. They were wheat farmers but also had cattle and pigs. There were there for three years before they had a crop. It was lean times. My dad, Pat Bird, was born on the farm. He went to school at District 45. The country schools were placed every four miles. Back then there were plenty of schools and plenty of children to fill them. On every farm there was a family and lots of children. The Bird's lived a mile east and a mile north of Breckenridge. My mother went to District 30, Union School. My mother went to Hunter High School and was in the first class to graduate from Hunter High in 1919. They rode in horse and buggy to school. I think there were nine in her class. It was a very close class and they stayed close all their lives. They had chores before school like pumping water for the cattle and the same thing in the evenings. They lived near Ellis. Ellis had a train and an elevator. There was a circus in Enid and her dad wanted them to go so they walked to Ellis, got on the train and rode to Enid to see the circus then rode the train back to Ellis and walked home about midnight. They were thrilled they got to go to the circus.

14:54 Dad went to school through the eighth grade. My parents met through barn dances. Everyone would join in and play whatever they could. Whenever a new barn

was built there was always a party. There was also a couple in the community, Mr. and Mrs. Bacon and they were always willing to clear out their living room and let the kids dance. Mom and dad got married in 1921 and lived on a place a mile north of Breckenridge. It was land that Grandma Bird had bought. They built a house on it and lived there until 1947. My dad had had pneumonia as a small child that had hurt his lungs. He was often ill. Dr. Harry Hudson told him if he wanted to live to go where it was high and dry so in 1947 they moved to Albuquerque and he lived for 30 more years. It was a hard move, but we were very blessed to have him. I was the only one they left behind. I was married and it was just after WWII. My husband came back from the service and my dad wanted him to stay on the farm. My husband didn't know anything about farming but we did and we stayed on the farm 50 years.

18:10 Farming was all my father had ever done. My two younger sisters moved to Albuquerque with my parents. The Depression has affected us all our lives. We are so much more frugal because of that. We get along on very little. I don't remember us being deprived. We were loved, we were never hungry. We didn't have much but we were all right. Most everybody was in the same situation. We had big gardens and canned a lot. Dad worked on the road for a few years to pay some tax.

21:25 We didn't have electricity until 1948. We had a Delco, a generator with batteries to charge so we had lights and a radio. No plumbing, but my dad was very innovative and he dug an underground tank by the windmill. The windmill turning would build up pressure in the tank and provided water to the house. But we did have an outhouse. Washday, the biggest blessing was a washer and dryer. We heated the water on an open hearth and washed the clothes in the Maytag that had a gas motor. We had as good as the times.

24:18 The Dust Bowl was a horrible time. I remember coming home from school and you couldn't see the print on the linoleum floor the dust was so fine it just covered everything. Many times you couldn't see more than an eighth of a mile. Really bad times for everyone, particularly farmers. You could see clouds, black clouds coming in. I don't remember the war rationing except maybe sugar and gasoline somewhat.

26:22 When my parent's left for Albuquerque I felt left behind. They had to leave everything they knew. It made it a lot easier on my dad with me and my husband being here and my dad could still be involved on the farm somewhat. I went to school at the country school then high school at Garber. They started closing the country schools. We walked two miles to school. Dad took us in the Model A some. When we went to Garber we rode the bus. The bus didn't have windows, just canvass awnings. The roads were bad and sometimes we'd have to get out of the bus and the girls would walk and the boys would have to push the bus over the rough spots.

29:20 I graduated from Garber in 1941 and went to Stillwater that fall. I got to go one year before dad got so sick that I had to come home and go to work at Gold Spot Dairy. The winter my parents went out to look for a place to live I went and stayed with my sisters and kept them in school.

30:10 Bill and I met on a blind date. His buddy was going with my girlfriend. He was from Sanford, Florida. He was in one of the first squadrons that came to Vance. He was here on December 7, 1941. I was in the library at Stillwater when the news came about Pearl Harbor. We knew how serious it was. A lot of boys joined. The campus was clear of boys in no time. I met Bill the Christmas of 1942. We went to see *White Christmas* at the Aztec Theater. Bill got orders in 1944 on Wednesday. We got married on Saturday and he left on Monday. I went with him for the first six weeks. We went to Sanford, Florida first to meet his folks then went to Greensboro, North Carolina and then to New Orleans. He told me when he didn't come home one evening from training that's when I needed to go back home. They couldn't tell us anything. He left on D-Day.

35:11 He was on patrol, not active duty. We were fortunate. The folks stayed here until Bill came back at Christmas 1946. They left the spring of 1947. I was the one that resisted us staying and farming. I wanted to go to Albuquerque. But I could see that we needed to stay. We farmed and did all the jobs everyone else did on the farm. I drove the wheat trucks to and from the elevator. It is such a good life but today it is too hard to farm. The dearest lesson is to keep the family together. Have a good church family. Have a strong faith and everything else will work pretty good. We attended a small Methodist Church in Breckenridge. Grandmother Bird was Catholic, but she didn't mind if we went to the Methodist Church, she just wanted us in church. In 1959 that little church closed. Our minister, Bob Gray became one of the pastors at First Methodist in Enid so we all just followed him.

40:26 Bill and I had a girl and two boys. Our youngest, David is out on the farm. I'm happy he's on the farm but I wish the conditions were better where he could just farm. He also has a job in town to support them. Bill retired in 1985. We moved to town in 1995. David wanted to farm and it was time for them to be on the farm so we moved to town. In Enid the time of big change was before the mall came. Everyone would go to the square and go to the movies. We loved going to town on Saturday nights and going to Weibel's Ice Cream and the Boston Fruit Store. You had to drive around and wait for a parking place. It was a fun time. We also went to the grocery store. There was a little grocery call Hopkins on Randolph. My grandmother shopped there. There were beans in an open barrel. It was very small.

46:11 The security of family and having the generations all there on both sides growing up. The friendships of neighbors out in the country are things I remember and cherish. We had a home extension group and an extension officer out of Stillwater. They would provide bulletins and materials to help the farmers and give lessons on canning and gardening and sewing. It was a wonderful asset.

49:10 We should never forget those that made the run and that proved up those claims. The hardships and all the things they went through. Our generations are the ones that reaped the benefit from their hard work. The hard work, the doing without, they did anything to keep that farm going. The interview ends with pictures of family.

End of Interview