

**Interview Transcript of Lee Collins about  
the Depression and WWII**

By Julie Collins

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English III  
Mrs. Hewes  
2<sup>nd</sup> Hour  
1-29-05

## Interview Transcript of Lee Collins about the Depression and WWII

**Julie: How old were you during the Depression?**

Lee: I was born in 1926 and the Depression started in 1929 so I was 3 ½ years old.

**Julie: How old were you during WWII?**

Lee: It started in 1941 so that would make me 15 or 16 years old.

**Julie: Where did you live? In the country or in town?**

Lee: I went to grade school in Lamont, OK and I went to high school in Medford, OK. I lived in the country all of the time.

**Julie: What was school like? Was it just a one-room school?**

Lee: We had basketball and football, during high school, we were rationed with gas so we didn't have a lot of outside activities. Other towns didn't come to play ball, everything was pretty local. In grade school we didn't have money to do a lot of activities so we made our own fun. The grade school was one teacher in one school. In high school we had regular school. In grade school the teacher would have one class and she would make them get up and recite. When I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, I took the home making test and scored better than the girls did.

**Julie: What did you do for fun in your spare time?**

Lee: We rode horses and bikes. We also played ball. Mainly we just had neighborhood activities. During the summer, we would have an ice cream social every two weeks. In the winter we would have PTA meetings, programs, and the adults would go to their meetings. We would ride around the section with our horses or bikes with other kids. We hunted a lot and mainly just made our own fun.

**Julie: Were there a lot of kids in your neighborhood?**

Lee: In Newkirk, there were about 10 or 15 around the neighborhood. In Lamont there weren't very many, I was just starting school so I was one of the younger ones.

**Julie: Did you see dust storms? What were they like?**

Lee: In Newkirk, and Lamont, the dirt would just filter in and block the sun out. And it went dark, but out in western Kansas was <sup>where</sup> they really had the dust storms.

**Julie: Did they put sheets over the windows?**

Lee: We didn't but they had to in western Kansas.

**Julie: What were the dust storms like?**

Lee: Where I lived, it was real still, the dirt would just settle in. In western Kansas there was a lot of wind with it.

**Julie: Do you remember the jackrabbit drives in southwest Kansas?**

Lee: We came out to western Kansas and went on two or three. My grandparents and a couple of uncles lived out in Garden City.

**Julie: How often were these drives?**

Lee: I don't know how often they had them, we just happened to be out here when they did. There were a lot more rabbits in western Kansas than where I lived in OK.

**Julie: How did you feel about WWII?**

Lee: It was just one of those things we never experienced so we just didn't know.

**Julie: In what ways did the war change your activities or habits?**

Lee: On the farm we didn't really change things a lot. We were restricted on tires and gasoline and some of the things we ate. We still went on with our work and activities. We had to conserve some, but we basically had enough to get our work done.

**Julie: Were other people you knew treated differently because of their race or ethnicity during the war?**

Lee: We didn't have any, it was just people like us in our neighborhood. They had a prisoner of war camp at Tonkawa for the Germans and for Japanese there was one at Granada, CO. We just knew were they were at, we didn't have any effect with them.

**Julie: What were some changes in your life after the war started?**

Lee: We had to stay home more, and take care of our work and stuff. We just couldn't drive. We didn't have electricity until 1943, so we did our studying by the lamp light.

**Julie: What were some economic effects of the Depression or the war?**

Lee: During the Depression, we just didn't have money. If you had a good crop, it wasn't worth anything. I can't remember what wheat was worth because I wasn't old enough. My dad would take the wheat to town, and get it milled, and make hog feed. He would also make cereal for the family. The folks always had livestock and animals. The neighbors would help each other. They wouldn't exchange money, but just help each other back and forth. During the war, things were more in demand, tractors were hard to get. They just made everything for the war. My grandpa had a lot of scrap metal, and we would haul it to town because it would help for the war. Cars were hard to get. You could get used ones, but new ones were hard to come by.

**Julie: Did you know anyone who was wounded or killed in the war?**

Lee: I had a teacher that was killed, and a couple of friends.

**Julie: Was the draft then?**

Lee: Yeah, they were drafting from 18 or 19 and on up. I took my physical, but I didn't pass so I never had to go.

**Julie: What was your most memorable experience about the war or the Depression?**

Lee: We just didn't have money, and rationing. Being on the farm, we just went on with our farming and activities, so it didn't hurt us <sup>too</sup> much.

**Julie: Did this affect Christmas and birthday gifts?**

Lee: During the Depression, we would get a toy and some clothes. My mother sewed a lot so she made a lot of things for us, but yes it did affect us.

**Julie: Where were you and what were you doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?**

Lee: I was in school when Franklin Roosevelt declared war, and they called us all in for an assembly. They played his speech back on the radio when he declared war.

**Julie: What did you and others think when you heard this news?**

Lee: We were all stunned, we didn't know what to expect. We were surprised that it happened.

**Julie: Did you know anything about internment camps?**

Lee: I just knew where they were at, I didn't know anything about them. We'd see them outside exercising, I would be scared they would escape sometimes.

**Julie: Did you experience shortages or rationing of food or other goods?**

Lee: Sugar, and coffee, gas, tires. As far as food, we raised most of our food. We were affected by the sugar and the sugar. We could grow as much garden as we wanted. We canned our own vegetables, and meat. I got my seeds from Lancaster, Pennsylvania and they were generally cheap.

**Julie: Did you do any extra jobs to get money?**

Lee: In the summer, I would run errands, and ride my bike to town and sell my produce to the grocery store. We could eat a meal for 25 cents, all you could eat.

**Julie: Did you know about any black market activity?**

Lee: Tractors and cars were sold on the black market, but we never got involved in it because grandpa and my uncles didn't want to be punished. They bought a new tractor in 1941 and could have gotten three times what they paid for it.

*Lee*

# Release Form

To be completed by the person interviewed:

I, (print name here) Lee Collins, give permission for the video/audio tape of my interview to be donated to the Cimarron City Library, to be kept on file, and used for purposes of research at a later date.

I agree that persons doing research may use my name and my statements without further approval on my part.

By giving my permission for this, I also understand that I am not giving up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold.

Accepted and agreed:

Signature: Lee Collins Date: 4-10-05  
month/day/year  
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City: CIMARRON State: KS Zip: 67835