

Interview with Susie Koehn about The Great Depression on January 23, 2005
By Mindy Woods

1. Mindy: What is your full name?

Susie Koehn: Susie Beak Koehn

2. M: Where were you born and raised?

SK: I was born in McPherson Co. and we moved to Gray County when I was 3 years old. That was in 1915.

3. M: What jobs did you do during your working years?

SK: I lived on a farm, so I had many chores around the house. We would bring home cows and I would milk them. I would also take care of the chickens. We helped in anyway that we could.

4. M: How old are you today?

SK: I am 92 years old. I will be turning 93 on February 6.

5. M: Where do you live today?

SK: I live in the nursing home in Montezuma. I own a little apartment here in Montezuma.

6. M: During the time of the depression, how old were you?

SK: At the time of the depression, I was about 17-18 years old.

7. M: During the time of the depression, were you in a relationship or married?

SK: I was not in a serious relationship. "You know how children are in school. We held hands, but nothing serious," Susie recalls.

8. M: During the time of the depression, where were you living? (In town or in the country?)

SK: We lived in the country on our farm.

9. M: What financial hardships did you notice during the depression?

SK: There were crop failures. That made living hard in the 1930s. Wheat was the main crop and no one could raise it. President Roosevelt and Governor Landon came to the counties and investigated. They went back to Washington D.C. and told the Government that they needed help. They were able to make loan payments to the SA office. The Government gave them money. Without this help, no one could have survived.

10. M: Do you remember the dust storms? If so, describe.

SK: Dust would come in through the cracks. We would clean rooms and right away they would need cleaning again. "We could not stop the dirt from coming

in," she says. "It was not fit for man and beast sometimes."

11. M: What new responsibilities did you have during the depression?

SK: I would help out in the house. I would cook. My mother could not buy food. We lived on a budget. "We had to make due what we could," Susie recalls.

12. M: What fun social activities were you involved in during the depression?

SK: We went to church services, but even the church needed cleaning. There were not many activities during this time.

13. M: What affect did the depression have on you? Physically and mentally?

SK: My mom died toward the end of the depression. She died in 1943. In 1946, REA brought electricity to the country. Others in town already had it, but this was new for people living in the country.

14. M: What is the most memorable experience from the time of the depression?

SK: In April, they had a bad dust storm. We had an Oklahoma boy visiting, and he was hoping he would be able to see a dust storm. "My God it is true," the boy told Susie when the storm hit.

15. M: Do you remember about the jackrabbit drives? If so, describe.

SK: Groups of people would get together and gather jackrabbits. They would club them to death. "It sounds rough, but they could not use guns," she says.

16. M: Do you remember the grasshopper plague? If so, describe.

SK: Not really. I remember that there were years when we had more grasshoppers than other years.

17. M: What news broadcasts did you have during this time to warn you about upcoming weather? (Radio, TV, etc.)

SK: My brother gave us a barometer. The hogs and cows knew when the weather was going to change.

18.M: Have you watched movies or seen pictures of the depression.

SK: I have seen pictures at the Stauth Museum here in Montezuma. I have not watched any movies.

19. M: What kinds of food or meals did you eat?

SK: My dad would raise 2 hogs in the winter. We would have pork and we would cut that into little pieces. We would brown it, add onions and salt and pepper for seasoning. We would make noodles and mix it all together. It was like a noodle soup. Mother would often go to the store and buy beef. That was when you could buy two pounds of hamburger for \$0.25! We often ate fried potatoes and we would bake our own bread. "If mother bought bakery bread, it was a treat to

us," Susie recalls happily.

20. M: How did life change for the better after the depression?

SK: After about 8-10 years we had a big snowstorm. That changed everything. "These were trying days," she says.

21. M: Is there anything else about the depression that you can tell me?

SK: It was very hard on the animals and the livestock. Susie's dad bought "brand" for the livestock at \$0.30 per sack. This was barely enough to help all the livestock live. We would have to use the windmill for our water. "We were very happy when the good days came. We enjoyed seeing clothes on the lines when out driving around," Susie concludes happily.

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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: Susie B Koehn Date: 05-15-05
month/day/year

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