

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewees: **Della Krause Behrens**
Mabel Krause Cole

Interview Date: 12/01/1996

Interviewer: Self-Directed

Transcriber: Marsha Smith

Location: Unknown

36 Pages



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Transcript

COLE: We're finally going to get our memories on tape, I hope. Della and I are here, right after Thanksgiving. You want to get started?

BEHRENS: Ooooh, I'll let you get started.

COLE: (giggles)

BEHRENS: Maybe I can unwind.

COLE: Well, I was trying to think back as far as could, and I remember as pre-teeners, we —we played "store" in the back yard—in the front yard, I guess it was, really, wasn't it?

BEHRENS: (chuckling)

COLE: No, it was the back yard, back there. But we didn't consider the front yard. Anyway, we had apple crates for our store and—the other one—one would be the store keeper and the other one would come buy our mud cakes or whatever we had for sale. And then we'd change around. The other one would play. We made our mud pies and decorated with chinaberries.

BEHRENS: Home-made! (chuckling)

COLE: Home-made. Used jar lids for the pie plate and then we put them on top of the chicken house to bake in the sun.

BEHRENS: Well, the temperature was right (still laughing).

COLE: We couldn't set it, could we?!

BEHRENS: Uh uh. (little sigh) Well, I—I don't—I DO remember making the mud pies, and um, Roy told me one time that when he was about thirteen, he and his dad drove up in a wagon. They wanted to talk to—I don't know if our dad was still living then or not. They wanted to talk him about—to see if he could half-hand, because people always did that in those days. AND, nobody was home, but you and me. That's kind of strange though, isn't it?

COLE: They may have been out in the fields.

BEHRENS: Yeah. Maybe so. And so we were climbing on the fence and, (chuckles), as his dad something to him about, 'Look at those pretty little girls, climbing on the fence'. And Roy said, 'And If he had told me I was gonna MARRY one of those little girls one day, I would have told him he was CRAZY!'.

(both laughing)

COLE: Cotton-headed girls.

BEHRENS: Yeah. (chuckling) I can remember when we were small, and we were making hay. And we always had the job of punching the wires through for the bales.

COLE: Yeah, uh huh.

BEHRENS: And it was SO hot, and this hay would come falling down on our heads and down our necks—

COLE: Dusty.

BEHRENS: Yep, dusty and everything else. And, so at the end of the day, you were looking for your shoes to put 'em on, to go home. You couldn't find 'em. They had been baled in the hay!

COLE: (laughs)

BEHRENS: And they were—Daddy sold a lot of the hay, so—'cause they never—they looked for the shoes as they fed the hay, but they never showed up, so he thinks he sold them. To ??

COLE: I don't really remember that. That's vague in my mind, kind of. But I can't remember that they were baled into the hay.

BEHRENS: (laughing in the background)

COLE: Well, let's see. Um, do you remember the time that—you know, our mailbox was about a quarter of a mile, at least.

BEHRENS: Uh huh.

COLE: From our house. And we'd watch for the mailman—

BEHRENS: Yes (laughing)

COLE: --sometimes in the buggy. Billa

BEHRENS: It was raining.

COLE: Billa. There's Billa!

BEHRENS: Billa.

COLE: He name was Bill but we called, 'Here comes Billa'.

BEHRENS: I don't remember him calling Billa.

COLE: And this day, Garrett went to the mailbox. And he came home, and he had papers —something that he got was in the mailbox. And it was—looked like chocolate. And he said that he ate it all. And we looked at it, and it turned out to be a sample of Ex-Lax.

BEHRENS: (laughing)

COLE: And he ate the WHOLE thing!

BEHRENS: Oh boy.

COLE: I don't remember the results, but maybe he does.

BEHRENS: I can know where he was for the next—quite—quite a while (laughing). Golly.

Well, I remember once—this was a lot later when Ernie—we had Ernie. But later, he was called Pat for reason. But anyway—

COLE: Was that the same one?

BEHRENS: YES! He came back and worked for Barney and Ben. And he was called Pat. And I said, "That's ERNIE!". They had left in the middle of the night from our place because of—. They said later that they had to take his mother-in-law somewhere to have a—that—that big—

COLE: She had a HUGE goiter on her—

BEHRENS: Growth or something on her cheek.

COLE: Growth on her cheek —it was awful.

BEHRENS: Looked terrible. And they were gonna go have that taken off. I don't know where they had to go.

COLE: They had to leave in the middle of the night.

BEHRENS: Yeah, uh huh.

COLE: ??? went with 'em [couldn't quite hear the beginning]

BEHRENS: (laughing) But anyway, it was before he left. Well, Garrett found a—some bees up in the tree. I don't remember if was a pear tree or peach tree or what.

COLE: Swarm.

BEHRENS: Swarm of bees, yeah. And it was back there where Daddy used to have an orchard of peach trees and stuff. And so he told Ernie to get up in the tree and then give it a shake when he got the hive under it. And, I guess Ernie got excited or something. I don't know. And he shook it too soon. Garrett was right under it and it landed on the back of his neck. And he started yelling, and he ran for the barn, and his clothes was comin' off as he was going. And I don't remember HOW many stings he had, but he really had a bunch of 'em. And he was SO mad at Ernie.

COLE: I guess so. You would think some of them might have flown up and got Ernie.

BEHRENS: (Laughing) Maybe they did! We don't even know about it.

COLE: Well, I remember a cracker story that we've told several times.

BEHRENS: (laughing) Yeah.

COLE: Somehow you and I were home alone.

BEHRENS: (laughing) 'Home Alone'!

COLE: I guess they were all out working and we were too little to work, maybe. Maybe not. For some reason we were there and we were hungry for crackers.

BEHRENS: And you said, 'Well, we'll just make our own!'.

COLE: Yeah.

BEHRENS: We didn't have any.

COLE: We had the cracker box.

BEHRENS: Right.

COLE: So you read the ingredients and I was mixing it up. And I said, 'and it says leavening' and you said, 'Well, I don't know what that is, so it can't be very important, so we'll just skip it'.

BEHRENS: We'll just leave that out!

COLE: Well, we baked the crackers.

BEHRENS: And they were flat as I don't know what (laughs).

COLE: They were just like if you put flour and water together and added a little salt and try to bake that. And then try to eat that! So those were our crackers. I never tried to make crackers again.

BEHRENS: I never have either. That was the end of our cracker-making days, wasn't it.

COLE: (chuckles) 'Fraid so!

BEHRENS: I can remember Dennis driving to Beasley. I don't remember if we were driving down the—I don't know where we were going—if we were going to church or where. But he slipped—the car slipped into the ditch. And he just kept going. And the sand that had washed into the ditch was harder than it was up on the road and he drove all the way to the railroad tracks in the ditch.

COLE: Probably the grass in the ditch helped too.

BEHRENS: Yeah, maybe so. And that grass probably held the sand back.

COLE: Were you with him or did he just tell us?

BEHRENS: Yeah, we were all along.

COLE: We were ALL along?

BEHRENS: Yes (laughing). He just kept driving and we made it.

COLE: Well, it was after Daddy died. I think it was probably that same year because he died in October and I think he and Mama had decided to give us some dolls for Christmas. And I don't know whether they'd already ordered them or what.

BEHRENS: Must have.

COLE: May have. Probably had. And she—Mama had them in her room, under a featherbed. And we didn't know they were there.

BEHRENS: (laughing)

COLE: BUT —Aunt Helen and Aunt Lona came to see us. I think it was Aunt Helen. I know Aunt Lona. Maybe it was Aunt Martha, I don't remember really. But they—she was showing the dolls to them, and they were BIG dolls, really pretty. And you and I walked into the room.

BEHRENS: Early Christmas, huh!

COLE: And she said, 'Oh well, you've already seen them, now.' So we DID have an early Christmas.

BEHRENS: Oh, they were BEAUTIFUL dolls and I left mine outside one night and the next morning it had a big crack right under its lip. At the chin. I said, 'Oh, that must be Mabel's doll!'

COLE: (laughing)

BEHRENS: (laughing) It wasn't MINE.

COLE: It WAS!

BEHRENS: Mabel said, 'NOOO, I know where MINE is.' So it was my doll. And I knew it, but I was going to be ugly.

COLE: Remember our exercise, running up and down the pasture, rolling the hoops.

BEHRENS: Oh, gosh, that was fun!

COLE: We had a T-shaped stick, I think (can't get this) and we'd roll rings. They weren't very big. They were only about, maybe—

BEHRENS: About eight inches—six or eight inches in diameter.

COLE: I don't believe they were—I was thinking they were maybe about twelve inches. I don't know.

BEHRENS: Maybe so. Somebody said they came off of the hub of a wagon wheel, but I don't know.

COLE: They may have. I didn't notice where they came from.

BEHRENS: Many a time I've wished I had one again, because you knew where every bump in the road was. How to hit it or how to go around it.

COLE: We were EXPERTS!

BEHRENS: Boy, I mean!

COLE: We went around the ant piles—

BEHRENS: YES.

COLE: The cow patties.

BEHRENS: Uh huh. We missed everything. Oh golly.

I remember one time we were walking to school on that road to the highway, where the water always came over. Well, one day, here came an eel, slithering across and scared the heck out of us. Sheesh. first eel I'd ever seen.

COLE: Are you sure it wasn't a snake?

BEHRENS: Well, the older ones said it was an eel. (laughing)

COLE: I don't remember that! You have a better memory than I have.

BEHRENS: Oh no.

COLE: Well, I remember going crawfishing in our pond.

BEHRENS: Oh yeah.

COLE: We'd go in the smokehouse and get us a piece of bacon and safety pins and string, and we'd stick it down in those holes. And we'd lure that crawfish out of the hole.

BEHRENS: And in the pond, we just threw it in the water, and they'd grab it. And we'd pull them out.

COLE: That was our fishing, wasn't it.

BEHRENS: Yeah. Boy we were—I remember one time we got about a fourth of a washtub full, and we took them over to the—I don't know if Ernie was living there then, or who was living in that rent house—but we took them over there and they were thrilled to death to get those. And they were going to clean them up and eat them. And we couldn't see how —

COLE: Seafood.

BEHRENS: That was their seafood (laughing).

COLE: On Sundays we would go to church most of the time, but Sunday afternoons, we'd have long afternoons for us.

BEHRENS: Uh huh. Right.

COLE: And we would get out there and play church. We'd sing all the songs. We knew 'em by heart. And we would just sing. I don't remember preaching.

BEHRENS: No, I don't either. We probably didn't know how.

Remember the time Loretta and Tekla [sp?] came over, we would be putting on a play for them.

COLE: Yeah. We'd always—we always had a play.

BEHRENS: And Loretta remembers that. She says, 'Y'all were SO smart'. And I said, 'Oh no, we just didn't have anything else to do.' And she said, 'Well, how did y'all think of those plays y'all always put on for us?'

COLE: Remember the time we each decided we were going to have a different name? And we tried the funniest name we could think of.

BEHRENS: Yeah!

COLE: Sophia and Henrietta Mae, and what else did we have? I think my name was Henrietta Mae.

BEHRENS: I can't remember what mine was.

COLE: Hetty and some of these names are—were really being used—but, of course we didn't think our—Mabel and Della were so funny.

BEHRENS: No, no we didn't. We didn't like our names, either.

COLE: Mama didn't like HER name. She was Alvina Lydia and I wish she'd have named me Lydia. I think that's a pretty name.

BEHRENS: Well, I asked her one time. I said, 'Mama, WHERE did find names like Mabel and Della.' She said, 'I don't know'. So if SHE didn't know, well, I don't know where they came from. Maybe they should have put a little more thought into that!

(both laughing)

COLE: Remember the time that hurricane came and Daddy was still living?

BEHRENS: YES!

COLE: And it just was REAL bad rain and wind. Our windmill just went—collapsed. Instead of being a wheel, it was a turkey tail. And the bottom part of the kitchen window blew out and Daddy and the boys—I don't remember which ones were—

BEHRENS: And I guess Mama probably, too.

COLE: --holding the kitchen table against that window to keep the wind out. And then the top window blew and the glass flew everywhere. And one piece of glass hit Daddy on the ear and just nearly cut his ear off.

BEHRENS: Yeah. Oh, that was something.

COLE: That must have been in—

BEHRENS: '32?

COLE: No, he died in '32.

BEHRENS: Yeah, but it might have been that summer. I don't know.

COLE: I don't know. I can't remember.

BEHRENS: It seemed to me like the storm was in '32 but I might be wrong there. [I think it is quite likely that it WAS in 1932 – there was a hurricane that caused considerable damage inland, with the eye passing over Needville]

I can remember one time, Garrett was going to teach me how to drive the car. And I was going from the road, from Beasley and trying to turn into at our gate, and I was worried so much about missing the bridge that I got excited and forgot to step on the brake. And because I was maneuvering that wheel, I guess I couldn't do two things at one time! And I went right through the gate. Broke all those big boards off. And I started crying. And I said I wasn't EVER going to drive again. (both laugh)

COLE: Well, I'm glad you didn't keep that decision.

BEHRENS: Just wish I could drive now!

COLE: I remember picking cotton. Of course I remember chopping cotton. And chopping corn. And gathering corn. But picking cotton was always—

BEHRENS: The worst part!

COLE: Yeah, we had to drag that sack behind us and lots of time we were picking with Garrett, and he would—Garrett read a lot. He read all kinds of good stories and he would tell us these stories. Like, I think it was Swiss Family Robinson or stories like that. And we had to keep up with him!

BEHRENS: Or we couldn't hear!

COLE: Or we couldn't hear that story. He picked kind of fast. So we kept up with him but he said he to go back and repick our row! (both laugh) Be we always enjoyed hearing his stories.

BEHRENS: Yeah, because they were SO interesting.

COLE: And Garrett helped me a lot with arithmetic. That's one reason I liked arithmetic as much as I did. Him and Mr. Boone, who was a good teacher. But I always liked arithmetic and geometry and all that because Garrett helped me.

BEHRENS: Berry helped me with arithmetic too. I remember one time—I don't know what you and I did, but Daddy spanked us. That's the only spanking I ever remember having gotten. And he told us both to lie down on the bed. You know, our feet were on the floor, we just bent over the bed. On our stomachs. And he used a fly swatter. And I yelled my head off and he hit lighter and lighter each time. But we were—I think our feelings were hurt more than anything because we weren't used to him giving us a spanking.

COLE: Uh huh. Daddy was—he didn't spank easily.

BEHRENS: No, at least he didn't on us.

COLE: He had to get really peeved at us. We had to really be bad, I guess. But I remember him reading funny papers to us, and you would sit on one knee and I'd sit on the other. And he would try to read the funnies. And—

BEHRENS: Smoke his pipe.

COLE: --smoke his pipe. And if the pipe was on MY side, I would kind of push on the pipe until he moved it to the other side. And then you would push on it 'til—then finally he took it out of his mouth and just put it down—

BEHRENS: Gave up!

COLE: --so he could read the funnies to us.

BEHRENS: I remember one time Mr. Stern had a great big old bull in our pasture and Berry had sent me a dog named Nikki. And he would ALWAYS grab that bull, or any of the cows, in their nose, and they would swing him around and around in the air. And he would—I just knew he was going to get killed. But one day, the bull stepped on him and killed him. He didn't die right away. He died a few days later. But, anyway—and Mr. Stern came and he asked if we had seen his bull lately. And we told him no. So he went out to the pasture to look for him, and the bull was dead. Don't know how—

COLE: At the same time?

BEHRENS: Yeah! I said, my goodness, maybe he died of a broken heart because he killed Nikki. (both laughing) That was a good thing to think, anyway.

COLE: I remember raising fields of sweet potatoes or even Irish potatoes. And we would—Daddy would go out and plow them up and we'd go behind and pick them up. And sometimes we would smell a certain odor and we knew right away what it was—it was lizard eggs. Because they always smelled SO strong.

BEHRENS: Oh. Thought you would say rotten potatoes, because remember, we picked up rotten potatoes when it was too wet to plow and we had to dig in there. Come up with a handful of rotten potatoes.

COLE: EW, I don't remember rotten ??

BEHRENS: Well, I didn't remember that the lizard eggs had an odor to them.

COLE: Yeah, they did. Remember walking to school? That was a pretty good distance, wasn't it about four miles?

BEHRENS: Yeah, close to it.

COLE: And Mama would make us wear a bonnet, a home-made bonnet. And we didn't want to but we'd go ahead and wear it. And when we got out of sight of home, we'd take 'em off and stuff 'em in our book satchel. But then she got us haircuts that were real short, like a boy.

BEHRENS: Daddy gave us those haircuts. Boy's haircuts.

COLE: And then we decided—I wore more mine even after I got to school because I didn't want them seeing my short hair.

BEHRENS: I remember we had to wear those stockings in the winter.

COLE: Yeah.

BEHRENS: And we'd get close to school and we'd roll them down or take them off. I don't remember which. But we weren't going to go to school with those long stockings on.

COLE: And then we started wearing socks, and Grandma said, 'Oh, you're going to have rheumatism in your knees from not wearing long stockings'.

BEHRENS: And maybe that's what I've got!

COLE: That's what we have! (both laughing)

BEHRENS: I remember after a good rain we would go slide on the area between the road and the renter's house.

COLE: It was a good place there.

BEHRENS: Real clay. Yeah, like clay. Oh, that was fantastic! And we would just slide—you could slide for twenty or thirty feet. And so we wanted to go, and Mama said, 'No, couldn't go', because I had on clean overalls. And I said, 'Well, I slide standing up'. And she said, 'Well, you'd better not get them dirty'. And so we went sliding, and, of course, I slid and feet went right out from under me, and I landed on my back, sliding. And I was really in trouble. I really got bawled out when I got home, because washing—

COLE: You couldn't just throw them in the washing machine and turn on the switch!

BEHRENS: No. Washing in those days was really work. No washers or dryers.

COLE: Yeah, Mama made her soap in a great big iron pot outside. And then after—when Daddy built that tool shed, he built a place and built the pump INSIDE.

BEHRENS: I didn't remember that!

COLE: Yeah, it was in—

BEHRENS: How could you have a fire under it?

COLE: Well, it was—the tool shed was open in front, you know, and had a chimney up there. But he—she—remember her cutting that soap up into pieces and letting them dry.

BEHRENS: Yes. Uh huh. We washed our hair and never had dandruff.

COLE: That's true!

BEHRENS: Maybe the lye killed the dandruff!

COLE: We butchered hogs, first cold spell, usually in October. We'd butcher—

BEHRENS: You and I washed dishes and pots, all day long.

COLE: We were all working. But I always looked forward to that first pot full of—

BEHRENS: meal. Yeah.

COLE: It was meat.

BEHRENS: It was meat, right.

COLE: It was pork and it was SO good. And then we'd have—we'd make sausage and bacon and hams—they'd be hanging in the smokehouse or be packed away in crocks in lard. And Berry and Garrett remember skippers. I don't remember skippers.

BEHRENS: I don't know what those are.

COLE: I'm not sure I know what those are. I think they are—we'll have to ask them.

BEHRENS: They are bugs that –

COLE: Little gnatty things that fly.

BEHRENS: We hope it's not any worse than that!

COLE: Yeah!

BEHRENS: I remember sliding on the floor in the hayloft. Because every time you'd move hay, well, that floor would get slicker and slicker and boy, we'd slide up there. I always wonder how we never got a splinter in our feet!

COLE: The hay bales got all the splinters!

BEHRENS: Yeah, I guess so. That was a lot of fun. So we had fun even though we didn't have anything to play with.

COLE: Yeah, we never did have a lot of toys and things.

BEHRENS: No. I don't ever remember telling Mama we didn't have anything to do, because I knew she would've given us something to do!

COLE: Well, we always kept ourselves busy. But I remember Daddy making a toy box for me. He covered it with some kind of a—looked like woven straw, that was really a mat for the floor. And he covered it with that. And I kept my things in there. Remember those little—

BEHRENS: I DIDN'T get a box!

COLE: You didn't get a box (spoken mockingly, while both are laughing).

BEHRENS: Noooo (also spoken mockingly). I didn't get a box!

COLE: He made a doll bed.

BEHRENS: I didn't get a—

COLE: Well, you got mine, I guess (both are laughing).

BEHRENS: After you got through with it.

COLE: I banged it up! But that was-- Well, let's see. Oh, about our getting permanents back those days.

BEHRENS: OH, yes.

COLE: Wasn't that AWFUL! That was the worst thing.

BEHRENS: It weighed so much.

COLE: You'd think your neck would break! All those heavy things on your head.

BEHRENS: And if you let your head move, then some of those things would burn your head.

COLE: Blister. You'd get blisters on your head if you weren't careful.

BEHRENS: And I was the first one in my grade that ever got a permanent.

COLE: Well, we had such STRAIGHT hair.

BEHRENS: Yeah.

COLE: That we didn't have any body in it. Well, maybe—

BEHRENS: Mama was going to get her one and get you one by Lydie Muehlbrad in Houston. And so—

COLE: How did we get to Houston?

BEHRENS: Don't ask me! There's no telling. But then her boss told her, he says, 'Well, we can't just let the little one sit there. Let's give her a permanent too.' So I got a free permanent! Then I worried about how I was gonna sleep on that hair and not ruin it. So I told Mama I wanted to have an iron bar, like a cross bar. Then I would put my neck on it so my hair wouldn't get messed up!

COLE: Remember when I rolled your hair on a pencil and it just made perfect rolls on setting?

BEHRENS: Right.

COLE: You wouldn't comb it out. You wanted to leave those perfect rolls.

BEHRENS: Noo. I LOVED those. I have pictures of myself in those.

COLE: Do you?

BEHRENS: Yes. At Aunt Martha and Uncle Ernst's 25th wedding anniversary.

COLE: Oh yeah. Was it 25th?

BEHRENS: Yeah, I think it was the 25th.

COLE: I remember that.

BEHRENS: And, boy, I had those curls all over my head. And then Mrs. Boone liked them so much that she got you to do HER hair.

COLE: It was only ONCE. Only once! (both laughing)

BEHRENS: And Mr. Boone shampooed her hair.

COLE: And I got there early that day.

BEHRENS: Yes, because she told you to be there at a certain time and she was still in bed!

COLE: And she wasn't ready and then Mr. Boone shampooed her hair, so I could roll it.

BEHRENS: We had never known of a man shampooing his wife's hair until then. Those were some funny days.

COLE: Remember Mama making cheese out of that clabber which was SO good, but then when she made cheese out of it, it smelled awful! She'd hang it up in those cheese cloth bags and let 'em drip. And I think that's one reason Garrett doesn't like cheese to this day.

BEHRENS: I don't think I ate it. I didn't like it.

COLE: I didn't either. I didn't like cheese until—I guess, really, until I married. Mart liked it and I started tasting it, and it tasted a little better every time, so now I LOVE it. But it was just different cheese than what we were used to.

BEHRENS: And now they tell you NOT to eat it!

COLE: Yeah, isn't that something.

COLE: Well, do you remember Mama making/baking bread? She made bread, big loaves. They must've been about twelve inches. The loaf was twelve inches by maybe twenty. Whatever size her roaster was, with the lid on it.

BEHRENS: Yeah. And she made it in there.

COLE: And she would put it in that roasting—

BEHRENS: I wanted little loaves, and she said, 'No, they go too fast.' She'd have to bake again.

COLE: Well, she could make a bunch of loaves.

BEHRENS: Well, yeah.

COLE: But she would put it in (dead air) [continuing from the other side]

COLE: She would put it in the roaster and she had a little peep hole in the roaster that she could tell when the bread—when she could see the bread, then she would (kinda bad squeak on here). Then she would put it in the oven and bake it. And it would come out just beautiful. We just—it was always good bread. But one time she had a bad batch and it wouldn't rise. And so she took it out of the pan and hid it under the rainwater cistern, just outside our back door.

BEHRENS: The dogs probably ate it up.

COLE: So Daddy wouldn't see it—and hurried back in and made up another batch.

BEHRENS: Well, yeah, she always used just a LITTLE pinch out of a cake of yeast.

COLE: I don't see how she made such a big—

BEHRENS: I don't either.

COLE: But she had a starter, though.

BEHRENS: She DID?! I didn't know that.

COLE: Remember she used peach leaves to—

BEHRENS: You're kidding!

COLE: --and boiled peach leaves and made with the yeast, made her own starter.

BEHRENS: I didn't know that.

COLE: I remember that part. But it was good bread. Well, I was remembering one time when Daddy was still living. On Saturdays, we'd go off to the store. I don't if it was EVERY Saturday or not, but when it rained, we went on the wagon. And this day we had gone on the wagon and Garrett was hanging his feet off the back end of the wagon, and I wanted to too. But he said that was his end and for me to go somewhere else. So I hung mine over the side. Well, the next time we made a turn, that wagon wheel popped my foot, with my shoes on, and really crushed my big toe. And I remember having to sit there, with my foot in a tub of hot water, salt water I think, and I couldn't go to Sunday School. And that toe nail came off and I still have a—

BEHRENS: That's the same toe you always have trouble with?

COLE: That thick toe nail.

BEHRENS: Oh my gosh!

COLE: We had a car, though. Remember that green car we had. We had one before that, that old Overland or Oakland. Overland, I believe.

BEHRENS: Can't remember.

COLE: But this was a green touring car and it had isinglass windows and we'd snap on when it was cold or rainy. And, I can't remember whether we traded that one in when we got our Model A—think we had a Model A.

BEHRENS: Surely we had something in between there.

COLE: I don't remember what. Remember Grandma and Grandpa's car?

BEHRENS: Yes.

COLE: It was one seater—I mean, two seats, but only—like, not a sedan. But it was—

BEHRENS: Two door, maybe?

COLE: It was two door, but they didn't have back seat.

BEHRENS: It didn't? What did it have back there?

COLE: It was just cut off. It was just a front seat.

BEHRENS: I didn't remember that. I thought it was—

COLE: But I don't ever remember riding in it. Do you?

BEHRENS: I don't either. No. And I can remember—I can still see Grandma holding on to that --something, up there on the right-hand side of the top of the window.

COLE: Like she had to hold on.

BEHRENS: Like she was going to fall out.

COLE: But they were—they kept that car in great shape and seldom drove it. But it was closed.

BEHRENS: They probably got \$100 for it.

COLE: It had—I think it had windows, that you could roll up and down.

BEHRENS: I think it did!

COLE: But there wasn't much room in it. Just Grandma and Grandpa in it.

BEHRENS: They probably want any of us along in it!

COLE: No, I'm sure they didn't. Remember visiting Aunt Helen and she had dinner for all of us? And a lot of relatives and she was—Aunt Helen was Tante Lena.

BEHRENS: Yeah.

COLE: And they had steps going up to their front porch and I was playing there. I think I was holding on to the post. What are those posts called?

BEHRENS: Piillars, like?

COLE: Yeah, and I fell. And they had a big old cactus growing there, and I fell on that cactus and I remember having to laugh. My daddy and Uncle Ernst I think it was, were in the swing, porch swing, and I was laying on my stomach, across their lap, while they picked the stickers out of my backside.

BEHRENS: (laughing)

COLE: (laughing) And then when, one time when Uncle Emil was there—I guess the Muehlbrads were there—and Uncle Emil always liked to play tricks and be funny.

BEHRENS: Yeah, and he did that as his house, too. Those peppers.

COLE: And he planted those little red peppers and he put one in his mouth and pretended to chew it and swallow it and it was good.

WELL, I decided to try it. And BOY, did I get a rude awakening! Because I found out he didn't chew it and I did. And I like to never—I went crying—screaming—

BEHRENS: Those things really burn! You get that one your hands, and you rub your around your eyes. I did that one time. I was pulling a bush out of the flower bed and I was perspiring, and I rubbed my hand across my eyes, and I thought I was going to die.

COLE: And in your eye's even worse than in your mouth, because you can't do much about it. Wash your eye. Well, I also remember, earlier than this, when I was supposed to be churning the butter. Remember we had that glass buttermaker with the wheel on it.

BEHRENS: Right.

COLE: And I was sitting on the floor churning while Mama went out to milk the cows. And when she came in, we were going to have supper, and that butter was going to be for supper. Well, I went to sleep on the floor. And they came in and the butter wasn't ready. Did I GET IT! Did I get it then!

BEHRENS: (laughing) I don't remember that.

COLE: And also, Mama used to make these big pans of popcorn, like popcorn balls.

BEHRENS: YES! Dishpan full!

COLE: Dishpan full. And she fixed it and she put it on top of the oven, and nobody was supposed to eat it until she came back from milking the cows.

BEHRENS: Oh gosh!

COLE: And she left me in there to watch that nobody ate it.

BEHRENS: Uh oh. And you didn't fall asleep, you ate popcorn.

COLE: No, no, no, but Garrett got into the popcorn. Well instead of staying there, I ran out to the barn, 'Mama, mama, Garrett's getting into the popcorn'. And she said, 'Well get back in that house and make him quit'.

BEHRENS: Like you could!

COLE: Like I could! I should have said, 'Hand ME some too'. But it was always good.

BEHRENS: She always put that candy over it. We'd sit there, and I remember one time, I ate SO much of it and in the middle of the night, I threw up, all—I was sleeping in between Mama and Daddy—

COLE: OH!

BEHRENS: Yeah, and I threw up ALL over them and all over myself. OH, they were NOT very happy!

COLE: (laughs)

BEHRENS: YUCK!

COLE: Well, I remember getting my driver's license when I was about twelve years old. Because the boys were tired of driving Mama to the store and they wanted to teach me how to drive, so they went and got my driver's license. I didn't even have to go.

BEHRENS: Oh, you're kidding! I had to pass a driving test with a police officer in the car.

COLE: I didn't have to pass a test. And I think they paid a quarter for my driver's license.

BEHRENS: Oh my gosh.

COLE: And so I drove Mama—we drove to Brenham, and Burton—

BEHRENS: YES – I remember that.

COLE: Remember that time we went to Brenham and we went on a dirt road through—probably went through Wallis or Orchard that way, and there was a stick of wood about, maybe fourteen inches long, just lying on the road. And I didn't think anything about it. Ran right over it, and it popped up, under our running board, and made a big bump in the running board. Good thing it didn't get under the car and break something that we couldn't have gotten—

BEHRENS: Yeah, like the gas tank or something.

COLE: Well, I knew after that, don't hit anything lying the road.

BEHRENS: Mm hmm.

COLE: But I would drive Mama to Rosenberg to get her groceries and—

BEHRENS: Yeah, we'd go to Burton and see, oh who were those—they had that young boy and a girl—

COLE: Yeah---

BEHRENS: Children. And we went to Artesian Wells with them. Can't remember their names. Isn't that awful!

COLE: The one that said 'Which one of you is the mean one'??

BEHRENS: No. (laughs) That was—

COLE: Raymond.

BEHRENS: Yes.

COLE: And, uh—

BEHRENS: And who?

COLE: (thinking)

BEHRENS: Raymond was the boy. I remember that.

COLE: And we played footsies at the table.

BEHRENS: Yeah. He liked you!

(both laugh)

BEHRENS: I can't remember what the girl's name was.

COLE: I can't remember either.

BEHRENS: We'd go see the Kurtz and—

COLE: The Kurtz—that's who it was. Esther and—

BEHRENS: That was Otto.

COLE: Who was the mean one. Well, HE was the mean one.

BEHRENS: Yeah! For remembering that.

COLE: WE were little angels.

BEHRENS: Right!

COLE: Well, I'm about worn out (run out?).

BEHRENS: I think I am too.

COLE: Do you want to stop and then maybe we can—

BEHRENS: I guess so. Maybe we'll think of something again.

COLE: I remember when we were putting—when the car was still back in. Before we built the new garage out there, it was back there by the orchard, and they were putting the car in the garage, and I was riding on the fender. I think Berry was driving. He said, ‘You better get off. Get off.’ And so I jumped off and the car ran over my foot. I fell down and the car ran over my foot.

BEHRENS: (laughing) You and your feet! You’ve had a life with those, haven’t you.

COLE: Yeah, I’m surprised I’m still walking! Apparently it didn’t hurt me very much.

BEHRENS: Remember when we used to walk through Gruenewald’s pasture? But I never did want to cut through there unless Garrett was with us, because it had to be somebody older. Because I was scared to death of that billy goat. He would come a-running.

COLE: Well, I remember a bull in there. But he would stand there and glare at us. And if we ran, he would start coming, so we had to walk.

BEHRENS: Oh, had to walk? Oh my gosh.

COLE: Did that billy goat ever come get close?

BEHRENS: I don’t really remember, but I was scared to death of him. Because he could run so fast. Yuck.

COLE: Remember picking flowers in ??? Hickman’s pasture?

BEHRENS: Yeah. Their meadow.

COLE: Their meadow and all those wild flowers. We would have ARM loads. And we’d put some in vases.

BEHRENS: You know, we never did ask them if we could pick ‘em. And they never did say, ‘Y’all get out of there. You’re getting our flowers!’ So I guess it was all right.

COLE: I guess. They were good neighbors.

BEHRENS: Yeah, they sure were.

COLE: Remember Nora ?? [couldn’t get the name]

BEHRENS: Yeah.

COLE: Real curly hair.

BEHRENS: buddy was more my age.

COLE: Well, did we tell about getting the sugar cane out of the field?

BEHRENS: I don't think so.

COLE: And sitting on top of the barn, or the smokehouse. We would always go out and pick the canes—cut the best off.

BEHRENS: Oh yes! And we knew which ones were the sweetest.

COLE: Oh yes. And then we'd just peel 'em and chew them and spit out the cud!

BEHRENS: And the chickens would be ready to have it, down under us. So we fed the chickens as we were feeding ourselves.

COLE: Do you remember we had a mulberry tree in the back yard?

BEHRENS: Oh boy. I mean. A BIG one. It was easy to climb and sit in. And they were so good.

COLE: And our teeth were purple and our mouths and our hands were purple. But we'd sit up there. And you know we never washed them. Can you imagine?

BEHRENS: No, we just ate them right out of the tree. And you know, then later—much later, somebody said, 'Oh, I wouldn't have eaten mulberries because they were full of worms'. I said I don't think ours were.

COLE: Ours were very healthy and clean! Sure.

BEHRENS: Yes. Right! At least we didn't sick from them, did we.

COLE: Uh uh. I don't remember getting sick from them.

BEHRENS: Remember when we used to have to clean out the horse trough?

COLE: Yeah.

BEHRENS: And we'd get all that old green stuff on the sides, and we'd have to scrape it off. Whenever the trough was low was when we'd have to go do that. And it would all fall to the bottom and then we had to bail it out, I guess you'd say. Like you do a boat or something.

And I don't know how we got the last of it out. I guess we probably used maybe a can or something and got most of it out. And then maybe a shovel. But I don't know.

COLE: I don't remember either. But then we had to assist the windmill. And it would—we'd turn on the water and it would just gush in there and fill it all up again, once we got it cleaned out.

BEHRENS: It was so pretty and clean then. We did such a good job!

COLE: We had goldfish in there for a while.

BEHRENS: Yeah. Wasn't that after the Emsoffs—I think the Emsoffs had put them in, or something, when they lived there. When we first moved to town?

COLE: Maybe so. I don't remember.

BEHRENS: And then you couldn't just put them in a tub or they would die. You had to put them in something and use some of the old water. It couldn't be tin. And I—we had a hard time trying to find something to keep them in.

COLE: We didn't clean it out after they lived there, though.

BEHRENS: Maybe we were too old then. I don't know.

COLE: I mean, we didn't live there any more.

BEHRENS: I know. Yeah, we did. I did, at least.

COLE: When THEY were living there?

BEHRENS: No, after they moved out.

COLE: Oh.

BEHRENS: But you didn't live there long. You got married.

COLE: Yeah.

BEHRENS: But I was there quite a while.

COLE: We had that shower bath, half shower bath under the cistern that—right by the windmill.

BEHRENS: The one that Garrett told about the snake going through that drain hole. He told me that snake was going to haunt me all night. Scared me to death! (laughing)

COLE: We put watermelon in there and turned the water on and then let them sit in there overnight and they'd be real chilled in the morning. And then we had that other cistern that the house—that was rain water, and every time it got a leak in it, we would have to put a stop—some thing to stop up that leak.

BEHRENS: Depending on how big the leak was.

COLE: Yeah.

BEHRENS: Some were toothpicks, some were bigger.

COLE: Put a piece of cloth on the end and then put it in there real tight. And it looked like a porcupine.

And it had tar spots and gum spots—everything.

BEHRENS: Yeah, well, it was a mess.

COLE: But that was good water. We used that water for washing clothes and washing our hair. And rainwater, washing your hair, really was good.

BEHRENS: Yeah, it really was good.

COLE: We moved to Beasley—I think I was about thirteen.

BEHRENS: Yeah, because I think I was about ten, so that would be about right.

COLE: We couldn't—

BEHRENS: Make the farm—do the farm any more.

COLE: And we got the Emsoffs to rent it and try to run it, because Berry was married and Dennis was married, and Garrett had a job in town, or I don't know.

BEHRENS: Yeah, because a lot of times we were picking cotton in January. I remember that. With gloves on because it was cold. So, we just had no business out there any more.

COLE: So we moved into the BIG city of Beasley.

BEHRENS: Yeah. (laughing) I enjoyed that.

COLE: I can't remember which house we moved in to.

BEHRENS: I think it's the one the Albrights lived in later. I think that's where we moved first.

COLE: I think it was too.

BEHRENS: Belonged to a guy named Ernst, or something, wasn't it?

COLE: Our house was kind of off from the road. We had a long driveway, but right at the end of the driveway was the Kashmeres. The Kashmeres lived there. And Wilcey's name wasn't Kashmere, was it?

BEHRENS: No, but I can't remember what it was.

COLE: It was Mrs. Kashmere's sister. Right? Wilcey?

BEHRENS: Was it her sister or her niece? I don't know.

COLE: Anyway, she was living with them and she was about our age. So we would meet in their barn and have embroidery club. We did embroidery and we sewed.

BEHRENS: Boy we really did beautiful work, didn't we? (laughs)

COLE: And I don't think I have a piece left!

BEHRENS: I don't think I do either! I don't even remember WHAT I embroidered, but I know we were always embroidering. And that was a lot of fun.

We moved into that two story house.

COLE: Oh, I LOVED that.

BEHRENS: Oh, I did too. That was more fun, going up and down the steps and sliding down that banister.

COLE: A big house. We didn't have furniture in all the rooms, but—

BEHRENS: No furniture! Yeah.

COLE: --we had our bed upstairs and had our kitchen.

BEHRENS: And you could just look out, WAY out all over the town.

COLE: I don't think we stayed there too—very long.

BEHRENS: No, I don't either.

COLE: And then moved into that other house.

BEHRENS: That house by the church.

COLE: By the church. And then we cleaned the church every week.

BEHRENS: Yeah. Sure did.

COLE: Well, when we lived in that house, the first house—I remember, of course we walked to and from the school because it wasn't that far. And one day we were standing outside the school and talking to some of the other girls, and 'meanie' Ralph Walker—his sister was Ruby, wasn't it?

BEHRENS: No----Alice was one and was it LaVerne?

COLE: LaVerne?

BEHRENS: I don't know.

COLE: Anyway, he came up behind me and kind of pulled the back of my dress at the collar, and I turned around, and kind of hit at him. And he said, 'I put some ants down your back'. And I didn't believe him.

BEHRENS: It wasn't long though. You found out he was right.

COLE: On the way home, I SURE did. And I mean, those big, big—

BEHRENS: Big red ants.

COLE: --big red ants.

BEHRENS: Too bad they didn't bite him

COLE: And they weren't fire ants. We didn't know what they were then. But I think we called these fire ants because they were big and red.

BEHRENS: I don't know. I just remember they were big. And had a big mouth.

COLE: And they REALLY stung—if they stung you, they really hurt. They're still around.

BEHRENS: You really swelled, yeah. We've got some at Somerville.

COLE: So I found out he wasn't joking.

BEHRENS: That wasn't very nice of him.

COLE: No----(chuckles) You know, all that time, we lived out there in the country, and even when we lived in town, we never had an ice box.

BEHRENS: Nope.

COLE: How did we keep things—that's one reason we get so sick—that I got ptomaine poisoning that time, because we couldn't—

BEHRENS: We couldn't keep the meat from spoiling.

COLE: Well, that's also—you know—that's why we packed—smoked the pork, and we had beef club. [talked over each other—couldn't get it]

BEHRENS: The beef club. We always went to Will Hopmann's house for it.

COLE: Because he had a barn that had—could—

BEHRENS: Accommodate all that. And did all the butchering or whatever.

COLE: And everybody—every family that belonged to it had to furnish a calf sometime during the year. And their meat was weighed. And if your calf didn't weigh as much as what you got, you'd have to pay extra.

BEHRENS: Oooh, I didn't remember that, but I guess that would stand to reason. That'd be right.

COLE: We always got a soup bone—

BEHRENS: Yep. Got good soup.

COLE: And we always got a roast and I don't know how many pounds of meat.

BEHRENS: I don't think we ever had ground meat, but I guess we ground it ourselves.

COLE: Probably.

BEHRENS: Because we had that grinder for pork. And I guess you could use it for meat. But I know you had to cook most of the meat ahead of time so it wouldn't spoil as quick that way.

COLE: Yeah. Mama always made beef soup. Remember her beef soup?

BEHRENS: Yes! Ooh it was good.

COLE: It was good. But you know, it was thin soup, because she'd dribble egg into it.

BEHRENS: Yeah.

COLE: And she had raisins in it.

BEHRENS: Yeah. And I made some like that after that, once, and oh, it was so good. Roy wouldn't even taste it.

COLE: Because it had raisins in it?

BEHRENS: Yeah. He said, 'I cannot believe anybody would eat soup with raisins in it', and I said, 'Well, just TASTE it. It's good'. And he wouldn't.

COLE: He wouldn't even TASTE it?!

BEHRENS: Nooo. But it was good.

COLE: Well, I didn't know just what all she put in it.

BEHRENS: And then mustard greens. You know, she cooked mustard greens. And I tried it and it was TERRIBLE. And I asked her, I said, 'Mama, how did you cook the mustard greens?' And she said, well, she cooked them separate from the potatoes and the rice. I said, 'Rice? I thought it was just potatoes and mustard greens.' She says, 'No', she cooked rice in with the potatoes. And it made all the difference in the world. Then I cooked it—

COLE: Turnip greens too.

BEHRENS: Yeah. They were stronger so I liked the mustard greens better. And then I would make 'em, and my kids would eat 'em. But they wouldn't eat 'em just cooked.

COLE: Did she put a little sugar in them?

BEHRENS: No.

COLE: Because a lot of times you put a little sugar in vegetables and it's supposed to make them taste better. Remember the big gardens we always had?

BEHRENS: Yeah.

COLE: We raised everything from cabbage to—

BEHRENS: English peas and kohlrabi and —

COLE: Kohlrabi — wasn't that good!

BEHRENS: That was good. We would just eat it raw.

COLE: Go out in the garden and just eat and pick those peas and eat them right out of the shell.

BEHRENS: Yeah. I told Aunt Lona that one time, when she was in that nursing home before she died, and told her we always went out in the garden and ate everything raw out of the garden. And she said, 'Well, y'all smarter than they were. That's what they tell us now we SHOULD do.' Well, I didn't know we were ahead of our time! We just couldn't wait for them to get cooked! We ate them raw.

COLE: Yeah, but our renter was out there plowing next to the garden, and he asked us what we were doing, because he saw us eating. I think he probably wanted us to give him some.

BEHRENS: But we didn't, did we!

COLE: 'Y'all are going to get the stomach ache if you don't get some salt on those vegetables' (said the renter).

BEHRENS: But we didn't, did we!

COLE: No.

BEHRENS: Didn't get the stomach ache either. Didn't get the salt.

COLE: Or if we did, we didn't blame it on eating the raw vegetables. Back in school—I remember having chapel. What did we call it?

BEHRENS: I don't remember that.

COLE: At school.

BEHRENS: Well, you had—

COLE: Do you remember, in the auditorium? Oh, we'd sing songs and sing those old songs.

BEHRENS: I don't remember that. That must've been before I got in there.

COLE: Yeah. And then our play, at the end of school, our senior play.

BEHRENS: Uh huh. That was always good.

COLE: What was the name of that?

BEHRENS: Was that Charley's Aunt?

COLE: No, that was Here Comes Charley. But that was our Luther League that put that one on. It was The Man in the Moon.

BEHRENS: Oh my gosh.

COLE: And the Moon was the name of a car.

BEHRENS: Oooh.

COLE: And The Man in the Moon—I can't remember much about the play—but Irving Schroeder was the "man" in the "Moon". And I think I had the lead in the play. And got up there, and—do you know, it's funny when you get up there like that, and you're acting. And you don't get scared.

BEHRENS: Oh I always did.

COLE: Well, I didn't. I just thought it was fun. And then the Luther League—we called it Here Comes Charley, but the Charley was a girl and her name was Charlotte, but called her Charley. We changed it to Henry and Henrietta.

BEHRENS: Oh, Here Comes Henry?!

COLE: Yeah, and Henrietta. And I don't know why. I think because something we were trying to get past the copyright or something. I remember that kind of ridiculous, just changing the name of the play.

BEHRENS: Gosh, thinking about Luther League. Remember all those sausage roasts we'd go on?

COLE: Oh yes.

BEHRENS: Usually at the sand ??? – San Bernard or somewhere where there was a lot of sand. And build a fire and cook the sausage.

COLE: I bet that sausage wasn't too well done a lot of time.

BEHRENS: Could have been, but sure did taste good.

COLE: Sure did.

BEHRENS: I remember Loretta and I were running in the sand, and we had no idea— because being at night, we couldn't see that it was actually made like waves. We thought it was smooth. And we just landed flat on our stomachs and we couldn't understand why. And it was because the sand was not really smooth. But we used to have a lot of fun on Luther League nights like that.

COLE: Yeah, you and Tekla and Loretta and you and I were always together. We were always good friends.

BEHRENS: Always had a lot of fun together.

COLE: It didn't snow very often, but one time we had about a 3 inch snow, didn't we?

BEHRENS: It seemed that way. At least that's what we called it.

COLE: Well, we made snowmen but we had to roll and the ground was bare after we rolled it. And we rolled all the snow up, but we made snowmen.

BEHRENS: We had a lot of fun at it anyway.

COLE: Yeah. And that was when Mart and I were already dating and he came over because he wanted to see me playing in the snow. And he took some pictures. I still have the picture and I was thinking why he wasn't in the picture. Well, it's because he had the camera!

BEHRENS: He wouldn't have trusted—

COLE: I didn't know how—

BEHRENS: --either one of us with his camera! I have a picture too. I was walking to the house. My books were about to drop out of my arms.

COLE: We still had to walk home from school in the snow?

BEHRENS: Oh I imagine so.

COLE: Rain or snow—

BEHRENS: Maybe we had the buses then already. I don't know.

COLE: I never rode a bus.

BEHRENS: Well, I did, but I don't know if it was just the last year that I went to school or whether it was two years. I really don't know.

COLE: We had snow about once every ten years.

BEHRENS: Yeah. So we had to make the most of it whenever we did.

COLE: Uh huh. Well, those were the days.

BEHRENS: Yeah, we had lots of fun.

COLE: We sure did.

BEHRENS: They weren't the 'good old days', I mean, like the golden days or anything.

COLE: Can't brag about 'em.

BEHRENS: It's good memories.

COLE: I'm glad we grew up in the country.

BEHRENS: Me too.

COLE: It was—

BEHRENS: And I'm glad we had good memories of it.

COLE: I am too.

BEHRENS: So-- (tape ends)



Photo from 1994 on the occasion of Garrett and Merle's 50th Wedding Anniversary.

From left to right: Mabel Krause Cole, Della Krause Behrens, Leora Stern Krause, Berry Fritz Krause, Merle Engel Krause, Garrett Charles Krause