GILBERT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Edited by Pat Castaneda and June Morrison

Interview by Carol Shepherd
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Gilbert Oral History Project

Interview: June Morrison
Date: July 9, 1992
Location: Morrison home, 12930 E. Elliot Road
Interviewer: Carol Shepherd

Interviewer: Now your name was Neely before you were married. I wonder if we can go back for a little bit and talk about your family, your mom and dad's family and their names. Your father was?

June Morrison: Clyde Neely.

Interviewer: He came originally from what area of the country?

June Morrison: They came here from Texas. He was born in Alabama. They came directly from Texas to Arizona.

Interviewer: They made kind of a step migration then.

June Morrison: Yes, they did. My father was born in Alabama but always considered himself a Texan. He was, during part of his life, a cowboy. He would take herds down to Mexico, maybe be gone as much as six months, then he would come back across the line and be at home for a while, and then do that again. So he was a cowboy, and at one time he was known as "Jack" Neely. We have a postcard somebody wrote him and it was addressed to "Jack" Neely. He had no middle name. His name was Clyde Neely, and there were fifteen children in the family, and all the others had numerous names, but he only had one.

Interviewer: Any reason for that?

June Morrison: None that I know of.

Interviewer: Did they run out of names?

June Morrison: Well he was second in the family, so it doesn't really add up to me, but that's the way it was. He had only one name.

Interviewer: What part of Alabama did they come from.

June Morrison: Oneonta was where he was born. It's outside of Birmingham, not very far. We visited there in 1939, so I saw the area where he was born. My parents visited some

people there. But that was the only time that I know of that he went back to Alabama after he came to Arizona.

Interviewer: Do you have the names of his parents?

June Morrison: Yes. William Henry Neely and Leota Ulalah Iltigirt Allgood.

Interviewer: When did they come?

June Morrison: I would assume it was somewhere around 1921 that they came to Arizona. They came to Arizona before my parents. My mother's parents were also in Arizona, and they were around the area of Wilcox and Cochise.

Interviewer: What was your mother's maiden namen?

June Morrison: Lehman. Her name was Minnie Mae Lehman. Her parents were German. My grandfather had a handlebar mustache, and he used to joke that if he got a quarter every time he washed dishes for my grandmother he would not have fifty cents. So he was of the old school, very much German both of them, although they were born in the United States.

Interviewer: So it was their parents who had immigrated.

June Morrison: Yes, it was their parents who had immigrated, evidently.

Interviewer: What brought the two families out here?

June Morrison: Well, now I'm going back to my parents. I know why they came. I'd like to go to that because I know it didn't rain for two years in the town where I was born, so I am sure that was why they came out here. Because my father was a farmer, and obviously if it didn't rain for two years you're not going to do much farming in a dry land farming area. That's what brought them. I think also for my grandparents on either side, they were in farming and ranching. My grandfather on my mother's side was in cattle ranching. Therefore they settled in Cochise where they had a ranching. Therefore they settled in Cochise where they had a nice cattle ranch. My grandfather on my father's side, William Henry Neely, was a farmer and he came here to farm. And I think it was just sort of "go west young man" type of thing, and the valley was settling and it was a new adventure to come west.

Interviewer: Where did they settle?

June Morrison: My grandfather on my father's side, here in Gilbert.

Interviewer: But where?

June Morrison: Well, he lived in what is now White Fence Farms, just directly south of us one mile.

Interviewer: Did he take an eighty or a 160 acres or..?

June Morrison: You know, I don't know exactly what he had. I assume that it was more like 160.

Interviewer: Do you know whether he homesteaded that or whether or not he bought an existing farm?

June Morrison: No, I really don't know that. I would think that probably he bought it, because if I understand it correctly, most of this area was already cultivated and had been in production for awhile.

I would like to talk about why the dams were built and why this valley was settled. It was settled because of the farmers. It was settled because the farmers paid assessments on their land, which built the dams, which gave them, the farmers, the water to go into production. If it hadn't been for the dams and the farmers paying the assessments so the government could build the dams, there would be no Salt River Valley as we know it.

Interviewer: Well, there would be no development in the community.

June Morrison: There would be small places along the river is what there would be. So the farmers are the ones who paid. There was an assessment on every acre of farmland.

Interviewer: Do you know what those assessments were?

June Morrison: I asked Marvin this morning if he knew that. I do not know exactly how much they were per acre, but I think I can find that out from my brother. I think it would be amazing. People would figure out the inflationary factor on those dollars and see how much they actually did pay for building the dam.

Interviewer: And then the series of canals that brought the water on out.

June Morrison: Correct. Of course, they followed the contours where the Indian's had built canals. Many people don't realize that the farmers are the ones who are responsible for getting that done. Of course, the government did it, but through the farmers paying those assessments. It was my understanding if you didn't pay the assessments you didn't get water, so the assessments were paid.

Interviewer: Did they run with the land, so if you sold your property before the full assessment was paid the new owner took over?

June Morrison: Yes, I believe that would be the case.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea how long the assessments ran? Thirty years? The land was actually bonded, wasn't it?

June Morrison: Yes. That's the way Marvin put it. The farmers bonded themselves in order to build those dams. That's what it amounted to.

Interviewer: Then the water rights to that water run with the land?

June Morrison: Yes, that's right. Until recently when the new underground water law came into effect, and that's a whole different thing.

Interviewer: The 100 year water supply for a community? Is that what you are referring to?

June Morrison: Yes, that's right.
I wanted to mention about the dams because that's why we are here. It is because of the water. The history of water in Arizona is the history of Arizona. Without water there would not have been anything.
I want to get back also to names. As you know my grandmother had several names. My father had one name, and my name is not June. It's Eunice Inez. And on one side of my birth certificate the clerk put Eunice Inez, and on the other side she put Emma Inez. I had never seen that until recently.

Interviewer: On one you are Eunice, and the other side you are Emma?

June Morrison: That's right. And it came about that I was called June because my sister, who is just two years older

than I, couldn't say Eunice so she said "Junice," and it was just shortened to June somehow. It stuck all my life. In essence it is my name except that on my birth certificate it doesn't say June.

Interviewre: Spell Eunice for me.

June Morrison: E-u-n-i-c-e I-n-e-z

Interviewer: Your grandmother's name. Would you spell those names out please?

June Morrison: I may have to get the information off of the Bible history.

Interviewer: I just want to be sure we have the correct spelling for the transcription.

June Morrison: Well, they're not always correct even in the Bible, because I notice when I go back that in one place it will be one way and in another place, another way, sometimes. Human error. We're just not all perfect.

Interviewer: You were how old when your family came here?

June Morrison: When my family came to Arizona, I was nine months old. I have never yet been to my birthplace to know it. When our oldest son was getting his wings at Beeville, Texas he said, "Mother wouldn't you like to go and see LaPryor on our way home? Wouldn't you like to go by and see where you were born?" I said, "I'd love to do that." But all morning long while he was finishing his flying, I was watching television and listening to the broadcast, and they were saying they were evacuating people out of the area we wanted to go into, because it had rained so much. Now I told you it hadn't rained for two years at one time, but in this case it had rained so much that they were evacuating people, so of course we did not go by. So I have never, ever seen the area where I was born. LaPryor, Texas.

It is in the area, I am told, south of the Big Bend country, where the Rio Grande comes down like this in Texas, and there is an area called Big Bend. I think there is a wilderness area park there.

I do know in Texas you can lease ground for hunting. You can lease this land and then go as often as you want to hunt on it. Our son has a father-in-law who has those rights, and he went to LaPryor one day and called me from LaPryor. So

that's as close as I have ever been to LaPryor to know it. I've never been back to see it.

So that's where I was born but we soon came out here, and then my little brother was born thirteen months later. That was the last of six children.

Interviewer: Can you name those children for me?

June Morrison: Yes. Lorena Mae, who married Verl Brown. C. W., that's Charles William, named after both of his grandparents, and he married Modene Arledge. Then W. R., Warren Roy, and he has been married twice. The first time to Verba Mathews, and the second time to Revy White. Then my sister Margaret, who is married to Calvin V. Weldon. And my younger brother, Rex Lehman Neely, married to Rusty. Louise Murphree is her name, but we always called her Rusty. That's M-u-r-p-h-r-e-e.

Interviewer: An unusual spelling.

June Morrison: Yes, it is. So that was the six children. I have always gone by June, through school, and even on my driver's license I have June Neely Morrison. The only thing that I have my other names on are legal documents. The land and things of that sort.

Interviewer: You grew up in Gilbert, then, and you and Marvin actually went to school together.

June Morrison: Yes. That was in the fifth grade. We sat next to each other in nearly everything.

Interviewer: He said that was where he first let you know that he was interested in you.

June Morrison: Yes, he did.

Interviewer: For a girl growing up in Gilbert, what was that like? Did you have any clubs that you belonged to? You were a farm girl, of course. Did you belong to 4-H?

June Morrison: I didn't belong to 4-H. I belonged to Camp Fire Girls. It was the only club that I remember that I belonged to in those early years. I went to some church groups, but that's the only organized club I remember.

Interviewer: Your family were members of the Methodist Church, I believe?

June Morrison: My family belonged to the Baptist Church and went to First Baptist Chruch in Mesa. It was after we were married a while that I joined the Methodist Church. My family was Baptist. However, my grandfather, W. H. Neely, was a Methodist. He had been a Methodist for quite awhile. But my parents were Baptists.

Interviewer: Did a lot of people go into Mesa to go to church?

June Morrison: A few. We were one of few.

Interviewer: Were there any social organizations for women? One of the things I have been looking for is someone who has some insight as to whether or not there were garden clubs or things that your mother may have belonged to.

June Morrison: I belonged to a garden club for some time in the Forties and early Fifties. We had a garden club in Gilbert. There was a Women's Club in Gilbert, but my mother did not belong to the Women's Club. With six children, my mother didn't have time to belong to clubs. In later years she would have had time. She was not a joiner, so to speak, probably because of all that she had to do for the family, and then because of the habit of not being in those organizations. In later years she did belong to one in Mesa.

Interviewer: The garden club in Gilbert, what was it? Did you do any community projects?

June Morrison: As a matter of fact we did. We planted flowers where the Circle K is in downtown Gilbert, across from the old City Hall. We planted a strip of flowers there and kept it cultivated for a while before the Circle K went and kept it cultivated for a while before the Circle K went in. Not too long before the Circle K went in. I don't know in. Not too long before the Circle K went in. I don't know whether it was two years or exactly how long it was. We have pictures of that.

Interviewer: That would have been in the Fifties?

June Morrison: Probably, yes.

Interviewer: What about church organizations. Did you have women's circles, card clubs?

June Morrison: We had circles, at least in the later years, and have had in the Methodist Church. Every Methodist Church is to have a women's group, and so they nearly all do. There

is still, today, a women's group. The effort is primarily a missionary effort to raise funds to send to missionaries wherever they might be.

Interviewer: Your own family, you have how many children?

June Morrison: Three, although we had five. We lost two children. We lost a boy and a girl. They were premature. Probably they would have survived today. The boy was Mark Allen, and he was just two days old when he died and weighed, well, they didn't weigh them. They assumed about four pounds. They didn't weigh them because they didn't handle them that much. Then the girl they didn't weigh for sure. She was even less developed. She was just six months, and she lived one day. Marsha Marie.

Our oldest son is Richard Neely Morrison, and he was born in 1947. We lost the two children between Richard and Scott. Scott Clyde Morrison, and he was born in '54, and Howard Clark Morrison was born in '58. So we have three sons.

Interviewer: How many grandchildren?

June Morrison: Eight grandchildren.

Interviewer: And the boys? They each married who?

June Morrison: Richard married Elaine Grangaard. Scott married Stormy, and that is her name, Stormy Wilson. And Howard married Jana Frederick from Texas.

Interviewer: Elaine of course is here. Elaine and Richard are here.

June Morrison: Scott and Stormy are here.

Interviewer: Your other child?

June Morrison: Howard is in Austin, Texas.

Interviewer: Your family farming history. They were growing alfalfa hay? Any cattle?

June Morrison: My father, because he was a cowboy in his early years, always wanted to have some cattle. And he did have cattle at the time he died. But he hadn't been in the cattle business very long. Oh, I am going to guess two or three years, and he was just feeding out some cattle in pens. But because of his cowboy experience he always kind of

wanted to have a ranch. Didn't really have one as we consider a ranch today.

Interviewer: Did he do any things outside of farming?

June Morrison: Oh, yes, he did. He was on the Salt River Project Board of Governors, and was for a number of years, although I don't know how many years he was on that. He was also in Farm Bureau.

Interviewer: On the Salt River Project Board, he must have been one of the earlier board members?

June Morrison: Of course, that would have probably been in the Forties, maybe the late Thirties, but I believe it was probably the Forties and early Fifties. He was not on there at the time the dams were built, of course, because that was 1900 or so.

Interviewer: Do you remember him talking about any of their unique problems at the time he was a board member? Things they were dealing with on water issues?

June Morrison: I would have to think about that one a little. Oh, I suppose the manner of voting would have been something. How you voted for board members, and whether you voted your acres or whether you voted one man, one vote. That would have come up about that time. You voted your acres at one time, but it came around to voting one person, one vote in later years. And, of course, voting your acres would be difficult for a lot of people to take today. They would think that that would be unfair. They didn't think it was unfair in those days. I am sure that issue probably came up.

Interviewer: I talked a little to your husband about the problems associated with the development of this area. What were some of the problems you remember from this area developing around you? You are still facing that problem.

June Morrison: Oh, yes. I don't know if he would have told you this, but when we first moved back to this house we were standing on the east side of this property and he was looking over there toward the town and he said, "I guess you know that someday somebody will want to buy this, and you'll be an old so-in-so if you don't sell it." He told me that thirty-six years ago, and nothing was being developed then. You know we went through a period where Gilbert made the

Wall Street Journal because they had the very same population in town that they had the last time they took the census. Gilbert absolutely did not grow at all. So when he made that remark it was long before any progress had been made.

Yes, there have been, there are, those feelings that you lose control of what you have if the city takes over. There are those feelings that why should you have to give up part of your property to build a road, for instance? Would you take off part of a person's building to promote the community interest? Why no, you wouldn't do that. But you would take a person's land and think nothing of it.

Interviewer: Of course, they did that to you when these roads were improved.

June Morrison: What is the difference? It is our livelihood. It is absolutely our livelihood. You cannot grow alfalfa on the cement. And so you have those feelings that this isn't really fair.

Interviewer: When did your father bring water down here?

June Morrison: The year would be difficult to pinpoint. There again I am sure my older brother would know. But shortly after we moved here, because I do not remember having a well here.

Interviewer: How far did he have to go? Gilbert Road?

June Morrison: No, he didn't have to go that far. It would only have been a little over a quarter of a mile, but if you did that yourself back then. And then the distance from the street, we'll say 3/8 of a mile. I think that would be very close.

Interviewer: So he hand dug that ditch?

June Morrison: Well, I don't know how it got dug, but he did it. He got the water here. But the town officials, and they have had it in writing in the newspaper, they don't care what happened in the past. This is the way it is going to be.

Interviewer: Do you feel this area will develop?

June Morrison: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: What are the advantanges to development over, say, remaining a county island.

June Morrison: Well, only financial, possibly. If that is the case. If you figured it was going to be a financial advantage, that would be the only thing. Because to me there is no way I can have a better situation than I am in right now. I have had people call me and say...in fact some of the real estate people in Phoenix have called and wanted to buy this place. I say, "Find me a place that has this much water right, this much privacy, and I'll talk to you." But I don't get any calls back.

Interviewer: It is quiet.

June Morrison: Very, very quiet.

Interviewer: You have a rural atmosphere with the ability to be close to a metropolitan area.

June Morrison: And we have had all of our lives. We have always been able to go into Phoenix at night and see Fred Waring or whoever was in town. We have always had the ability to drive in and drive out the same night, and be back here. I have often said also that we have been very blessed in that we have something that professional people work their whole lives to have. We have a place in the country where we can live, and that's what many professional people want. If they can just have a place for a horse or some kind of bucolic sort of atmosphere.

Interviewer: Of course, they have to be willing to drive to do it.

June Morrison: Right.

Interviewer: And you don't have to make a comute.

June Morrison: We don't have to commute as much as we did in the past. We still go into Phoenix, but not as much as we did.

Interviewer: It's not every day.

June Morrison: Oh, no. But my husband worked long and hard for the things we have. I have known him to work close to three days at a time when we had a flood in order to get out grain that was stored in a barn. He worked round the clock.

Tape 1, side 2

Interviewer: Other disadvantages, I would think, besides just the fact that you would lose your privacy, to developed this property would mean a tremendous change in lifestyle for you.

June Morrison: It is a complete loss of a way of life for us, because if you develop you lose the land. If you lose the land, you no longer farm. If you sell all of your land and develop all of your land. So, yes, it is a completely different way of life, and we have heard from those farmers who have sold and developed how they wish they hadn't, many of them.

Interviewer: Do many of them regret their decision?

June Morrison: I wouldn't say all of them do, but some of them do, yes.

Interviewer: There has been a new development in recent years. A number of farmers who have sold have found themselves getting back all of the land that was once debt free, and it is now debt ridden.

June Morrison: Well, it's certainly different than it was in the Forties and Fifties when we were always able to pay off our debts and have considerable left to put into another year. It is different now because the farmer has been hit with low prices for our products and high prices for the things we have to buy, so it is very difficult to stay in farming.

Interviewer: Farming has evolved into a big business. At one time you could grow everything and be self sufficient on the farm. Now farmers are more specialized.

June Morrison: I suppose you could, but I didn't live in the day that you could be self sufficient. My mother grew vegetables, and indeed we did live through the depression, the so called Big Depression. She grew vegetables, but it wasn't solely to support us. She liked to grow things, and they were fresh and they were good, and it was a way of life to her as well as a savings. Since we did have a large family, it did help. But I never did see the time when everything could be raised on the farm.

At one time I did see my mother and dad cut up a beef or a pig on our kitchen table. They came in and they put

newspapers on the table, and they both worked and cut that beef, and then my mother would can it instead of freezing it. The only way to preserve it was to can it. She would put quart jars of meat in the basement. So it was hard work. Very hard work, and took a long time.

Interviewer: Without air conditioning it was very hot work.

June Morrison: It was very hot work, indeed. So we did have that sort of thing, but it came primarily through hard work, as most things do, I guess, when you really think of it.

Interviewer: Let's talk about this house a little bit. Your father built it?

June Morrison: My father bought. He bought from a man name of Wago. I don't know how to spell that. I suppose W-a-g-o. But I do know that the man went broke farming, and my father liked the fact that it was off the highway. With six children he wanted a place that was back off the roadway. and this was ideal to him. The house was here. There was a place for the bathroom, but no bathroom fixtures. The man couldn't pay for the fixtures. Later my father put the bathroom fixtures in.

Interviewer: Right after he bought this he brought the water down from Gilbert?

June Morrison: Yes, very shortly after that.

Interviewer: Did you have electricity in this house at that time?

June Morrison: Always had electricity here. I remember living in a house where we had carbide lights, and I remember the odor. If I were to smell that odor today I would still know what it was, because it had a peculiar kind of an odor. It was a little like camp light. Not keorsene. But it had it's own peculiar odor.

Interviewer: Was that house here in Gilbert?

June Morrison: Yes it was. It was two miles south of Gilbert and Elliot. Directly south.

Interviewer: Did your folks rent that place?

June Morrison: I think the house came with the leased land. I think that is why we were there.

Interviewer: That seems to have been a popular mode of rental. Then he bought this property?

June Morrison: Yes.

Interviewer: What was the year that you and Marvin moved into this place?

June Morrison: 1955, he said.

Interviewer: You basically raised your family here?

June Morrison: Except for Richard who was seven when we moved here.

Interviewer: Where were you living before you moved here?

June Morrison: We lived at Recker Road and almost Guadalupe. We still have that house.

Interviewer: Of course, you have the dairy out there too. And the farm land.

Interruption in tape.

June Morrison: I was born in 1924, and soon that would have been depression time, so of course it was difficult for this man to continue on.

Interviewer: There were a lot of farmers who had that problem.

June Morrison: Yes.

Break to check spellings from the family Bible.

Interviewer: You can't grow cotton because of the development?

June Morrison: Because of the development we can't grow cotton any longer in some places. The schools and the houses are too close. The liability is too much. It is just like a doctor's malpractice, except we can't get insurance against such things. So you see it makes it very difficult. Now if a product would come along that we could grow... In the years

that we didn't grow cotton, sometimes we grew flax. We grew safflower. We grew some other crops-- sugarbeets and watermelon, but none of them actually were long term. They were more experimental than anything. They did not have the return that cotton did, so therefore they didn't stay around.

Interviewer: So alfalfa is absolutely the only thing you can grow here that has the return?

June Morrison: At the moment. We have thought about turning it into a plant nursery, flower farm. You name it. We've just about run the gambit. Herbs, basil. It is not that we haven't looked. It's just the return is not there. Then, too, you have to think about what your experience is. So many people lose their money because they go into things they have no experience in, and we just don't want to do that. All of our ventures have been in agriculture. The dairy, the cattle ranch and the farm are all agriculture.

Interviewer: If you decided to sell this off, what would you do? Would you consider staying here or would you personally want to relocate?

June Morrison: We have considered both and the decision is not made at the present time.

Interviewer: It's something you are still thinking about?

June Morrison: Yes, actively thinking about. Everyday.

Interviewer: Wouldn't it be rather hard to leave here?

June Morrison: Absolutely. It would be very, very hard. No question about it. I can't fool myself about it.

Interviewer: How long do you think you have before you have to have this decision made? Is there a time table for that?

June Morrison: Probably within a year.

Interviewer: Is the rest of this that is going to develop kind of what is pushing your decision?

June Morrison: We think so. If you leave a place out and the development passes you by, sometimes that is difficult too. It just depends on what you want to go into. How you want to develop it. If you wanted to put it in houses then you

probably want to go with the flow at the time that the cycle is high. And so we have thought about all of those things.

Interviewer: It can't have been easy.

June Morrison: No, it's not easy.

Interviewer: This property has been in your family sixty years?

June Morrison: Yes. Sixty-one years this year. Yes.

Interviewer: Three generations?

June Morriosn: Right. Three generations, correct. And I can tell you that I am not the most sentimental one in the family. I am sentimental, but I am not the most sentimental, because I have sometimes wanted to take down old structures that have been here all my life, and some of my family have protested saying, "Mom, that's been here all of your life." I said, "Yes, I know it has, but I think it is time it came down." So, it's difficult to make changes. The longer you stay in a certain groove, the harder it is to get out. And we've been in the agricultural mode a long time. It will be hard to get out. There is no question.

Interviewer: Let's talk a little bit about your school. Going to school you had dances and things. When did you and Marvin decide to get married?

June Morrison: Well, we decided to get married on Tuesday night and we were married on Saturday. So that wasn't a very long engagement.

Interviewer: Must have been a little bit of decision making ahead of that.

June Morrison: I suppose that is true. We had been going together a long time. We had been in school together since the fifth grade. We had gone to college together through our freshman year, and then of course the war came right in the middle of the freshman year. Then Marvin continued on in school during the summer, and then came August.... Well, actually he went into the service earlier than that. He went into the service from school. He had only gotten into his junior year a few weeks when he was called to go into the service. So he went and had his basic training, and went into some college work in Ohio. But then the hue and cry was

that these college kids should not be allowed to continue their education and not have to go into the ground forces. He was taken right out of college with a broken leg and sent to the infantry in Texas, and he had a broken ankle and had to go through all that physical torture with a broken ankle.

Interviewer: Good grief!

June Morrison: Because the hue and cry of the country was that they were privileged because they were studying engineering and so forth. He would have made a very good engineer.

Interviewer: He came home sometime, I assume, before he went to France, and you were married?

June Morrison: Right. He came home in August and we decided on Tuesday night to get married, and we were married on Saturday night here.

Interviewer: Who was your maid of honor?

June Morrison: My sister, Margaret. The best man was Kenneth, Marvin's brother. And those attending were almost entirely family.

Interviewer: While he was gone, what did you do?

June Morrison: I finished college. I graduated from ASU and then I took a job at an alfalfa dehydrating plant in the area. There was one that had been there for some years, and then there was a new one that sprung up, but I worked at the traditional one, and I worked the full time he was gone. And after he came back, for a while, I worked also. I had gotten a position as a teacher in California, but, of course, when I found out that he was going to be coming home in the spring, I gave the school notice that I wouldn't be teaching in the fall.

Interviewer: You had to be shocked when you found out he was wounded.

June Morrison: Yes. My mother had died in January, and Marvin was wounded in February of the same year. We received this telegram, and in fact, this tells you what a small town is like. My father heard by way of the grapevine that the, what would amount to the Chief of Police today, had a telegram for me, before we found out what the contents were.

Interviewer: That must have been frightening for him.

June Morrison: And then when it came it said he was "slightly wounded." Well, I had known other people whose friends or husbands had that same telegram and it turned out to be considerably worse than "slightly wounded." But Marvin's fortunately was a piece of shrapnel that he has in him yet today. And the body has just surrounded it, and it always shows up in a lung x-ray. The Army surgeons tried to remove it twice, and it's just too deep. They couldn't get it out.

Interviewer: Working at the alfalfa plant, the dehydrating plant, that actually dries the alfalfa doesn't it?

June Morrison: Yes. Correct.

Interviewer: Don't they have the great big tumbling bins?

June Morrison: How to do it?

Interviewer: Yes.

June Morrison: I never did see that process. I worked in the office for years, and I routed the freight cars that took it to Iowa or Illinois. Sometimes they made it into rabbit pellets, and sometimes they made it into chicken feed, so it came in different forms. But the railroads were always happy to have it go over their line. So that was one of the things I did, but I did other things, of course. Filing. There was a lab there. They always tested the alfalfa to see how much protein was in it, because that was the way you sold it. If it was high protein you received more money per ton then if it were low protein. So there was a labortory right there at the office and they would test the alfalfa before it left.

Interviewer: Did you work outside the house for a number of years?

June Morrison: Not very long. After Marvin came home, well our first son was born, not in that very first year, but not very long after that either. There was plenty to do, and then besides that I kept books for the ranch, for the farm, for a number of years. By the time the second son was born I gave that up. I must have kept books something like seven years, because there are seven years between Richard and Scott. It was sometime after Scott was born that I gave up keeping the books.

Interviewer: That was a pretty big job though keeping track of everything on a farm.

June Morrison: It was such a big job that I was pretty far behind when the fellow came who became the office manager and took over the bookkeeping.

Interviewer: Let's talk just a minute about the evolution of farming. There's been a big change. Now your father probably wouldn't have needed a bookkeeper.

June Morrison: He needed one, but he didn't have one.

Interviewer: He didn't have one?

June Morrison: His bookkeeping was very sporadic and was all over the office, or all over the desk, wherever he was working. Papers were everywhere. So he needed one, but he didn't have one.

Interviewer: Now you almost need a fleet of them?

June Morrison: Oh, yes. The requirements today that the government enforces are onerous. They are really onerous. My parents complained about it in their day, but they were nothing compared to what we have today. Nothing. Well, that's a whole different subject.

Interviewer: You have a large enough operation that you are involved in not only keeping track of the crops and all of the paperwork associated with that, but you also have to keep track of labor, of stock, lots of facets of the ag business.

June Morrison: Then sometimes the restrictions are ridiculous. When the government says that water is going to run from our place into the Gila River, they're simply off their rocker. It is not going to happen. Sometimes you just say, "What's the use of trying to comply?"

Interviewer: Why are they telling you your water will run into the Gila River?

June Morrison: In developments today, the water is supposed to go into the underground. You are supposed to make all of these retaining areas so that the water will go into the underground and not be contaminated. Well, it's going to be contaminated if you have contamination on the farm or in the

subdivision, or wherever it is, but they were saying because we had a feed lot they didn't want this water going into the Gila River. Well the Gila River is nineteen miles, or whatever it is, south of us. It is not going to get there.

Interviewer: If it does, it will probably be clean.

June Morrison: If it gets there, it will be clean. Sometimes the things are just ridiculous and you just eventually say, "I'm not going to do it." But, of course, that is more me than it is Marvin. I am much more a rebel than he is. But a few times they have ignored things that kept coming such as that. It is just more than a person can take when you have to have storm doors on the post offices in Southern California because you have to have storm doors in Minnesota or in Massachutes. You know it does not make sense. So it is the same kind of thing. It is necessary some places, but it is not necessary everywhere, and when you know that, you rebel. You just say, "No!"

Interviewer: How did your family come out here? Did they ship their things, and drive out?

June Morrison: My parents drove out. My uncle, Otto Neely and his brother drove a team of horses from Texas. But my parents drove out, and we still have a tin box that they brought some things in.

Interviewer: Did they have a two wheeler on the back? There must have been alot of things for that family?

June Morrison: With so many children, at that time, of course, five, and one a baby, you would think it wouldn't be possible even to come, but they managed. I don't know if it was a truck or not. At nine months I don't remember much.

Interviewer: No, you don't remember much. Just the logistics of keeping diapers clean would have been a nightmare.

June Morrison: Terrible, terrible.

One thing I wanted to mention about what kids did for fun and all was we used to play Annie Over at this house. At that time this was the end of the house. The boys would throw a baseball over this house, then they would send which ever one around the corner, and that's one thing that we played. We played jacks. The boys played Mumbly Peg and marbles, and the girls played dolls and paper dolls. We played a lot of paper dolls. I can't get my grandchildren

interested in playing paper dolls. We cut out paper dolls by the hour.

Interviewer: Did you ever make them out of catalogs?

June Morrison: I imagine we did. Fashion was very interesting to us. You know. I have bought old fashioned clothes for paper dolls, and the kids just aren't interested. If I cut them out they might play with them two minutes. I was so surprised because that was one of the things we did. And, of course, swings and gymnastic type of things. But also playing on farm equipment and just whatever was around.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to help out in the fields?

June Morrison: No, I never did help in the fields at all. My brothers did. They worked very, very hard. They would sew grain into gunny sacks, into burlap bags, and then have to lift those 100 pound sacks on the combines. And the chaff from the combines was just terrible. Then sometimes they would sleep down in the basement in the daytime because it was cooler. They would put a fan at the head of the stairs and they would sleep down there in the daytime and then work at night.

Interviewer: Did that chaff ever get stuck in their skins?

June Morrison: It was just very uncomfortable.

Interviewer: What about other things that you did. Swimming in the canal?

June Morrison: Swimming in the canals we did. And then one of the things that people did that I think was illegal was to ski on the canals. They would get some kind of a flat board, and then they would tie a rope to it, then tie a rope to the car and they would ski on the canals in the canal water.

Interviewer: Did you ever ski on the canal?

June Morrison: No, I never did, but people did do that. When we were in high school there was only one boy who had a car. His car was, oh, I suppose a Ford. I'm not very intrested in cars so I don't know. It was what people would call today a jalopie. But it was the interest of the whole school because it was the only one on campus. We graduated with eighteen in

our class and, of course, that was in 1941. Well, there were probably 100 kids in school. Maybe. Counting freshmen and all. Freshmen through seniors, you know. So everybody knew everybody else, and the car was of great interest.

Interviewer: What about school dances and things like that?

June Morrison: We had quite a few of those. One of the things people did was to listen to the world series. Baseball World Series. I mean when you would go into a store it was like people now watching the Olympics. They would be listening to the radio and the World Series and wondering who was going to win. And that was a big deal. Sometimes we would have a radio at school at noontime. We would listen to the World Series.

Or sometimes we'd have a dance at noon. We had more dances than anything else I can think of on a regualr basis. I said Marvin and I went steady, that is we didn't go with anyone else to speak of, but we didn't go steadily like people do today. If we went out in one semester a half a dozen times, that was probably a big lot. We went with each other, but not very often.

Interviewer: Weren't you probably in a group of kids a great deal of time where you were together but...

June Morrison: Oh, yes. Right. We were definitely that way.

Interviewer: What about a soda fountain?

June Morrison: We did have a soda fountain in Gilbert. And I am told that the old fountain is still in that building. That it is still around somewhere. It has never been resurrected and put back, but I was told in recent years that it was still there.

Interviewer: Did you kind of hang out there?

June Morrison: Yes. And the things we had were Red Rivers and Green Rivers, and when Cherry Coke came out that was the living end. That was really something. And then, of course, the chololate things. Sometimes a chocolate Coke, which I didn't go for but some people did. Then malts. But a rootbeer float was one of the things we'd rather have than almost anything. The A & W rootbeer with ice cream was a big treat.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to dances out of town?

June Morrison: I don't recall that we ever did in high school, except as juniors we put on the Junior/Senior Prom for the seniors, and we sold candy all year long at five cents a bar in order to put on this prom. When we were Juniors we had that prom at the San Marcos Hotel in Chandler, so that was a big deal. The first time Marvin ever kissed me was at the San Marcos in Chandler. And that was when we were Juniors in high school.

Interviewer: What about when you were seniors. Where did the juniors hold your prom.

June Morrison: Well, isn't it funny that I can't remember that. Marvin probably remembers, but I don't. The war hadn't started yet because it didn't start until December, and I was trying to think. But the clouds were really around. I don't know that that would have had any effect. I think that would not have had any effect. But during our junior year we sold Musketeer bars and the peanut brittle bars for five cents a bar.

Interviewer: Bit of Honey?

June Morrison: The Bit of Honey was one of them, and the English Toffee bar. Surprising how big it was. If we could see that today. They sell it for twenty-five cents or more. English Toffee. All of those. We sold those and made enough money to have an orchestra, to rent the room, and all of those things.

Interviewer: Did you have a dinner for the seniors?

June Morrison: No. It was a party dance. It was a prom, and everyone wore long dresses and dressed up very much. But no limousines. We didn't have corsages, and we didn't have a lot of things, but it was a nice party for that time, and we had refreshments. And we had live music.

Interviewer: That was pretty nice, then.

June Morrison: Yes, it was at the San Marcos.

Interviewer: Did you have any other class projects?

June Morrison: Our senior year we had to do the yearbook, and we did it with blue printing, and it was the most awful thing you ever saw. It was terrible. I don't know why we

were supposed to do that. It was a lot of work and just terrible.

Interviewer: You probably thought it was going to come out fine.

June Morrison: I suppose so, but it didn't. It was really very, very bad. Let's see. Marvin was in track meets. We were in orchestra. We had orchestra in the basement of what is now the Gilbert Museum. I started school in kindergarten in that room, and later in high school was in orchestra in that room.

Interviewer: What instrument did you play?

June Morrison: I played piano primarily, but there was a time when I played viola some. Marvin played several things. Violin primarily.

Interviewer: You went all through that school then?

June Morrison: Oh, yes. Then the high school. So those administrative offices now, they bring back ever so many memories.

Interviewer: They are beautiful.

June Morrison: They are very nice.

Interviewer: Who was in your class with eighteen students?

June Morrison: Well, Ruth Gieszl who is now in the community did not graudate with us, but during part of the years of our schooling in Gilbert she was in our class. Then she moved to California and graduated in California. She was our same age. Then her...who later became her sister-in-law, Ruth Blakely, her name was Ruth Gieszl. She was in our class and was one of my very best friends. Anna Wallace was in our class, and she presently lives in Prescott. And Jack Eddy. He is a pharmacist, or has been a pharmacist, he may be retired now in California. And Sheldon Lofgreen, Daryl Slade and Alfred Sotomayor.

And, of course, we think back and remember that in grade school the Mexican children were not with us. They were in a separate building. Completely separate building. We would get together sometimes for the winding of the Maypole or something like that. But it was a very different thing when

we got to junior high. Then the Mexican children were all in with us.

The reason for that was that at one time they just didn't speak English well enough to be in the classes to go through the sixth grade. Well, that was the stated reason. I don't know if that was entirely it or not. But truly they didn't speak very much English. And so when they got to the place where they could speak enough English to keep up with the classes, then they were in with everyone else.

Interviewer: They were mainstreamed then? As far as farm labor. Let's skip over to farm labor for a second. When there were so many people out here picking cotton, was there a contractor that came to the farm and said, "I have fifty workers," you know, or did they just come individually and hire on?

June Morrison: They came individually. One of the things I had to do for my father, and I didn't mind doing it at all, was to help him check the amounts of cotton that people picked everyday. It would be done on an adding machine tape and he would read off all these numbers, because every Saturday he paid them in cash. And I recall that he would get $50 to pay these workers every Saturday. At least $50. Now some of the kids at school said, "There's no way that your dad can get $50 from the bank every week." But he did. To them that was just an awful lot of money, and there was no way that he could do that.

Well, I would sit there, and he would read off these numbers and check. And every once in a while he would read a wrong one to see if I was paying attention. Then we paid them in cash. And it really wasn't very much money. Not very much at all. But those people's troubles were my father's troubles. You know, if they were going to have a baby and there was no way to get the wife to the doctor, he might have to take her.

Interviewer: Where did they live while they were working for you?

June Morrison: As we said awhile ago, leasing property you would probably get the house with it. And that was the same way with the job. You generally got a house. The house was provided. And so we had a lot of just ordinary houses. Very ordinary houses around on the properties. And if you bought land you might buy some labor houses with the property. It is not so common today, but even on our ranch at one time

Marvin was figuring up how many houses we had, and we had eighty-five.

Interviewer: That's a lot of houses on one property.

June Morrison: It's not that we had them all on the farm. That included some out at the dairy. It was at the time when the county was renumbering. They had a renumbering system, and it was a time when we were having those floods in early 1980. He went in on the train to the county recorder's office and got numbers for eighty-five houses.

Now we don't have that many on the farm, but it included all those other workers. Most of them have their own trailer houses. We do have some houses out on the dairy. It's permanent housing, but not all of it is. So that's an awful lot of cesspools. Those things. We've taken care of a lot of that kind of thing. If the cooler goes out, some of our people have to go out and take care of the cooler. If the cesspool gets filled up, then we have to take care of that. The workers problems are the owner's problems.

Interviewer: We were courious about how it was handled in the earlier days.

June Morrison: Well, truly the workers had a tough time. And there were migratory workers, and at that time there were hobos who came around. They might just knock at your door, and we always fed them. They might or might not work, but we always fed them.

One of the reasons that Sonora Town came into being-- do you know where Sonora Town is? It was because that property was not taxed. It was not on the tax roles. So that's why those people started camping there, or building houses there, was because there were no taxes. It was that little three cornered piece between the canal and Warner Road. For some reason when they were surveying no one was using it and it just wasn't put on the roles. How they found it out, I don't know.

Interviewer: So Sonora Town grew up.

June Morrison: Sonora Town completely filled up just like a subdivision. Just one house right after another.

Interviewer: Most of those folks were farm laborers too, weren't they?

June Morrison: Yes, they were. And in later years rather than just being strictly farm laborers, many of them had their own trucks and started hauling alfalfa. That's how some of them got started and got out of the strictly farm labor business. That was hard work, lifting those bales. They stacked them high. But that was one way they could get on their feet and be a contractor. They would contract to take your hay from here to wherever you wanted it to go. If you were selling it or you wanted it to go by rail. Of course that's one thing we all know, is that Gilbert was at one time the largest alfalfa shipping place in the world. Right here in Gilbert. And that siding was used a lot for shipping hay, alfalfa.

Interviewer: Of course, it's not used at all now. And the depot was taken out?

June Morrison: The depot was taken out, and that was taken out because of one family who came here and were here awhile, but they had to do with the newspaper. They put up such a fuss that the Southern Pacific took that depot out. They had a campaign to try to get rid of it. This family did. The wife worked for the newspaper and wrote articles in the newspaper all the time. And the husband, I don't know. I remember one thing that he did was to fly over Gilbert during the Gilbert Days Parade, because we have had that going for a long time. But they came, and they left, and they no longer had to endure what they had started. The fact that it was no longer there. And not enough people objected to them taking the depot down.

Interviewer: I have heard that it happened very quickly. One minute it was there and the next minute it was gone.

June Morrison: Right. But in the old days, and I say old days meaning the Thirties and Forties, the Capital Feed and Seed was the place that the men gathered, because that was where you bought equipment or you bought the seed, where you bought the gasoline, where you got your supplies for the farms. Everybody knew everybody in there, and the man who ran it at the time was a good fellow. It was just sort of the men's gathering place. Capital Feed and Seed. When my mother had cancer and went to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, the Mayo Clinic called Capital Feed and Seed. It was one of the places my father wrote down as a reference. They called from the Mayo Clinic to see what his credit was like and the man there said, "Clyde Neely never asked for anything he couldn't pay for." That was his credit.

Interviewer: Couldn't ask for better than that.

June Morrison: I think that's right. So as far as I know there was no other credit check.

Interviewer: I wouldn't imagine.

June Morrison: No. That was a long way to go to get medical care, and they didn't help her. It wasn't their fault. It was too late to help her. So my father was married three times, actually.

Interviewer: Your mother was his first wife?

June Morrison: Right. He had no other children, but he was married three times.

Interviewer: Where did the women gather if the men gathered at the feed store?

June Morrison: It is a little like today. The women don't gather as the men do in one place. That is during the war I can remember my mother rolling bandages, and making things for the soldiers. It was the Red Cross. We all came together for the Red Cross. That's what she did. Making kits, where they would put in razors and whatever else that the Red Cross asked them to.

Interviewer: This was World War II?

June Morrison: Yes. So that's where she gathered with people. Then the church groups. But I suppose the women's club, if she had gone to that, would have been one place. In later years I suppose it was garden club. But there hasn't been a garden club in Gilbert for quite awhile.

Interviewer: Have you seen any of the, I suppose you would say, social impact since...

June Morrison: Yes. You see, my father wanted to know where his kids were. We moved into this house because he was responsible for his children and they weren't to just go off and be anywhere at any time. I can remember him spanking my brothers really harder than I thought he should for their indiscretions, but he was responsible for them. He was going to be responsible for them.

The social changes that you see in the family today are really heartbreaking to me. People expect the state to be

responsible for their children. Well, how ridiculous. I don't wan't the state interfering with my up bringing of my children. I knew where my children were. And if I had to call at one o'clock or two o'clock or three o'clock to somebody's house to see if my kids were there, I did. And I made no appologies for it. Absolutely none. I knew where my children were, and they knew that if I found out they weren't where they were suppose to be, they had something to pay.

And one time one of them came in late, and he was quite late. I was standing by the door. He was old enough to know what my feelings were, but I decided that the question that you have to ask yourself is, "How long do I wait before I let someone know that he is not here? How long do I wait before I wake up Marvin? How long do I wait before I call the police, or whatever that you decide to do? So when he came in that door I said to him, "How long do you want me to wait before I start looking for you?" And I never, ever had to do that again. When you put the responsibility back on them, they realize that it is not just your feelings that you are thinking about, but you are thinking about them. And that makes a difference.

Interviewer: When you are in a small town you have a little help from neighbors and others who tend to see that nobody gets into too much trouble? Did you find that to be true?

June Morrison: I think that was basically true. Through chaparones at the dances and just generally that people knew. One time some boys came...because we have a U-shaped drive, it's almost like a freeway sometimes with teenagers, and people will come in here and just look and then go on. For whatever reason. Well, one night some boys came through here, and my father got up and he marched them down to the police station. Now they didn't know, but he was in his pickup and they were in their car, and they didn't know that he was in his nightshirt, and there was no way that he was going to get out of there. But he took them down to the police station.

So people did those things, mainly just to scare them. And I am sure nothing was done. I don't know what mischief they were in. Probably something. It wasn't very far.

But, yes, people did do their best to instill some moral upbringing in the kids. And the schools tried to. They tried to have teachers who were the right kind of people who would teach kids along the way a few morals as well as the book learning. And that didn't always work, of course, because

there were always people yelling about-- in that day they didn't call it civil rights-- but their rights.

We lived through the time when a man and his wife could not teach in the district at the same time. You see the man was the bread winner, and if the wife was going to teach she had to teach in another district. That of course changed, and they were able to teach in the same district, but for a long time they couldn't. And the man got more money than the woman did teaching. So life was very much different. There were very few single parent families. Very, very few. And if a family had a tragedy, the whole community really pitched in very much and tried to help out.

Interviewer: Do you remember any specific examples of that?

June Morrison: Well, even not so long ago there was an organization called Gilbert Way. And this organization's sole purpose was helping people through difficult circumstances. I know we gave money to that. Maybe someone was in an accident and lost a leg. I don't know that I can come up with any specific one.

Interviewer: Gilbert has always had a history of helping each other haven't they, until recently?

June Morrison: I think that's basically right. Yes.

Interviewer: Several people, one person in particular, Ed Lamoreaux, mentioned that for a while there was some friendly rivalry in the community between the Methodists and the LDS members. But it was a "friendly rivalry" was the way he described it, for School Board seats and Town Council seats.

June Morrison: Yes. Right.

Interviewer: I wondered if you remember anything about it?

June Morrison: Oh, yes, I do. Very much so. Yes. And I think that it was just as bad in those days to have all the members of the School Board to be Methodist, as it is today to have nearly all the School Board be Mormon. Because you realize eventually that all the barbs are going to fall upon you, and its no picnic to be on those boards in the first place. So it's difficult to be on those boards in a more or less divided community of religions. And I think there has been some change there, but it isn't completly gone.

Interviewer: Do you think that has created some problems in the town?

June Morrison: Oh, surely. You can absolutely see it, that the LDS have school release time for their students and they always get a place very close to the school for their seminary. At one time we couldn't have school functions on certain nights because of the activities at the LDS Church.

Interviewer: That was a local Board decision?

June Morrison: Yes, I believe it was. So a few things like that. And I don't remember specifically, but I suppose that the Methodist's might have done something that shouldn't have been done because they were all from one church. So it was just as bad one way as the other. There really should be more of a cross section of the community on the boards. I definitely think so.

I have been on a number of boards, and I know one time on the Child Crisis Center Board in Mesa they were wanting to have the Department of Economic Security social workers on that board, and I said, "No way. They already have their sphere of influence with their jobs, and then if they get on a board where they have more influence, that's just overwhelmingly one agency's point of view." So I wasn't in favor of that at all. Have people from the general community. In my way of thinking, it just isn't fair to have them all from one area of the town.

I think that the LDS have come to see that. I think that they have come to see that some of the problems are brought on by themselves. By the decisions that are made. And some of the more open minded LDS people see that. Some of them don't.

Interviewer: Early release time was legislated by the state wasn't it?

June Morrison: I don't know if that is the case. Now in later years other groups could have it, as well.

Interviewer: When your kids went to school, what was it like? Did they just have..?

June Morrison: They had Wednesday schedules on Friday, and Monday schedules on Wednesday, and Tuesdays on Thursdays. And I had real trouble keeping up with it sometimes. They'd come home and say, "Well, we're having a Friday schedule today," And I would say, "On Monday?" or whatever it was.

That was when Howard, the youngest, was in school. They did that sometimes. I don't know why they did that. Must have been to accommodate certain things, but I never did understand all of that.

But, of course, when our oldest son went to school he was absolutely in everything. He was outstanding in nearly everything, so he participated very widely in musical events, athletic events. If they had a play, he would be in the play. In his senior year he was gone alot because he was FFA president of the state. And so being from a small school, and being, as you say, a big frog in a little pond, he had so much experience. He had a rich, rich experience in ever so many things. And I don't think that it was necessarily the making of him, but I do think that it gave him a lot of experience that kids today don't get.

Of course, that didn't happen so much when our younger sons, Scott and Howard went to high school because there were a lot more in high school. They were outstanding and they did very well in school, and they were valedictorian or salutatorian. But it was their experiences. For instance, in football Howard spent six hours a day with football, and I said to his coach, "Don't you think that is a little lopsided. What if every teacher required their kid to have six hours of work? There's no way." He said, "I never thought of it like that." Now I don't mean they were practicing all that time, but they were watching films, or they were talking about the plays or they were whatever. Well,I thought that was excessive.

Interviewer: How was the team that year.

June Morrison: They were a very good team. They were in the championship that year. And that year they practiced on Thanksgiving Day, and I called the Superintendent, and I knew him well. And I said, "What is this? Talking about kids not being very family oriented, and you have football practice on Thanksgiving Day?" He said, "Well, June, I understand, but too many people want it." That was his answer. "Too many people want it." It was on Thanksgiving Day that year. So some of us protested. Whether they moved it or not.

Interviewer: That's the rebel in you.

June Morrison: That's the rebel in me. I've got a lot of rebel in me. But I thought that was no time to be doing football practice. Thanksgiving Day.

Interviewer: I have to agree with you. That would be a little much.

June Morrison: I thought so.

Interviewer: Anything else that you would like to talk about?

June Morrison: Yes. Our family has been in farming for a number of generations. Owning land is more than just a mere asset to us. It means hope and promise for a better tomorrow. It is the challenge of doing your best with what you have. It is the idea that the land will produce forever. Farming almost always produces new wealth every year. It is revewable, unlike the oil and gas reserves which take eons to renew.

I feel I belong to the land.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.