

INTERVIEW SUMMARY-TAPE INDEX

NAME: Morris, Susan  
DATE OF INTERVIEW:  
LOCATION:  
INTERVIEWER: Hope Hadley  
REEL NO.

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31:06-39:35		Education in rural area vs. urban schooling - no preparation for college. Early marriages in small town. Feelings on divorce in small town.

END

HH: What is your full name?

SM: Susan Lucile Morris.

HH: Do you have any nicknames?

SM: No.

HH: Okay, no nicknames and you're not married. And your address?

SM: Elk River.

HH: Date of birth?

SM: October 2, 1952.

HH: And your place of birth?

SM: Moscow.

HH: Your first residence in Idaho, is that Elk River?

SM: Yes.

HH: Have you lived here all that time?

SM: Right, with the exception of going to school.

HH: Okay, family background. Mother's maiden name?

SM: Harriet Yager.

HH: Date of birth?

SM: I don't know what her's is; I couldn't tell you. I don't know the year and I'm not even sure of the date either.

HH: Let's wait on that one. Her place of birth?

SM: I don't know that. I know she was from Georgia, but I don't think she was born in Georgia.

HH: Do you know the year she was married in?

SM: No.

HH: How about counting back from when you were born?

SM: She must have been married in 1950.

HH: Did she have any occupations or jobs?

SM: She was a secretary before she was married. She went two years of college.

HH: Up here at the University?

SM: No, in Alabama, I believe. I wouldn't put that down because I'm not sure.

HH: Well, we'll put a question mark by it. And that's basically what she's done before she married?

SM: Yeah.

HH: Your father's name?

SM: John Morris.

HH: And his date of birth?

SM: No, you can ask Grandma, she knows.

HH: And his place of birth?

SM: In Elk River, but I can't give you the year.

[There is a conversation with some other people in the room before the interview resumes again.]

HH: What about your father's occupation?

SM: Pharmacist.

HH: That's basically what he's been doing all these years?

SM: Along with a hundred other odd jobs.

HH: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

SM: I have one brother living and I have one that was killed in January.

HH: Can you give me his name?

SM: Thomas Morris.

HH: And no sisters?

SM: No sisters.

HH: Okay, I think we can fill the rest of this out later. Can

you tell me what are some of the advantages of living in the rural area, you know, the rural life?

SM: Well, I think that you learn to depend more upon yourself for recreation instead of having it set before you. It could be a disadvantage because of the gossip because you are right in the middle of it all the time. I think you get to know people better. The country is great. I think everybody should have a chance, if not live in it but be able to have access to it just to learn, you know. To be able to go out and see what it's like to be free. To have the choice of whether you want to go hiking or something without having to go 20 miles in the car to get there.

HH: You don't have much problem with pollution around here, do you?

SM: No, not an awful lot. Our biggest problem is, well, small towns don't have a real top rate sewage system and the biggest problem there is that.

HH: How would you compare the life of a rural woman with that of an urban woman? If you have a friend, say in Moscow or Lewiston, how would you compare your life with her?

SM: I think that a woman in an urban area has more to occupy her time without having to really look for something to do. Like the

women here get bored an awful lot, especially during the winter because it's mostly just housekeeping and looking after the kids and that's it -- there's not much outside activity. I think this is a lot of the fault of the people because they don't get out and do things.

HH: So, in a city there's always something going on?

SM: There's always something. There's always some kind of a meeting. People are getting involved. They're getting involved in, I think, more with school activities and church activities and this is the thing in larger areas.

HH: In winter season, it kind of closes down around here?

SM: Right.

HH: How does your family now compare to when you were a child? Is it a lot different now?

SM: Oh, I don't think that for myself it's that much different. I'm still pretty much doing the same things now that I liked to do then. I haven't changed that much. I like being outdoors, riding and working with animals. And I did then and I do now.

HH: What were some of the things that you and your brothers did

when you were little? Did you both have the same chores around the house and that sort of thing? What did you do for recreation?

SM: For recreation we used to do all sorts of things. We got in lots of trouble. No, my childhood was, like as far as playing, I was at that time and am still the only girl around here that is my age. There are people maybe a year older or a year younger, this type of thing. But when I was before school, I ran around with the guys all the time so it was me and the guys and just for myself we did a lot of the cowboy and the Indian and playing with trucks and this type of thing. We played a lot in the woods and building treehouses. I didn't spent very much time in the house.

HH: Did that change once you got into grade school and into high school?

SM: Well, in grade school I was real shy, like I took dancing lessons and I started taking piano lessons and this type of thing; but, when I'd get home from school it was out with the guys or else down with the horses. I didn't really get into that much running around with the girls. Girls weren't any fun.

HH: Since you were considered a tomboy, what were the other girls doing? Were they more into dolls or playing house?



SM: Yeah, they were playing dolls and playing house. I did that quite a bit, but I had more fun playing with trucks. You were playing house and you would always form little clubs and you would kick somebody else out if you got mad at them and you'd be somebody else's friend another day, you know, just typical.

HH: Sounds like it.

SM: A lot of them were pretty groupy, you know, ran around more as a group of girls instead of with a bunch of guys.

HH: Was there sort of an expectation when you were in high school? Like a lot of the girls would get married when they got out or not many would go to college?

SM: Most of the girls that have graduated in the last few years, well, since I've been, five years, and during the time I was in high school I think most of them did pretty much get married right out of high school and most of them married guys from Bovill, Deary and this vicinity.

HH: So, they just basically stayed around the area when they got married?

SM: There wasn't an awful lot, maybe one or two out of each graduating class that would go to school, and some of them would complete school and some of them wouldn't.

HH: So, do you think more are going to college now?

SM: I think that in the last couple years, more are going. Let me say that like from '70 to '73, I think more were going and in these last couple of years, I don't think as many kids that have been graduated have been going. But then a lot of them have been getting married right out of high school, too.

HH: Did your parents ever put any pressure on you to go on to college?

SM: Yes. I wanted to go for two years and that was it, and then the third year kind of crept up on me and after that I figured, well, I might as well finish because we've already put this much money into it.

HH: What did you major in?

SM: Well, the first four years I was an Animal Science major, and I'm not too bright in math, chemistry and genetics and nutrition. I'm in the division one, so I went into General Studies so I'll graduate with General Studies. That's about all I'm in right now is good old General Studies. I didn't see any sense in fighting the odds against my head.

HH: What do you do just for yourself, just to relax and for recreation or just for fun?

SM: I like to read, I read a lot. I like to get out and ride and I like to get out and hike and bike ride and this type of thing. Mostly anything to do with outdoors I really enjoy. I really love the outdoors.

HH: When I was in a small town, the tendency seemed to be to gather around the bars.

SM: That's another pretty much a nightly time of recreation and everybody gathers. That's one thing bad about Elk River, and I suppose other small towns because that's all there is for anybody to do around here and that's not to say they go down to drink. I mean there's pool tables.

HH: But that's where the social life gathers?

SM: Yeah, that's where it gathers.

HH: What did your family do for recreation?

SM: We had picnics. We had an old army jeep. Dad would take us on all day excursions. We'd go up in the mountains and we'd travel a lot. We always traveled quite a bit and we'd go on week trips or something.

HH: Where would you go?

SM: All over the United States and pretty well traveled as far as the states are concerned.

HH: What do you do now? What does your family do now? Do you still get together?

SM: Not as much as we used to. All us kids have pretty well gone our own way and doing our own thing, so it's not too much of a family get together as it used to be. Everybody is going to do their thing. Tim is going to do what he wants and Mom and Dad do their thing. It's not like it used to be.

HH: When you were growing up, did your family seem to think that the girls would grow up and get married? Were you sort of raised with that idea that you would grow up and get married?

SM: Most of the girls around here have been. But, my folks, and I'm real glad about it, have never pushed it. In fact, I think they have more discouraged getting married right away. They got married, well, Mom was 26 and Dad was 31 when they got married. And I think it's really great. Like, right now I'm the only girl in Elk River that's single that is the marrying age. Everybody says, "Well, Susan, when are you going to get married?" And I don't plan on it; I've got a lot of things I want to do. I want to travel next fall and so I have no plans whatsoever.

HH: Thinking back, what are some of the things you have done to support your family?

SM: Me support my family? How about my family support me?

HH: I guess this is the question we usually ask the older married women; but, I don't know, maybe you were the strong one to lean on during a crisis or helped your mother around the house a great deal?

SM: Well, I've always had my share of the housework. I haven't been burdened with it; Mom has never been a slave driver. It's just: "Will you do this?" "Well, I don't want to." You know, this type of thing. I suppose I've supported by working in the summer to help with my college tuition would be the biggest factor.

HH: What community or church activities have you been involved in? Are there any clubs around here?

SM: Well, I'm not real involved in anything right now, but when I was in high school and junior high, I was involved with the choir, church, vacation Bible school and things like Four-H. I was in Four-H for ten years.

HH: Do you raise animals?

SM: Just the horse part, I guess. I took child development one year, health, and a couple of classes like that and that's about all. I've never really been one to be in social things where someone is structuring where you have to do it somewhere with a time and a date set on it.

HH: Does this community have a get-together on the Fourth of July and that sort of thing?

SM: No, I suppose Elk River has a big blow-out which would be on Elk River Days. Most of the town helps in some way in getting things cleaned up, organizing.

HH: When is this?

SM: In August, the third week in August.

HH: What do you do for that?

SM: I personally don't do anything for it. I used to help with the gym, but I don't anymore.

HH: It's sort of like a picnic?

SM: It's a community day, you know, like the festivals that most towns sponsor once a year. They have logging events and that type of thing, motorcycle races.

HH: Have you ever displayed anything in a county fair?

SM: My horse projects and little toys for child care projects. Nothing, any food or clothing or that type of thing. I've never been too interested in Home Ec.

HH: Does your mother quilt and that sort of thing?

SM: No. Grandma does all the quilting and sewing. Mom's not too homemakerish, as far as sewing and that sort. She does all the cooking; she really enjoys cooking.

HH: What suggestions would you give a young woman that would prepare her for life on a farm or in a small town? Say you had a woman from the city and she decided she really liked the country, what would you tell her?

SM: The biggest thing that they have to really take into consideration, especially if they are from the city, is that they're not going to have things set before them to do. They are going to have to find things to do and they are going to have to accept it the way it is, and if they want to find their own recreation, they are going to have a good time. And I think another thing, and this doesn't have anything to do with recreation, but a lot of people come in here and are un-cool. People really get a negative reaction to people who act like they are better than you are.

HH: They have an idea that country people are just dumb or something.

SM: Yeah, they do. I get so ticked in some of my classes. A lot of people, the instructors, would make snide comments about Elk River in particular about the low level of education and this type of thing. And I just say, "Look you guys, I've had five years of college and I'm still here, so we must not be that dumb." They just have a really ignorant outlook; they don't know what they are talking about. They just say what they have heard or think they know.

HH: Sounds like they have never been in a small town or anything like that.

SM: So many people, especially from the city, come in here and put out like, "I'm better than you guys so don't hassle me." The people around here and in any small town are real friendly, but when they get that kind of attitude from an outsider ...

HH: They turn them off right away. Would you say they have to get used to the feeling of being isolated? Or, you know what I mean.

SM: I don't think it's as bad now because people are used to having to go 50 miles to driving to get out of Elk River and to get to Moscow, which we consider the city, and people in the city



consider us just as a little dinky town. I don't consider it too isolated. People that come here that haven't been up here before consider it real isolated.

HH: So, basically if they were going to move in a small town they would have to prepare themselves with the idea that they were going to move in and would do something.

SM: The only disadvantage is that you have your lack of stores and for any clothes shopping, you have to go out of town. The prices are not that much higher here than what they are out of town so they have everything handy like food, drugs and liquor and all that. So, the biggest handicap would be clothing and most people like to go to some other towns to buy their clothes, anyway.

HH: Does your family subscribe to any particular magazines or newspapers?

SM: Dad, having the store, he just sort of picks up whatever they send, so I don't think they subscribe. They do get National Geographic, you know, a lot of Arizona and travel magazines because Grandma, she's real well traveled and my dad's done a lot of traveling with the service. As far as anything like Good Housekeeping or something like this, they come into the store so you just pick them up here.

HH: You must have quite a variety then?

SM: Everything from detectives to watch your diet.

HH: Does your family watch TV a lot?

SM: I don't think they do an awful lot. Mostly, Mom has it on in the evenings and watches it; but, in the daytime she usually has the radio on and Dad down here usually has the radio on. I personally can't stand it unless I have nothing else to do; I don't care for it that much.

HH: Do your parents have any certain programs that they watch?

SM: They watch the news, the six o'clock news, the noon news. The last couple of years, with me being at school, I haven't really paid that much attention to what they watch.

HH: Since you've gone away to college and you've had quite a bit of education, what made you decide to come back to Elk River? And would you live in a small town for the rest of your life, do you think?

SM: Right now, my coming back is mostly because for a lack of money to go anywhere else, is probably number one and the time in between going to school and summer vacation isn't that long that it's worth going anywhere. But, when I get enough saved up

I can get out and take the horses and be able to support them, but I wouldn't want to live around here. I would want to live in a small area. I wouldn't want to live in the city.

HH: Where do you think you might go?

SM: I haven't the slightest idea. I just want to get out about for the next couple of years, no planned course of action.

HH: Do you think you'll eventually get married?

SM: Oh yeah, but not anywhere in the near future.

HH: It kind of sneaks up on you. What about children? Do you think you will have some?

SM: Probably. Right now my attitude is I really don't want them, but then that's my selfish attitude because right now there is things that I want to do and I just seeing them as tying me down. When I get married, I hope I've got the travel bug out of my system and I'm ready to settle down.

HH: Do you think you'd have a big family?

SM: No, I'd want a small one, not more than two kids.

HH: Is there anything you can tell me about your experience of living here? Anything special about school or just living here?

SM: Oh, school is a big party. My graduating class was six. I had this problem; I don't think most of the other girls did, but with me growing up with all these guys and just being another one of the guys, I never wanted to date any of them. So, most of my dating was done after college as far as a one to one type dating.

HH: What did you do for fun after school? You know, did you just get in the car and get in the park and drink or what?

SM: It depends on the time of the year. In the winter we had a lot of tubing, sleighing and skating parties, and other than that, it's really hard to put a finger on any particular thing. Whatever happens to come along and they would say, "Hey, come on, let's drive around." You would do that or it was just like anywhere else. The kids would all get in a car and go take races out on the highway or have their beer bust on Friday night thinking that nobody knows where they are. Of course, everybody does.

HH: Are cars sort of a status thing around here? I know at our school it was always who had the hot car.

SM: Yeah, that and motorcycles. You know, they would get a motorcycle in the spring. That was the cool thing.

HH: Was it hard going to school with such a small class?

SM: Well, I don't have anything to compare it to as far as high school and junior high, so I would say no.

HH: Because I know in ours, there was always the "in" group of girls.

SM: They had that up here, too; it was just on a smaller scale. You had the girls that were sort of what you considered the snob group, and the ones that kind of, "Can I be in your group today?" This type of thing. But everyone was one big happy family. A lot of fights.

HH: You mean fist fights?

SM: The girls a lot of the times, this is excluding myself, I wasn't big enough. A lot of times things would get pretty heated and the girls would sometimes get into knockdown drag-outs during PE.

HH: Where did they usually do this?

SM: Oh, we'd be playing soccer and, you know, like one girl doesn't like another girl, just a good reason when she belts you, to belt her right back whether she did it on purpose or not.

I don't think it's as bad now as it used to be. This was when I was in junior high and grade school.

HH: My, I've never run into that before.

SM: I don't really know that they did or not. Like going steady and this type of thing, you know. Like, if I'm going out with this guy, you leave him alone. I think that was pretty well understood.

HH: There wasn't much trading off in junior high with us and into high school and he may have gone with her in junior high but now he's with this other girl.

SM: There was quite a bit the last, oh, it seemed like the junior and senior year when people would level off and stay with the same guy or the guy would stay with the same girl. Before that, every week someone was going steady with somebody else.

HH: Was sports a big thing in the schools?

SM: Real big. During the winter that's what people have to relate to. Like, "Well, my boy does this and that." The only sports we have is basketball and track now. They used to have football, but we don't have enough guys. I guess they have enough guys this year, but they are all so small the first game they'd probably go out and get killed. Five of them were carried

out on stretchers, so they don't play football anymore; they might start up again next year, I don't know. But they've done real good in basketball in the last couple of years. This year they were second in the state in the April tournament. They do real well in track. It seems like we've always had at least one person that has gone to state and played something in track.

HH: One woman that we talked with last night said that she felt that there were a lot of classes lacking from the high school curriculum and so that when the kids went on to college. Did you find a lot of gaps in your education?

SM: Well, my biggest gap was I had math, but for college preparation I had absolutely no math background. That's one of the troubles I had in college because I dropped all my math classes that I did pick up. One bad thing up here is, which I suppose is probably true in a lot of your larger schools too, is the teacher that is trained in one particular field is teaching in three or four areas that he doesn't want to know anything about. And we don't have enough teachers. The size of the school and the number of pupils, you don't really need that many more teachers but they don't have enough where they can have four or five different electives. In fact, I don't know how it is now, but when I was in high school we had two electives. You could either take typing or else you could take girls' crafts and that was the electives. One or the other. There's not a real big choice.

HH: Your grandmother said that she felt there was a real need for Home Ec teachers.

SM: Yeah, they had one up there; I think last year and I don't think she really got down to the thing of Home Ec. She just breezed over things from what I could gather. She was an older woman that did it the way they did it 20 years ago. And, you know things have changed. I know nothing about Home Ec, but I do know that things have changed.

HH: In 20 years, I think so. Do you think that's one of the things that might discourage them from going on to college? Maybe being afraid that they don't have enough?

SM: I think that the biggest thing that discourages them from going on to college is their parents.

HH: Really?

SM: Yeah.

HH: The parents like to keep their girls home?

SM: Well, I may be speaking out of turn, but I won't mention any names. I think a lot of the parents, and I know this is true of a lot of my friends' parents, is they discourage them by saying, "Well, look at so and so, what so and so is she getting out of



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by saying, "Well look at so and so, what is she getting out of college? Nothing, so why do you want to go to college? Save your money. We don't want to put out the money for you." That's what it is. They don't want to take out that money that they have saved to put their kids through college.

HH: So, it's basically, "We don't have the money but we would like you to go."?

SM: A lot of the cases is, "We do have the money but we don't want to put out the money on a college education." And I know that a lot of people around here don't have the money; but, they also discourage the kids from wanting to go. I've heard several parents just sit down and have a heart to heart talk with them on why you don't want to go to college. They're not broadening their scope. I don't know whether they want to keep them here or whether they are just selfish. They don't want to put out anything else after high school.

HH: What do they expect their daughter or son to do if they don't go?

SM: Well, I think one of the biggest reasons why most of the girls get married right out of high school is because there is a lack of something to do. I know the last two of my girlfriends have gotten married and have been divorced since they graduated

and they looked around and said, "There is nothing in Elk River for me to do and I'm not trained to do anything anywhere else, so I'll get married." And that's what they did and one of the girls was divorced six months later.

HH: I know the main employer is the mill, I think, is that right?

SM: Not so much as the mill. I guess they employ quite a bit but just logging in general.

HH: Do they sort of expect the sons to go into the same business as their fathers? You know, like, "My boy will go to work doing lumbering, too."

SM: I don't really know if that's their attitude or not because we aren't .. I mean, we are guided by the logging but we are not a logging family ourselves. Most of the guys do go into some form of logging or like going in working with the Forest Service. I suppose that is what most of them probably do, but now whether this is just because there is nothing available or whether they are getting pushed from their parents, I don't really know.

HH: Your father, being a pharmacist, he obviously had that education. Did he encourage his sons and you to go on because of that, do you think?

SM: Yeah, I think so because he has seen the opportunities that there are and he doesn't want any of us to spend the rest of our lives in Elk River, you know, and having just a mediocre type of life where you're not really doing anything and they are both just really pushy for me to travel. They think it's just really great that I want to do it.

HH: That's great.

SM: I lost my train of thought.

HH: You were saying that you were the only girl here of your age. Do most of the young people go out of Elk River after a certain age?

SM: No, I just happened to be born in between this bunch of girls and that bunch of girls. The only girl of my age, you know, like was 19 when I was 19 and 17 when I was 17, is a girl moved in when she was in the eighth grade. There have been girls that have been a grade above or a grade below. But I went through the fifth and six grades being the only girl in the class. And it has its advantages and disadvantages. Now, like my older brother, we went to school together because his birthday didn't meet the deadline, the date deadline on time, and it was fun but it wasn't so fun either because we would always tattle on each other. We were always dragging little stories home on what so and so did today or why the teacher yelled at me.

XX: You were saying that your girlfriends that got married and divorced, are they still living here in Elk River?

SM: One is, and she is doing nothing. She's living home and visiting right now.

XX: How would she ever meet anybody else if she does stay here and she doesn't know of any other option and she's already been married and divorced?

SM: I don't know. I suppose we get an awful lot of guys that come through here in the summer and that's where a lot of the girls pick up their husbands. In fact, that's where she met her husband. She met him up here during the summer. She wants to go to, I believe to Beauty College. But, all she's done is talked about it; she hasn't done anything about it. So, I don't know if she's going to pick up something or whether she's going to hang around or what she's going to do.

HH: Unless you can think of anything else, that's basically it.

XX: Do most of the ladies in town, the older ladies, are they really against the young girls getting divorces? How do they accept that?

SM: The last couple years, well, I think is the general trend

all over the United States, and they are just accepting it as it happens, instead of looking down their noses on it like they used to. A lot of them, maybe more so here because a lot of people realize that maybe the parents have pushed her into that marriage when she wasn't sure about it herself. I think that more people are more understanding about divorces.