

Interview with Rose (Senger) Baumgartner (RB)

Conducted by Michael M. Miller (MM)

October 31, 1993, Fargo, North Dakota

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MM: This is Michael Miller from North Dakota State University, the Germans from Russia Bibliographer. I am here in the home of my aunt Rose Senger Baumgartner who grew up in Emmons County, North Dakota. It's a real pleasure to be with you Rose, in your apartment here in Fargo. We are going to talk a little bit about what you recollect about the holidays and so forth because it's now Halloween in the year 1993 and we are approaching some very important holidays. But first of all Rose, would you tell us what was the date of your birth?

RB: September 5, 1911.

MM: And you were born near where?

RB: Emmons County but Wells district. What do they call it?

MM: Were you born on the farm?

RB: On the farm and there was a midwife.

MM: Oh, you were born by a midwife?

RB: Oh, yes.

MM: What was the name of your parents?

RB: Anton and Mary Senger.

MM: Anton Senger and your mother was Mary. What was her maiden name?

RB: Eisenzimmer.

MM: Eisenzimmer. And your parents, were they born in Emmons County or were they born in the old country?

RB: They were born in the old country.

MM: Which was in the Black Sea in the Ukraine which is Russia at that time. And when you were a child Rose, growing up on the farm, how many children were in the family?

RB: Nine, and I was the baby.

MM: You were the baby so you had lots of brothers and sisters older than you at home?

RB: Oh, yah. But I only remember 4 of them when they were at home. The other ones, when they got married I don't even remember.

- MM:** The ones that you remember at home, what were their names?
- RB:** John and Mary and Julia and Anton.
- MM:** And who is still living in your family?
- RB:** Mary and Julia and myself.
- MM:** And now, Mary would be how old?
- RB:** 90.
- MM:** She's going to be 90?
- RB:** Yah, gonna be 90.
- MM:** And she's living where?
- RB:** In the Strasburg Nursing Home.
- MM:** And what about Julia? How old is Julia today?
- RB:** Julia is 87 and she lives in her apartment in Lodi, [CA].
- MM:** Oh, so she's in good shape too?
- RB:** Oh, yes.
- MM:** Let's talk a little bit about what you recollect. First of all, today is Halloween. Did you by chance have Halloween when you were a child?
- RB:** I wouldn't remember.
- MM:** Halloween, you didn't have too much of that?
- RB:** Not that I recall.
- MM:** What about Thanksgiving?
- RA:** A big Thanksgiving dinner, always turkey and all the goodies. And my sisters and my brothers, they all went to the dance and I had to be home with my folks. I was too little. We had a kerosene lamp and I watched my sisters putting in the hair curler and fix their hair. When they were gone, I would stand on the chair by the dresser and put the hair curler in the lamp too and fix my hair.
- MM:** Well, why did they put it in the lamp?
- RB:** Well, to heat it.
- MM:** Oh, that's interesting. There was no electricity?
- RB:** There was no electricity. The kerosene lamps, that was my job to clean 'em and to put the kerosene in. Everybody had a job. I had to gather the eggs and wipe up the kitchen floor.
- MM:** Let's go back to that kerosene lamp, that's interesting. About what year would this be? You were born in 1911, so it must have been in the 1911 on through 1921 or early 20's?

- RB:** In early 20's.
- MM:** You stayed home until what age? How old were you when you left the farm?
- RB:** 14.
- MM:** You left the farm at 14, but then your folks moved to town?
- RB:** Yah, um hum.
- MM:** But let's go back to Thanksgiving, so there was a Thanksgiving dance?
- RB:** Yes, the girls would go to Strasburg there. Strasburg always had a dance and my brothers [would go also].
- MM:** Strasburg was a big place for dances?
- RB:** Yah, um hum.
- MM:** And who played? You remember who played?
- RB:** No, that I wouldn't remember. Schwab I think, and those people in that line. I wouldn't know them.
- MM:** Did you ever go to a dance when Lawrence Welk played?
- RB:** Yes I did, but we lived in town already. I wasn't quite old enough but when Lawrence Welk come to town, everybody could go.
- MM:** That was cute. So he was popular at that time already?
- RB:** Oh, yes.
- MM:** So, where did they play down there?
- RB:** Well, in Strasburg in that same hall. The Pool Room.
- MM:** Really? So how would you get down there? Were there cars around?
- RB:** Well, there were kids that went. A whole car full, as many as they got in there. Usually at least six.
- MM:** Oh, is that right? And then, were there all girls?
- RB:** No. No, those days the girls didn't drive. There were some boys that did the driving.
- MM:** Oh, the girls didn't drive then?
- RB:** Uh uh, no.
- MM:** Then you had to pay to get in?
- RB:** Well, we didn't have to pay, just the boys. The girls didn't have to pay those days. But the boys, the way I remember they had to pay \$1.00.
- MM:** That was pretty expensive even for a dance at that time?.
- RB:** Yah, but the girls didn't have to pay.

- MM:** Was Lawrence pretty popular?
- RB:** Very popular, like I say. But when I went to dances, Lawrence was not at Strasburg no more. He would come home for a visit and then there would be a dance.
- MM:** That meant he probably come up from Yankton already?
- RB:** Yah, oh yes. No. No, I don't remember Lawrence being home.
- MM:** You were too young yet then? Do you ever remember hearing Lawrence Welk on the radio?
- RB:** Oh, yes.
- MM:** On WNEX from Yankton?
- RB:** From Yankton yah, whatever station.
- MM:** Oh, yah. People were real proud of him even then.
- RB:** Oh yah, always.
- MM:** And then Christmas was very important in the heritage of our German Russian people. But what do you recall about Christmas? First of all, you didn't have any vehicle at that time. Was it the horse and buggy?
- RB:** Well, we had a car. In 1912 I think, my dad had his first car. But then in the winter months you didn't use the car, there was too much snow. Then they went with the sled and the horses.
- MM:** Sled and horses. So, what do you recall as a child and growing up as a teenager about Christmas? How did you celebrate Christmas?
- RB:** Well, for Christmas they'd butcher. They made sausage and they had pork and beef roast and swiss steak was one of the main meals.
- MM:** Was there any German food made?
- RB:** Well, kuchen. Oh yes, kuchen, different cookies, German cookies and....
- MM:** What kind of kuchen did they make? Cheese kuchen?
- RB:** Yah, cheese kuchen and prune [kuchen]. Very much so, prune kuchen.
- MM:** Oh, yah. Lot of prune kuchen and lot of fruit?
- RB:** Oh, yes. The apples were always bought in a box.
- MM:** Did they make pigs feet?
- RB:** They made pigs feet too, oh yah.
- MM:** What do they call that in German?
- RB:** Koladetz.
- MM:** Yah, that I remember too. And did they make some hams once in a while?

- RB:** Oh, yes. Now for Christmas, there was ham but that was not the main deal. Ham would be for breakfast and for supper and German potato salad with vinegar and oil, but I do not remember what the main deal was for dinner. It must have been some kind of a beef. Beef roast or swiss steak or something in that line.
- MM:** Now, what about Christmas Eve? Of course, your mom prepared for Christmas days ahead of time and with a big family like that, everybody had to help out?
- RB:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** What was your duty?
- RB:** Well, I was too small at the time. Julia and Mary were home and mother, so I would probably have to go down in the cellar and get something.
- MM:** Was there a root cellar?
- RB:** No, we had a big house and a full basement.
- MM:** But no outside root cellar?
- RB:** We had what they call a ice cellar full of ice and that was my job. You take the jello down and you get some cream and all day long, I had to run back and forth.
- MM:** What about...? Did they have some of those watermelons that they canned?
- RB:** Oh, 100.... Two fifty gallon barrels of watermelon. Because my sisters were married and they lived [away] and their house was not as convenient as ours, so dad would put them up for everybody. [When] they'd come home to visit, [then] they'd take 'em along. That I remember.
- MM:** Oh, my. Did you have to go and fetch some of those watermelon once in a while?
- RB:** Oh, yes. And then they made lot of popcorn in the furnace with a big deal. There was this popcorn maker, was out of wire and then they had those big dish pans full, big dish pans.
- MM:** Is that right? What did they do with all that popcorn?
- RB:** Yah, they ate it. Some made popcorn balls and some was just plain. Popcorn and apples, that was a big deal.
- MM:** Did they put any popcorn like on the [Christmas] trees?
- RB:** Well we did, but I don't know why. We never had a tree.
- MM:** Never had a Christmas tree?
- RB:** Never had a Christmas tree. In school we did, but not at home.
- MM:** Maybe it was just because it was hard to get one? They couldn't afford one?
- RB:** Well they could, but maybe dad was scared of the fire or something. I don't know. But we had..., there was a big kitchen, a big living room so we had room and another kitchen. But I would say for some reason, I wouldn't know.

- MM:** Did they do some singing at Christmas and some Christmas songs once in a while?
- RB:** Oh, yes. Now my sisters would get company and they would sing, the boys and the girls. But it was always German.
- MM:** Oh.
- RB:** But I just don't remember what the songs were.
- MM:** Probably 'Stille Nacht'?
- RB:** Yah. Oh, yes.
- MM:** When Christmas Eve came, it was very important to you and your folks and the relatives? Did they make a lot of their gifts?
- RB:** Oh, well maybe years ago. But in my time, it was bought.
- MM:** Purchased mainly?
- RB:** Yah, and you always got a new dress. I got a new dress up until I got married for Christmas.
- MM:** Got a new dress for Christmas?
- RB:** Oh, yah. That was....
- MM:** And they'd go to town and buy that dress?
- RB:** Oh, yes. And the other kids, everybody had new dresses on and some of it was sewed those days.
- MM:** Did they wear the dress for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?
- RB:** Christmas Eve you had early supper and then the Santa Claus would come and the Christmas... Mrs. Santa Claus.
- MM:** And she came too?
- RB:** Oh yah, in a big bob sled. They'd start someplace and then they'd come to our place later. There was a lot of snow and it was kinda hilly and then my brother and I would run back and forth, if we can hear 'em sing. Then we'd catch heck because they said we were gonna catch cold, so we'd....
- MM:** You'd run out and see where Santa Claus is coming?
- RB:** No, whether we could hear him come. The Santa Claus with the bob sled and bells and [their] singing you could hear.
- MM:** Oh, it was beautiful out there, so still at night. Did they sing?
- RB:** They sang and they had lot of fun, oh yah. Then my folks would sit side by side and my brother and I, dad had me on his lap and my brother was beside me and the other ones [who] were bigger, they were already in the party with the other ones. Then we got always a bunch of Christmas goodies. Nuts, all kinds of nuts and candy and cookies, a big bag.
- MM:** Santa Claus brought those?

- RB:** That Santa Claus brought that and a gift.
- MM:** Oh, he did?
- RB:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** So he brought it. As a child, you thought he was bringing that from Santa land?
- RB:** Oh, yah. Yah. My brother, I was trying to think.... We got gifts. But what did the boys have those days I just don't remember. But I had dolls and dishes and stuff like that.
- MM:** Oh, yes. Now as you were growing up a little bit, you later on knew that was no real Santa Claus?
- RB:** Oh yah, um hum.
- MM:** Did you remember Santa Claus, him coming to the house all of your young days during Christmas Eve?
- RB:** Oh, well towards last it didn't come no more. I was 14, yah.
- MM:** Right. What about angels? Did they come too?
- RB:** Well, they had some kind of an angel and there was even one guy, he was dressed up as a donkey. That I remember.
- MM:** Would he be called the Belzenickel?
- RB:** No, no. The Belzenickel was Santa Claus.
- MM:** Oh, Belzenickel was Santa Claus?
- RB:** Yah. And Mrs. Santa Claus, she was dressed in white and all decorated out and then that donkey. I don't know what he was suppose to be.
- MM:** Now, did they...? When you were a child, when you were in your teens and even when Santa Claus would come, was all the language German?
- RB:** All the language was German.
- MM:** So German was spoken primarily?
- RB:** Yah.
- MM:** No English at that time?
- RB:** No English. In school but....
- MM:** I mean at home. Though it was primarily [German], this was until you were married?
- RB:** No. When we lived in town we would speak more English, but my folks did talk more German than any. But mother could answer you, she knew a little about it. It was dad [who] knew, he could read it and all.
- MM:** But your folks did learn English?
- RB:** Oh yes, um hum.

- MM:** They learned to speak English?
- RB:** And my mother had 11 surgeries, so when she was in the hospital, she'd come home and she was very interested. She would pick up a lot of English because those days sometimes she had to stay 4 weeks in the hospital.
- MM:** Uh huh. On Christmas Day, did you go on a sleigh ride or anything like that? Did you have your own sleigh and horses?
- RB:** Yah. We had more than one sleigh, but I don't recall what we did Christmas Day.
- MM:** But you must have used that sleigh I suppose to go to school, didn't you?
- RB:** Yah, oh yes. Like I say, we had about three of 'em. One was what they call the double sled, that was a big one. That's where Santa Claus come in.
- MM:** What were the other two sleds used for?
- RB:** Well, to go visiting. We drive to church sometimes with the smaller one. We lived so close to school and then there was the neighbors. [They] come right through there so we'd always catch ride with the neighbors.
- MM:** With the sled?
- RB:** Well, they had the sled. Oh, yah.
- MM:** Then during the spring and fall, you'd walk to school?
- RB:** Oh yah, um hum.
- MM:** Now, did you have some real nice horses?
- RB:** Well, I don't know. Either we had 42 or 50. We had lot of horses.
- MM:** Oh, my goodness!
- RB:** Yah. Well, those days the whole farm was..., the plowing and the seeding and that was all done by horses.
- MM:** Who took care of those horses?
- RB:** Well, the boys. We always had a hired man year round and then the two boys and dad.
- MM:** Do you remember the hired man's name?
- RB:** Well, we had different ones. But one I remember by the name of...? His first name was Casper. But Jahner? Casper Jahner, yah.
- MM:** He was another German Russian boy?
- RB:** Oh, yah. They were all German, yah.
- MM:** So then you had a good time at Christmas and you got your gift and it was special to you?

- RB:** Yah. And the neighbors would come and you could go with, sometimes my folks would take me with. See, where the trouble came in, my brother wanted.... He could dance when he was 14, so he went with the girls going dancing or house parties and I was always alone. Then where my folks went so many times, they had no more small children either. So I was kinda in the 'dog house'.
- MM:** And then you had...? Did you have a Midnight Mass?
- RB:** Oh no, on the farm you didn't. Sometimes we didn't have church or a Mass on Christmas Day but the priest would come from Linton the next day or so. But we went to church and there was a man that could sing and they had a few prayers and you still had to be in church for Christmas.
- MM:** After you looked at all the presents and everything on Christmas Eve, then would they have a lot of food after that? They'd serve a meal?
- RB:** I just wouldn't recall. I'm sure because my folks were big eaters and it was all ready. But maybe by that time the kids are...? I was too excited. I just wouldn't remember that, but I am sure there was food.
- MM:** Were there a lot of decorations in the house?
- RB:** Not too much. There was some setting around, but not too much.
- MM:** And then on Christmas Day, they'd maybe have the left overs and they'd have another nice meal?
- RB:** Oh, yah. And then where I remember, my sisters would come home and their husbands and their kids.
- MM:** Did they ever serve like duck or geese? They didn't prepare too much wild game?
- RB:** No, um hum. They had turkey for Thanksgiving.
- MM:** What about butchering? Did they do their own butchering?
- RB:** They butchered maybe 10 pigs and a beef. Oh yah, there was a regular butcher party. And my dad was the one that mixed the sausage in the big bucket.
- MM:** What kind of sausage did they make?
- RB:** Well, Bratwurst and Blutwurst and head cheese. Then we had that ice cellar and in the winter months, [when] the ice wasn't in [froze] yet for Christmas, they'd use it as a smoke house. They'd smoke the hams and the sausage.
- MM:** Was that ice cellar...? Was it deep or how was that built?
- RB:** That was deep. The roof was not too high, but then it went down. You had to use the step-ladder to get down as the ice went down. The further down you had to go in the summer months.
- MM:** Right. So it was cool down there?
- RB:** It was cool and we had ice 'til way late. We made a lot of ice cream.
- MM:** Oh, you remember making a lot of ice cream?
- RB:** Oh, yah. We had a big...? I don't know, 5 gallons or whatever it was. Whenever they made ice cream, it was with that big freezer.

- MM:** Now the ice cream, did they have a lot of cream?
- RB:** Home cream and they put eggs in their ice cream but I never mix it. My sisters were home but I know they put eggs in and cream and milk and whatever. It was real good.
- MM:** Um hum. Now you know our German Russian people always had good sweet things. When you went to school, you were a child when you went to the country school and you went to school until what age?
- RB:** Yah, just 8th grade.
- MM:** To the 8th grade?
- RB:** Yah.
- MM:** Did you have a Christmas party at school?
- RB:** Not that I recall. I mean we had on the farm, but in town I don't remember a Christmas party. But on the farm we had a little party. We all exchanged little gifts. We drew names and we exchanged little gifts and we had a Christmas tree. The boys cut a tree from the creek, cherry tree or whatever it was, anything that had branches and we kinda decorated that with homemade stuff we made in school and hung it on. But there was no lights on.
- MM:** So it wasn't necessarily a regular Christmas tree like we would think of, but just a regular tree? Because we didn't have Christmas trees down there, so they would just cut another tree and bring it to school?
- RB:** With a lot of branches. Something that had a lot of branches, yah.
- MM:** They'd decorate it and it looked nice?
- RB:** Oh, yah. Well, we thought it was. There was Santa Clauses on there and so.
- MM:** What about Christmas cards? Did they have Christmas cards at that time they'd mail to other people like now?
- RB:** Not that I recall. When we lived in town we did, but I never remember on the farm.
- MM:** Would you get mail every day on the farm? Would somebody come out and bring the mail every day?
- RB:** Well, the way I remember, the only mail we got.... There was no mailman. When my folks go to town, they usually went 2 or 3 times, 2 times for sure and they brought the mail from town.
- MM:** Now, those winters were long and sometimes cold and there were storms?
- RB:** Yah. But my dad went with the double sled into town and then he'd buy up this and that and that. But the flour and sugar and a lot of that stuff they bought in fall, that they didn't have to bother [buy then].
- MM:** They would prepare for the whole winter?
- RB:** Whole winter, yah. We had a walk in closet upstairs and there was all kinds of cereal and sauce. I know my mother liked pineapple sauce and none of us kids cared about it.
- MM:** And then they knew in case they didn't get into town, they'd be prepared for the winter?

- RB:** Oh, yah. They always had cows. In the winter months they didn't milk so many cows, but there was always enough for the milk we used, a little cream we used then.
- MM:** What about church and prayer in the home? Did you usually have your own prayers every evening in the home?
- RB:** Well, before we went on the table for supper you had to. The whole gang would stand around the table and pray.
- MM:** Do you remember the prayer?
- RB:** Yah. Well I knew Our Father was in it always. But then they had a few other little prayers with, but I don't remember just what. And then every Sunday, the way I remember, the priest from Linton came every other Sunday to the farm church and they would get him with the sled. And then once when the priest wasn't there, there was that man that could play the organ and they'd sing and he said a few prayers. But you went to church every Sunday.
- MM:** What was the name of the church?
- RB:** Rosenthal.
- MM:** That was the name of the church?
- RB:** Um hum.
- MM:** That was in Emmons County and that was east of Linton, right?
- RB:** Yah, east. Southeast a little bit I would say, but east.
- MM:** What about when spring came and you were going to school and then in March or April, Easter would come. What was Easter like? What do you remember about Easter?
- RB:** Well, you always got a new outfit.
- MM:** Another new outfit?
- RB:** Oh yes, we dressed for the Easter. Then Ma bought a lot of Easter goodies. I would say for Easter that they had ham and German potato salad and they always baked a lot of stuff.
- MM:** Some more Kuchen, I bet?
- RB:** Yah, whatever. Kuchen was always in the deal and then they made what they call cottage cheese rolls. They were in the cake pan, two of them in there and then you roll it up like a cinnamon roll. Then when you cut it, the cottage cheese was in there.
- MM:** How did they make those?
- RB:** Yah, they had a good dough for that. Then also that cottage cheese, sugar went in and everything but I just wouldn't know how.
- MM:** Now as long as we're talking about the pastry, let's talk about some of those noodles. They had lots of noodles didn't they, in those days?

- RB:** Yah, Strudla, noodla and Dampfnoodla.
- MM:** What others? Did your mother ever make Platchinda? How did she make those?
- RB:** Platchinda? Oh, Platchinda!
- MM:** What was inside those Platchinda?
- RB:** Well, that's the pumpkin inside.
- MM:** That was more in the fall then?
- RB:** Yah, more in the fall. Then we always had a bastaan, that's a watermelon patch. So we had pumpkins and everything until Christmas. Fresh ones.
- MM:** Oh, that means that your folks had a big garden?
- RB:** Yah. Watermelon patch, that's about half a acre. Dad loved to do that and then they'd give away to whoever wanted some could come and get watermelons.
- MM:** Did they have a lot of pumpkins too?
- RB:** Oh, yah. Pumpkins and then [had what] they called 'em Kochmelonen but you cooked them and then you ate it as sauce. There was raisin in there and lemon and sugar.
- MM:** That was good. I never heard of that before.
- RB:** Oh yah, they had lot of those.
- MM:** Did they have a lot of cucumbers?
- RB:** Oh yes, dill pickles.
- MM:** A lot of canning then?
- RB:** A lot of canning, jah.
- MM:** Did they can like meat, too?
- RB:** Later on in years, oh yes. But I'd say we were in town already but my sisters canned meat.
- MM:** Did you all have to learn how to take care of the garden?
- RB:** Oh yes, we all had to help. Then we had the watermelon patch, that was kinda out in the field, but the garden was at home. Then my dad did a lot. We were right by the Beaver Creek so we had always a nice, nice garden.
- MM:** Did you get water once in a while from the creek?
- RB:** Oh, yes. When we washed, we would get it from the creek. See, that was so soft.
- MM:** So you didn't have running water? You didn't have a pump?
- RB:** Oh yah, we had a pump. But the water from the creek, not all the time, sometimes it was dirty. But sometimes you could go and get it from the creek.

- MM:** You would use that for washing clothes?
- RB:** Washing clothes. Then we had a shed, but in the winter months we couldn't use it. We had a regular little engine and two machines that would pull two [wash] machines. See, those farm clothes, you had to wash them twice. They were put in one machine and then in the other.
- MM:** What did they use for soap then?
- RB:** They made most of their soap.
- MM:** How did they make that?
- RB:** Well, when they butchered, they used beef fat. I don't know what all. They put lye in and that was good soap.
- MM:** Were the clothes nice and white?
- RB:** Oh, I should say. You get that lye in there, you get them white.
- MM:** Those winters like today now, it got dark soon, so you had to depend on the kerosene lamp?
- RB:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** So when it got dark, on went the kerosene lamp? That was your job to clean them?
- RB:** Yah. Turn `em on, whoever was around would set it off the table. We had `em on the table or wherever it was, so there was a spot we put `em on during the day. But to clean `em, we had to cut the wicks somehow a little bit.
- MM:** So, in those evenings when it got dark, what did they do for entertainment in those long winter evenings?
- RB:** Well, the girls would embroider and some would read and some made popcorn.
- MM:** Did they play cards?
- RB:** Oh, play cards! I knew I forgot something. That was A #1. The dishes off the table and the cards came out.
- MM:** What kind of cards did they play?
- RB:** Well, whist and Durecke. Durecke, that's for two [players] though and Profranzen.
- MM:** Pinochle?
- RB:** No, not at that time.
- MM:** Did they play any games?
- RB:** My sisters, they had games but I wouldn't remember at the time. I was too little to get in on. I know they had one that came to the show and then they would couple them up. Somebody would be in the other room and they'd say, "Now you bring so and so for a couple." Then they'd come and it wasn't the right couple and they would have to go and pick another girl 'till they had the right girl.

- MM:** Now, there was no television at that time. Did your folks get a newspaper?
- RB:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** What newspapers were they?
- RB:** There was a Linton paper and then there was the *Herold*.
- MM:** *Nord Dakota Herold* came from Dickinson?
- RB:** Yah, my dad would eat you alive if you would take the paper.
- MM:** So, he could hardly wait 'till that German newspaper came? Of course, there were a lot of letters in there from our people that stayed in Russia and so they had these letters back and forth. What about radio? Was there radio?
- RB:** Well, not when we were on the farm. But in town there was.
- MM:** So, you don't recall radio on the farm?
- RB:** No, no. I don't think nobody had radio.
- MM:** How did they communicate then? Was there a telephone?
- RB:** We had a telephone and then it wasn't private. We could all listen in. In the evening when somebody would call, everybody would listen in. Now this is news. Our number was three long ones [rings].
- MM:** So you remember as a child already after 1911 that they had the telephone already?
- RB:** Oh, yah. As a child I remember it on the farm.
- MM:** When it would ring at one house, everybody could hear it.
- RB:** Yah.
- MM:** So, that's what they call a "party line" ?
- RB:** Nowadays they call a party line if it's two or so, but that was the whole gang.
- MM:** With many on the party line, they would get news?
- RB:** They'd get news and then they would talk in and they'd be on the phone a long time, a regular conversation on the phone.
- MM:** So others would join in on the conversation and it was in good will?
- RB:** Oh, yes. And then they couldn't wait 'till they got off the line, what they said.
- MM:** Do you remember some other holidays? Did they have any other special holidays? Was Names Day an important day?
- RB:** Oh, Names Day was the biggest because all those names, they were in November, December, January and March some. So they had [those] instead of birthday parties. They had Names Day parties. Usually like my folks, they had a big Names Day party. Two days they would stay overnight and my brother-in-law played the accordion and the other one played a cornet. So they cleaned out one of the rooms and

they were dancing all night. Some would go to bed, then they would come out and start dancing again. They had drinks, wine and....

MM: Did they ever make their own liquor on the farm?

RB: Well, they made some and some beer and our wine was a big deal.

MM: They made their own beer?

RB: Oh yes, that I remember. I had to help somehow. We had to help fill the bottles.

MM: What about Schnaps? Did they make their own Schnaps, too?

RB: They made some but not too much. That was more work.

MM: So a Names Day for 2 days, what did they do? A lot of dancing?

RB: Lot of dancing and they were singing too.

MM: A lot of German songs?

RB: All German songs and of course, plenty food. The 2nd day, they usually made vegetable soup.

MM: Which was borscht?

RB: Jah, borscht.

MM: How did they make their vegetable soup at that time? Like today?

RB: Well, I'd say like today. There was a lot of meat in but they didn't cut the meat in. They took the meat out [after it was cooked] which gave good flavor. Cabbage and all the vegetables. Then when they served it, they served it in a big bowl. That you had to take from that bowl to serve yourself. There was cream in there. They wouldn't eat it without cream. That's no borscht if there is no cream in it and that smoothed it.

MM: Now, what about New Year's? I forgot to ask you, did they have any New Year's celebration?

RB: Oh yah, they had New Year's parties. Oh yes, those older people. Then the girls always danced New Year's and Christmas. If it wasn't in Strasburg, it was in somebody's house.

MM: They actually had dances?

RB: Lot a dances.

MM: Did they go out and shoot the gun at New Year's?

RB: Oh, yes! They come to my folk's house usually a little later because dad had wine and mother got up and dressed and they had goodies. That night I could sleep downstairs and I could hear. Then there was about six guys I'd say. Then they would say, "Zünd mer's an un kenn mers nei Jahr anschieße". Then they'd sing and then shoot and then come in. Mother had a big luncheon. Dad gave them a few wines.

MM: A drink or two and they were just local boys?

RB: Just local boys from the farm. A lot of Bosches and those Bosches had such good voices.

- MM:** Who else were your neighbors?
- RB:** Jah, Veters and Bosches and Jangulas and Fischer's and Rau's.
- MM:** Through the years as you got older and moved to Fargo from Linton, did you keep in touch with any of your classmates or anyone?
- RB:** Not too much. But then sometimes they would see me at Linton in the restaurant but they wouldn't have the nerve to come over and say, "Hi, hello, I am so and so." But they would ask my brother all about me. One day I came to my brother's house and he had a telephone call. They were betting, some of those that knew me from the farm, how old I was. And then they didn't agree so they call Anton and asked Anton how old I am.
- MM:** Oh, ah huh. They were probably some old boyfriends.
- RB:** Well, I didn't have a boyfriend but in school you knew everybody.
- MM:** Now courting and having boyfriends. At what age was it acceptable for your parents and others of the German Russian families?
- RB:** Well, some had boyfriends when they were about 16 I'd say. 16 and 18, I'd say about average.
- MM:** Most of your girlfriends, the neighbors and so forth, did they go to high school?
- RB:** Well, most of my girlfriends. Just three of us that didn't go to high school. But like Clara went but her aunt didn't go. Then Mrs. Johnny Kramer didn't go but most of `em went, I'd say.
- MM:** Now, when you finished the 8th grade and you thought you'd go on to high school maybe, what happened?
- RB:** Well, my mother was sick all the time and in those days in our house [women's work] was to wash diapers. See, all my sisters had a family. They said, "To wash diapers, you don't need an education". See, they thought I'd do the same thing as my sisters did. My mother was not a well lady at all so I had to stay at home.
- MM:** Was that hard for you knowing that others were going on to school and you couldn't go to high school?
- RB:** Well, there were three of us that didn't and at that time it wasn't like it is now. Now it would be different.
- MM:** But when you didn't go on to high school and those that did go, you still got together?
- RB:** We always. You'd never know when we went to dances or something, we were always the same gang.
- MM:** There was no conflict that you were less educated?
- RB:** No, no. I have that to this day yet. My friends, they worked in offices and all, but there's no [difference].
- MM:** No difference of opinion who went to school and who didn't go to school?
- RB:** Yah, um hum.
- MM:** Do you remember who your teacher was in the upper grades?

RB: No, I wouldn't remember that.

MM: Now, the church was very important?

RB: Oh, yah.

MM: So, that must have meant that you probably went to the summer catechism?

RB: Yah, when we were on the farm. Oh yes, definitely. Like my sister Julia and some others, they had to teach some of those kids that didn't know certain little prayers they had to know before they went to First Communion. But my sister Julia learned me at home already, so I was ahead of them.

MM: Now, what about Confirmation? Was that important?

RB: That was important too. I was Confirmed on the farm.

MM: At Rosenthal?

RB: Rosenthal, uh hum.

MM: Do you remember who the priests were out there?

RB: Well, there was a Father Seiler I think, where I first made my First Communion and Confirmed.

MM: First Communion was very important?

RB: Oh, that was important. Then I was so little and that communion railing they had.... I wanted to go with my friends, they walked in partners those days. They had a group and then I had to go with the little ones. They were both so little that they had to stand at the communion railing instead of kneeling when they got communion. Then that didn't work with me but I suppose Ma talked to me.

MM: Do you remember the dress you wore?

RB: I had a white dress and a veil, oh yah.

MM: And then what did they do afterwards? Was there like a little dinner or something?

RB: Well, at home and by that time, some of my sisters were married and they had come and their kids. There was always food.

MM: Let's go back to your days on the farm and the chores. There must have been a lot of chores. You mention a little bit about you had to gather the eggs and so forth, but everybody had their own duty?

RB: Everybody had their own duty, yah.

MM: Even as a child?

RB: Even as a child they had to gather the eggs. Then when they went to town, we had a crate that held 144 eggs, that's 12 dozen. Then they had to see that they were all clean, fill that one and that was my job too. And help with the dishes.

MM: Did you ever have to go out to the barn? The boys did that mainly?

RB: Well, the last year we were on the farm, I had to plow.

- MM:** Oh, you did?
- RB:** Oh yah, I had to plow.
- MM:** Did they have machinery or horses?
- RB:** All horses. Like I say, we had either 42 or 52 horses.
- MM:** You had a lot of horses. Beautiful.
- RB:** Yah. Then on your plow, you had to have five horses and then for instance, the hired man was Tony Senger, Wendlyn Senger's brother. We were both just kids, but we were both as a group behind each other. And in those days..., you wouldn't know at all what a header box is? I had to drive the header box. I had to drive it until I could drive it already with my eyes closed.
- MM:** You learned to drive then?
- RB:** Oh yah, with the horses. Then my dad and I would go to town and take wheat in with a wagon load. Each one had 50 bushels and I'd go to Strasburg to the elevator, but my dad was with me to take the wheat in.
- MM:** And they'd sell it there?
- RB:** Oh yah, at the elevator.
- MM:** And then you'd head home again? How old were you then? About 13, 14?
- RB:** No, about 12.
- MM:** So you were driving into town then already at 12?
- RB:** Oh, yah. Then my dad would stay over and I'd drive home. Then I'd drive so darn fast with the empty box. Then the boys would give me hell because the horses were sweaty when I got home. Finally I got wise to that, I drove real fast when I left Strasburg and then towards home I drove slower. But they noticed that the box on the wagon had jumped ahead and they could tell that I had gone fast sometimes.
- MM:** Ah huh. And your dad stayed overnight?
- RB:** No, no. Sometimes for the afternoon. Sometimes he would stay for the afternoon and I'd go home. See, we'd leave in the morning maybe about 8:00 o'clock or so and that was only 10 miles in there.
- MM:** Do you ever remember your father and mother reading to you as a child?
- RB:** Oh yes, my dad did.
- MM:** He was a reader?
- RB:** Now, those days when there was Palm Sunday, they'd have a reader and he would be the reader for church or mass, but in German.
- MM:** In German? The old German script?
- RB:** Oh, jah.

- MM:** Was the Bible important in the home?
- RB:** Not too much in our house. Dad would read a lot of different books, but the Bible wasn't read too much.
- MM:** Did he ever talk about the old country?
- RB:** All the time and I'd get so mad because I didn't know what was going on. To me it was Greek. Then I'd say to mother, "You tell him I don't like that".
- MM:** You don't remember what he used to talk about?
- RB:** No, I wouldn't remember at all because like I say, I didn't know anything about what he was trying to tell you. I know when Kraft started at the funeral parlor, he wanted Kraft to write a book but Kraft had his hands full too and his family was small and all.
- MM:** That would have been valuable. Sounds to me like your father was a smart man.
- RB:** Well, he was very much interested in the old country.
- MM:** Self-educated?
- RB:** Yah.
- MM:** Did a lot of reading?
- RB:** Yah.
- MM:** Did they ever share those newspapers with other neighbors or did they get like the *Nord Dakota Herold* too?
- RB:** No. Dad didn't share it because when it got old, then we could use it for something. Those days it was hard to find something to wrap. Sometimes he'd get after the girls, they took it too soon for something.
- MM:** So they'd use it for wrapping presents?
- RB:** No. I don't know what they used it for.
- MM:** Do you remember the hot summers?
- RB:** Oh, yah. I remember the hot summer when I was driving that header box. That hot summer, I had the biggest straw hat you could find in town.
- MM:** And then the creek was nearby so you could go swimming?
- RB:** We went swimming, the creek was real close by. We had a lot of chokecherries, mulberries, gooseberries, Juneberries, and wild plums.
- MM:** You made a lot of good jams?
- RB:** A lot of jams. With those June berries, they made pies and Kuchen too. You could put it on the kuchen, too.
- MM:** Did they make a lot of wedding kuchen too?
- RB:** Oh, big weddings. Yah.

MM: What do you remember about a wedding? Weddings were very important?

End of Tape-Side One

-----Missing Words-----

Side Two

MM: Rose Senger Baumgartner who grew up east of Linton in Emmons County. We just finished talking about Kuchen and weddings. Weddings were very important.

RB: Very important.

MM: It wasn't just a 1 day affair, was it?

RB: No, 2 days.

MM: At least 2 days and they had dances and sometimes they probably even had a barn dance. What do you remember about those barn dances?

RB: Well, like I said before, when we lived in town we went out to barn dances. Even around town going south, there was John Zacher. They had big barn dances southwest of Linton, southwest I'd say.

MM: Who played at those barn dances?

RB: Well, there was Schwab and John Lipp. There was just different ones that I wouldn't recall, but them I do.

MM: Now, do you remember hearing if Lawrence Welk ever played at a barn dance?

RB: Not my age.

MM: Not during your era, but he probably did play?

RB: Yah, he played. I know he played.

MM: Could be your older members of the family went?

RB: Yah.

MM: And then they would clean out the loft in the barn?

RB: And the barn dances were usually around June and July when it was warm.

MM: June and July was a big time for barn dances. At that time, there were already cars.

RB: Oh yes, absolutely.

MM: Did some come with horses?

RB: No, no. Not for those barn dances.

- MM:** Not in your era? We talked about Names Days, we talked about the holidays. It sounds to me that Names Days were very important.
- RB:** Very important for those older people.
- MM:** And for commemorating a certain event and that was probably even sometimes more than one day?
- RB:** Most of the time one day because Names Days was in winter months and then the farmers had plenty time. Now my brother-in-law's name was Valentine and they had a big Names Day party for 2 days on St. Valentine's Day.
- MM:** So they even had Valentine's Day then?
- RB:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** Of course, Christmas was very important. But I gathered from our conversation that religion was important in the home?
- RB:** Oh yes, um hum.
- MM:** And your father was a reader so you had access to good reading material. He would read the *Nord Dakota Herald* and did you save those newspapers?
- RB:** Well, certain length of time.
- MM:** And then they were used for other purposes?
- RB:** Yah.
- MM:** But he liked to have those around so he could read them?
- RB:** Oh yes, very much so. Now the Linton paper, whether it was called the *Emmons County Record* then already or not, but we had a Linton paper when we were on the farm.
- MM:** So, you got the news. That was one of the only vehicles for getting news because you didn't have the radio and there was no television. You didn't get to town that often but the telephone may have helped in getting news.
- RB:** The telephone, yah. Everybody enjoyed the telephone and you could call into town.
- MM:** So you could find out what's going on?
- RB:** I know there was a few times that somebody called out to give a message. See, that was 12 miles out.
- MM:** Now did you ever recall, you were younger then, did your sisters ever mention you were farm girls and then there were the city girls. Was there ever a conflict?
- RB:** No, no. No.
- MM:** Never was that feeling of, well, I grew up in town and you're on the farm?
- RB:** No. The ones that went to high school, we went to the dances together.
- MM:** Well, that was good that there was always a friendship.

- RB:** Always a friendship.
- MM:** During those teenage years, you probably only spoke German yet? Even at the dances?
- RB:** No, they were speaking English.
- MM:** Of course, there was a mixture of different nationalities so they wouldn't all speak German?
- RB:** Yah, they were different.
- MM:** Did you find as a teenager that people of different religions got along or did they stick together?
- RB:** Once in a while, there was kind of a friction where some would say, "Oh the Catholics." Not too much.
- MM:** What about the different groups? Like there were Dutch people down there and there were non-Catholic people in Linton and so forth, did they all get along pretty good?
- RB:** Well, it was a small town and everybody respected everybody.
- MM:** But at the dances they would pretty much only stick together or did they dance with each other even though they were not Catholic?
- RB:** They danced with each other even though they were not Catholic.
- MM:** But a lot of those non-Catholics didn't go to the dances, right?
- RB:** Well, some of the younger ones my age kind of sneaked out. But the older ones, some of them were not supposed to go.
- MM:** It wasn't as acceptable as in our time?
- RB:** Yah, um hum.
- MM:** That's always been true that dancing was always a very important form of entertainment and exercise for our German Russian people.
- RB:** Yah. Then we had that nice Pavilion.
- MM:** The Pavilion. Where was that located?
- RB:** Well, down in the park at Linton.
- MM:** The Linton park, yes.
- RB:** That was big and everything was new at the time. There was big dances and then they also roller skated.
- MM:** Roller skating?
- RB:** Some Sunday nights. I did some but not too much. I didn't go quite for it but Clara did and it was nice. They had those windows that you could push out. See, they had to pull them in, then it was way shut, the window and all. Then you could stand out there, watch them roller skate.
- MM:** That was fun?
- RB:** Yah.

MM: We are going to close our conversation today on October 31, 1993 and it's Halloween. That's a special event in today's society for the children and even for the adults, they love to dress up. But my aunt Rose has a good memory of her days as a child and important holidays that she had. We are so glad to know she's going to be 83 and still in good health. She has a sister Mary who is going to be 90 and a sister Julia who is going to be 88. So, the three Senger girls are in pretty good shape yet?

RB: Yah.

MM: I want to thank you for our conversation and we'll have to do it again. Thank you.