

Interview with Frances Burckhardt (FB)

Conducted by Brother Placid Gross (PG)

January 2000, Bismarck, North Dakota

Transcription by Jessica Rice

Edited and Proofread by Peter Eberle

[beginning missing]

PG: Was he born in Russia?

FB: Yes, in Strasburg, South Russia. He was born on November the 27th in 1874.

PG: When did he die?

FB: October the 2nd in 1939.

PG: Where is he buried?

FB: In Strasburg, North Dakota.

PG: And what was your mother's maiden name?

FB: Schweitzer. Eva Schweitzer.

PG: Where was she born?

FB: She was born in Strasburg, South Russia, too.

PG: When was she born?

FB: March the 2nd in 1884.

PG: So she was ten years younger than your dad.

FB: Uh-huh, and they died ten years apart, too.

PG: So they both died at the same age?

FB: Well, Ma was a little older; she got to be 65, but dad was only 64 when he died.

PG: Did they get married in Russia?

FB: Yeah. They had two children in Russia and they both died, and they're buried over there: a girl (the oldest), and a boy.

PG: Do you know what names they had?

FB: Eva was born the 30th of November in 1901.

PG: And the boy?

- FB:** The boy was born not even a year after that. The boy was born on the 2nd of November in 1902.
- PG:** Do you know, did that boy have a name, too?
- FB:** Paul.
- PG:** And then, how many more children did they have?
- FB:** Now, they came to America then on January the 6th, 1903; they landed in America. And now, Tony was born in October that same year, the 3rd of October in 1903. He was the oldest one then here in America. Then they had the number of children. After Tony there was a little girl, but she died: Magdalena.
- PG:** Where is she buried?
- FB:** Saint Anthony's south of Napoleon. This little girl [Magdalena] was born on March 6th in 1906, and then Carl was born in 1908, 7th of March. And then it was me; I was born on the 14th of December, 1910. Then Sebastian was born on the 23rd of February, 1913. Then they had the little boy—it was still in the old house, in the sod house. I remember that real well. I'm not sure now, it was the 8th or the 11th of June...I have it written down, I should have looked it up. And that one was born in 1916, but died.
- PG:** And where is he buried?
- FB:** At Saint Michael's. We have two there side-by-side: the Michael and the Eugene. So then, after Eugene was Michael, and he was [born] just a year after Eugene, and he died, too. But he lived long enough; they took him to St. Aloysius. St. Michael's was a mission to St. Aloysius at that time. The church was there, but no priest; we were a mission. Nobody had any cars, you know, we had to go by team. And I remember that; we were in catechism, school, and when we kids came home—we didn't know there was a baby coming or whatever—there was a little coffin in the front of the room and a little dead baby in there. Then we cried, you know. We wanted that baby, but it was dead. But they took him to - and he was baptized by a priest [A039]. But Eugene just had the...what do you call the [A040]?
- PG:** Emergency?
- FB:** Well, a baptism by whatever. He didn't get baptized by a priest, I think Ma did it, you know. What is it called, when they baptized somebody with...can't think of the word, I know it...[A043], in German you say the [A043].
- PG:** When there's no priest, then anybody can baptize him.
- FB:** Yeah, well, Eugene was baptized like that. And then after Michael came Dorothy in 1918 through the flu. She was born the 23rd of November in 1918. And then was Crissy, Christine, who was born on the 24th of January in 1922, and then there was a gap of five years between Crissy and Wendy. Wendy was born in the 23rd of June, 1927.
- PG:** Gwendolyn?
- FB:** Gwendolyn, yeah, in 1927. So that's it. They had a bunch of children, but only seven living. Only Chris and I living now, but -
- PG:** Seven that survived?

- FB:** Seven in all, yeah. And then when Wendy was born, you know, Tony was already married and they had two children, so we never had a big family. We were never a big family together, because there weren't that many.
- PG:** Did your parents talk about Russia?
- FB:** Oh, yeah.
- PG:** Do you remember anything what they said about Russia?
- FB:** Well, there wasn't much, like, my dad was not much of a talker, you know. He was a quiet man. But Ma, she was the last in her family, the baby, and her father was sick with the asthma for 24 years. He could not do anything. They were poor. Well, they had a few...they didn't call it acres in Russia, you know, desadin. And now, I think one desadin was two and a half acres, like our acres. It seems to me it was two and a half acres. And I don't know, they didn't have much. Grandpa couldn't work, and then Ma's brothers: Andrew, he was married over in Russia and Uncle Carl was still single when our folks came in 1903. But they were here in America. They lived out north of St. Michael's. The two, Uncle Carl lived in with Uncle Andrew's, but Uncle Andrew's were married and had children already. See, he was the oldest [A065]. So anyway, when they came over, the folks then they lived with—I don't know how long they lived with Uncle Andrew, I think until spring, and then they hired out to Anton Senger's. I still have this copy, it was in the Record [newspaper], and I think this is the house where my brother was born in, this log, this house that's in the record.
- PG:** Oh, I see. I saw that write up.
- FB:** That's where my folks worked for a whole year: both of them, Mom and Dad, both of them together for 300 dollars a year—two people.
- PG:** Well, did your mother talk about the cows they had in Russia?
- FB:** I don't know if they had any - yeah, they had cows, but I don't know if our folks...
- PG:** Were there gardens?
- FB:** Fruit. They had a lot of fruit. You know, they used to say where they came from had a climate like California. They had all kinds of fruit: apples and pears and everything.
- PG:** And when they came over here, they...
- FB:** Oh, that must have been so sad. Sometimes, I like to reminisce, you know, and I sometimes say, no wonder they all died so young. Like, my Grandma Schweitzer and Grandpa Burckhardt were over here too, but they lived only a few months and they died. They're both buried in St. Anthony's out of Napoleon: Burckhardt grandfather and my Schweitzer grandmother. One lived, I think five months and the other seven months. But they must have died just, you know, coming over here, they got 160 acres of land. Yeah, but where's the house. You got the 160 acres of land, but where are you going to live? And that's why they started the sod houses.
- PG:** Do you know what your mother died from? She was only 65.
- FB:** A stroke.

- PG:** The stroke.
- FB:** Yeah, we were prone strokes people, you know. My dad died of stroke, Ma died of a stroke, Carl, Dorothy...now Wendy, we don't even know for sure. He had either a massive heart attack or whatever. He was a vegetable for a month until he died. He was only 57 years old. He died in Spokane, Washington. Dorothy died of a stroke...Carl, Dorothy, Ma, Dad.
- PG:** Now, when they came over here, where did they settle? I mean, where was their farm?
- FB:** Where? It is still there, where Horner lives on the hill there.
- PG:** Any Horner?
- FB:** That was our home. That's our homestead.
- PG:** That's about two miles east of St. Michael's?
- FB:** Uh-huh...about two and a half miles, yeah.
- PG:** Oh. So you remember the sod house?
- FB:** Yes. I even cleaned. Start scrubbing floor in the sod house. [Laughs]
- PG:** Yeah, how could you scrub the floor in the sod house?
- FB:** Well, we had wood floor, we didn't have [A099]. We had a wood floor. I remember that...can I talk funny? [Laughs]
- PG:** Sure.
- FB:** I was only drunk once in my life and that was in the sod house. You know, in the sod house they had these thick walls like it shows in that write up.
- PG:** Yeah.
- FB:** The windows were outside and there was wood, you know, and they always had schnapps, you know that sweet stuff. It must have been either apricot schnapps, I don't know, but it was sweet. And the folks were out milking. And I was young; I bet you I was not more than about four years old, maybe, but I remember it. I must have been in the house alone. They had the bottle of schnapps on the window sill. It was deep, about this deep, that window sill—and a little glass by it, you know. I crawled up there. I don't know what made me crawl up there, you know, like kids. Then I spilled. I remembered it like yesterday. And I spilled some; I was going to, I think, pour some of that schnapps out or whatever. I spilled it, I scooped it up with a glass and I was drinking, you know, and I got myself loaded. So when folks came in, I remember that I was sitting under the table and I was singing when they came in from doing their chores, you know.
- PG:** You were happy, huh?
- FB:** [Laughs] So I remember that, yeah.
- PG:** Do you remember carrying the dry cow chips in?

- FB:** Oh, yes. Wagon loads full. When there was a build up of clouds. [A119 German phrase] Then, you had to run, so you had something to burn.
- PG:** You had to pick it up before it got wet.
- FB:** Yeah. And then we used to put it in the shed to keep it dry. Yeah, we made the mischt, too, like everybody else.
- PG:** Did you make those blocks?
- FB:** That was our project for 4th of July. To set it up, you know [A124 German].
- PG:** How did you pack it?
- FB:** With horses.
- PG:** Did you drag something behind the horses, or...?
- FB:** No...what do you call it...
- PG:** Did you have a packer of some kind?
- FB:** No, it was [A128 German].
- PG:** Stone boat.
- FB:** They laid rocks on there, you know, to make it heavy. But most of the time they just did it with horses, I think. Around and around and around.
- PG:** Just the feet of the horses, with hooves, would pack it.
- FB:** And then when it was packed, then they cut it with the spade. The blocks were about maybe as big as this, not quite this big. Square, you know.
- PG:** Fourteen inches...probably fourteen by fourteen?
- FB:** When it was cut the first time, then you put the two pieces together like this, then it had to dry. You had to do that a lot, you know. Then you put four pieces together again, one on top, then it would sit like that for a while. Then you had to make it [A142 German]. I could still do it; I would know how to do it.
- PG:** Did you use the horse manure, too, or just cow manure?
- FB:** Yeah, everything. Horse manure, that burns so easy, you know, the cows' was kind of heavy. But, we used it from the barns.
- PG:** It was all mixed together.
- FB:** Well, in the winter time, they put it on a pile. You couldn't spread it out in the winter time. In spring they would put it on the bed; you call it the [A148 Mischthava pit]. Spread it out and level it. Then it must have been after spring work when they started spreading it out and preparing it. Well, this was always our project before the 4th of July. And then later on it was put into stacks, [A152 mischthava].
- PG:** Did you have to schmear it on the side?

- FB:** Yeah, I went through all that stuff.
- PG:** You took fresh cow manure...
- FB:** ...and mixed it with straw, then you schmeared it on to keep the rain out.
- PG:** ...so the rain doesn't blow in, or the snow. Did you do that with your hands, with bare hands, or did you have a towel?
- FB:** Oh, I don't remember that, maybe we did. I didn't care to go into that. We went in with the feet, you know, with the straw, with the mischt.
- PG:** Really.
- FB:** Not with the hand.
- PG:** Well, did you have a washtub?
- FB:** Oh, yeah, or a trough of some kind. I don't remember that. But then that was the main fuel that you burned. They had to have mischt, otherwise...well, we had coal, too. Later on, when the lignite mines started, we had a truck. We didn't burn that mischt, we didn't make mischt anymore. Lignite coal, they were cheap. I think four dollars a ton, or something like that. Then Tony, my brother, used to haul it.
- PG:** Okay, off of where did you haul it?
- FB:** From Wilton, and up here around Hazen and Beulah, someplace where these lines are.
- PG:** So it was quite-a-ways with the truck?
- FB:** Well, there was nothing around here—coal.
- PG:** I thought maybe it came with the train.
- FB:** Well, no, Toney always hauled it...Well sometimes, like that hard coal, that would come to Linton on the train.
- PG:** If you had a truck, I'm sure it would be cheaper.
- FB:** To get it here, sure. Especially that Lignite, it was big chunks. He hauled for other people, too, Tony did.
- PG:** Do you remember when the gypsies came around?
- FB:** Uh-huh.
- PG:** Chicano. Do you remember that? I've never talked to anybody who remembered actually seeing the Chicano.
- FB:** Oh, I do. They were always dressed up real nice. But now I don't remember of them ever stealing anything from us, because you were scared when those people... we didn't see them too much. But we had all kinds of people. You know, Ma was that way. She kept everybody overnight. We used to call them the [A178]. And some of them even would drive. I remember one would come with a, what do you call the [A180], a little one horse on that there. They used to come around all the time in the summer time. Our neighbors, I don't know, they didn't keep people overnight. I'm not going to mention their

names. They always sent them to us. Ma took them in, we were never hurt or anything. We had people we had never seen in our life. One time we had two. They were Jewish: an older man and a young guy. They were with us a whole week. They were stormed in (this was in the winter time) and they even drove with the team. They were there with us, just like they belonged to the family. He was peddling dry goods. I know, when he left, there was that jersey stuff, and it would stretch so much, and Ma would sew herself some dresses. She got a whole bundle, you know, and hat stretched out of shape—oiy, oiy, that wasn't worth anything. Later on, they would say "Yeah, I suppose that was stolen stuff, they must of...and then they came around and sold it."

PG: So, he was driving with a horse?

FB: Uh-huh.

PG: One horse or two horses?

FB: No, two horses and a sled, a sled for winter time.

PG: They went from farm to farm selling that cloth. What else did he sell?

FB: I don't know, I don't think anything else. I think it was all sack. But then years ago, we had the Watkins and the [A198 Rolly] man. They always came to our place, too, but not overnight. But we used to wait for them. They would give us some candy or chewing gum. The [A200Rolly] man was from Napoleon. I think his name was Oman.

PG: Later on, I remember a [A202 Arntz]. I think he was [A202 Rolly] man, wasn't he?

FB: He never came to our place, but I knew him.

PG: He was from Burnstad, or is that wrong?

FB: Well, one was crippled that used to come for—I don't remember what he was doing, but he had [A206], but I don't remember what his name was.

PG: What did the gypsies do, what did they want?

FB: Well, they wanted money. A lot of people remember, that I have talked to, and they say...well, you were scared of gypsies; they would go in and take stuff. But, we never had that experience. And I don't remember that they were there that much. Maybe once or whatever that I knew about: Chicano.

PG: About how many do you think came in one bunch?

FB: Oh, one or two cars. They came with cars.

PG: Oh, they had cars already?

FB: But this was later, it was not the beginning.

PG: Do you remember in the thirties when they got relief?

FB: We didn't get relief. Well, my folks never applied, I don't think, but later on then we got some of that canned meat. Do you remember anything like that?

PG: No, not canned meat.

- FB:** We got, what was it now...beef...one was sheep.
- PG:** Sheep meat?
- FB:** What do you call it? Lamb...or mutton, I think they called it.
- PG:** In a can?
- FB:** Uh-huh. And Dorothy wouldn't eat it. During spring time, well it [canned meat] was handy, then Dorothy, if she knew it was mutton, she wouldn't eat it. Then Ma, one time she had it and she put onion in and fried it nice. After we had eaten, then Ma said, "What did she eat today?" "Oh, beef." Then Ma said, "You ate mutton today." [Laughs] At that time, nobody knew what grapefruit was. Well we did, but I know that some people got grapefruit and they would give them to the pigs. They said, "They could've kept their sour oranges." They didn't know they were grapefruit and they wouldn't eat them. [Laughter] Yeah, that was quite something.
- PG:** Now we eat them! Yeah, I know people did not know what that was.
- FB:** Yeah, or celery. I don't know if anybody got celery, but when celery first came out, that was something that we had never seen before. I use a lot of celery in food.
- PG:** Getting back to the old country, did your parents ever get letters from Russia?
- FB:** Uh-huh. Oh, yeah. Well, when their family was...well they all came over here. See Grandma Schweitzer—my mother's father never came over here, he died when Ma was only twelve years old. Then there was hardly anybody over there. Ma had the sister that never came over here. She was married to a pretty rich guy who was a contractor. Their name was Brandis, his name was Julius Brandis, and he died in 1918 during the flu...but when the folks were still over there, when she was first married to this man, this [A255]; Aunt Christine was Ma's sister. Then Ma's parents, they kind of got a little bit more on their feet because she would help them out, but then she never came to America because she was married and had three children. And I can't blame her for not coming over here. The reason my parents came over here was to get away from wars, because my dad was in the service four years. And then when they got out, he and Uncle Paul both, you know his brother-in-law. Then there was another war brewing, but I don't remember who it was with. I think it was with Turkey. I'm not sure. Then, they came over here to get away from getting into the army again, you know, to get back into fighting a war. I think they have it hard, those men, when they talked about it. Dad said they almost starved, they had nothing to eat.
- PG:** When he was in the Russian army?
- FB:** Yeah. They carried their utensils for eating in their boots. They had a fork or spoon or whatever. And they had dark bread, black bread. Sometimes they would break it open and the worms would crawl out and they would shake the worms out and eat it.
- PG:** Oh my.
- FB:** Just imagine.
- PG:** So your Aunt Christine, do you know what happened to her in Russia?
- FB:** She starved. Would you like to see a picture?

PG: Sure.

FB: '18, I know that.

PG: She died in the flu?

FB: He died in the flu [epidemic] over there, too. I don't know if he died of the flu, but he died at that time. This is Alexander, and this is Catherine, and Mary Ann was not born yet. Then, when they had this disturbance in Russia, they came and took the men away. And Mary (they had no children) and her husband—I don't remember now what her married name was. This was a Striefel, her married name. And Mary, they told them they were going to bring the men, march them through the city, the village, dorf they called it. They could see them and she saw her husband, but they could not talk to each other or do anything. That's the last time she saw him and she hung herself. She committed suicide.

PG: Who's the one that committed suicide?

FB: Mary, the one that's not on here. Mary Ann.

PG: Okay, do you know what happened to this Alexander?

FB: We lost track. Some of their children might be living, but we had some of our relatives somewhere in Siberia. But we lost all track. After Dad died, Ma couldn't write—she could write German, but not, like, a letter—and I used to write for her. Then after I started work for father then, well, there was so much to do and other things, we got interested in other things and we kind of got a little bit lazy with writing. But I kept in track with Ma's cousin, Pauline Schlosser was her name. They live in Strasbourg, too, and they fled from Strasburg; they went into German, and she lived in Berlin, this Pauline Schlosser. And I used to write to her through Ma, you know, Ma would tell me what to write. Then she died, though. I have a picture of her too, but where I've got it Lord only knows. I used to send her some of my clothes and on one of the pictures that she sent back she had one of my dresses on, this Pauline Schlosser.

PG: When she lived in Berlin, Germany?

FB: Uh-huh. But then, through her, we heard—she sent a picture, too, from Siberia that she had gotten from some relative, where one of our relatives was on there. They had not even shoes to wear. And cold! She had boots and had her feet wrapped up in cloth, you know, with clothing I suppose: wrapped up. Oh, I don't know how these people will ever be able to answer for that thing that they did to these people.

PG: What about your mother's other brothers and sisters? How many stayed over there or how many came over?

FB: They all were over here. She only had two sisters and two brothers.

PG: All but this one, it's your mother's sister. Is this the only one that stayed back?

FB: Yeah. See Mrs. Paul Senger was Ma's sister, and they are all dead now. Andrew Schweitzer was her brother, he was the oldest one, and then Carl Schweitzer was still single when the folks came over, but he married. Two brothers married two sisters. The sisters were Schlosser girls and the boys were Schweitzers, of course. Uncle Andrew had married Aunt Christine Schlosser, then Uncle Carl married [A329 Kunagunda]. They are buried in St. Michael's, Carl Schweitzer and his wife. Andrew Schweitzer died in Fort Yates. They moved across the river in those poor days and times, you know, and he died

over there and she died over here. She's buried up here at St. Mary's, she's a Christine, too; that was a Schlosser. That was Ma's sister-in-laws, she had only two brothers. They had more children in Russia, but so many of them died, you know, they had no doctors. Like the folks, they had two, their oldest, and they both died.

PG: When you were young, what work did you like to do when you were growing up?

FB: Reading. [Laughs]

PG: Well, what did you read?

FB: All kinds of stuff. I could read German when I was just a little girl. So when I got something to read, I would forget my work. I would get spanked many times, because I was a reader. I still am, you can tell, but my eyes are going. Well, I did always housework: scrubbing and cleaning and washing dishes and cooking. I cooked when I was only eight years old.

PG: Oh, really.

FB: The folks were all out in the field and Dorothy was a baby and I had her at home. I milked nine cows every evening.

PG: When you were eight years old?

FB: Before I was eight, because I know we didn't have Dorothy yet and I must have been only seven and I milked nine cows every evening. We had ten, but the one I couldn't milk, it was kind of hard to milk.

PG: Well, what did you cook?

FB: Mom would prepare it in the morning and I knew the clock, the time. At such and such a time, you set it [on the stove]. And this was a kerosene stove. One time I almost burnt the house down. We had all kinds of experiences. This was the new house even, but this was in the morning. The folks had gone to Strasburg, with the team, and Carl and Tony and I were out milking, but I put the coffee on. You had these coffee pots, this big coffee maker, you know years ago, not like nowadays. Anyway, I put on the kerosene stove and put the coffee on and we went out to milk. Then we had the separator in one of the rooms down stairs; we called it the furnace room (the furnace was in there) and Tony went in and carried milk in, and when he came in, the house was all full of smoke. So, the fire in the kerosene stove got bigger on its own. I must have had it a little bit too high. They would burn higher a lot of times, if there was a little air or something like that, it would cause the fire to burn. Anyway, we had an old trunk in the corner by the furnace where we kept the dirty clothes. I don't know where the other clothes were. But anyway, the stove started these clothes on fire, so the house was all full of smoke, but we got it in time. Tony put it out, so...oh boy! That was a new house, was just newly painted, was when the house was just newly built in spring. Everything was clean. Then Tony went upstairs and opened up the windows and where the smoke went out, the curtains were just black. Oh, I didn't get even a licking. Yeah, all kinds of experience...oiy, oiy, oiy.

PG: What work did you not like to do?

FB: Washing the separator. [Laughs] Oh boy, that was my greatest, I don't know why, but I didn't like to wash the separator.

- PG:** It was quite a job to put that back together.
- FB:** Yeah, it was. And then you had to carry the water, heat the water from the house and in the summer, we had the separator in the granary, you know. We had the little granary a little ways from the house and we always kept it nice and clean—you had to. I hated to wash the separator. Well, you had to. There was lots of things I think that you didn't like to do but you had to do them. There's no way.
- PG:** Where did you go to school?
- FB:** A half a mile east of the church. That was down the corner, do you remember that? That's where that was. The first school was at St. Michael's. There was a little school. Joe Rerick was my first teacher. Joe Rerick that had that store over at St. Anthony's and then later on at Napoleon. I remember him, I think, only one year: maybe first grade or whatever. Then, there was something, it seems to me it was in Jay Kunz' yard there was a little building that we went to school. You know I went to school when I was only five years old...and walked...two and a half miles? Sometimes I couldn't keep up with the boys and I'd get a good licking, too, and I would cry.
- PG:** What was Joe Rerick doing? Was he a farmer, or did he have a store then already?
- FB:** No...
- PG:** He never owned a store in St. Michael's, did he?
- FB:** No. The first store that was at St. Michael's was Frank Rerick and somebody else had the store there one time, a long time ago.
- PG:** So that Kunz was not the first one?
- FB:** No, but it was in a different building. But I remember that store that Frank Rerick's had, and somebody else, but I don't remember who it was.
- PG:** Then, you just went to grade school?
- FB:** Uh-huh. Yeah, I should've gone to more school, but, years ago, a girl didn't...well, they were supposed to get married and have a family. They didn't need high school. That was the idea. I learn so easy, you know, it's too bad, but...
- PG:** Did you have seven months of school?
- FB:** No.
- PG:** Maybe even less?
- FB:** Maybe even five and six months.
- PG:** Where did the teachers come from?
- FB:** Most of our teachers came from Minnesota. I know I still remember one; her name was Eleanor [A433 Kluse]. She came from Elbow Lake, Minnesota. Then we had one was Blanche [435 Valinski], she was also from Minnesota, she stayed at Kunz'. She was a Catholic woman, very nice. I got so attached always. When we had to say goodbye to the teachers, we cried. Then we had men teachers, too. I don't remember—well, Joe Rerick was the first one, but then I don't remember too many after that.

- PG:** Did Joe Rerick have an education?
- FB:** Uh-huh. He went to Richardton to school, when Fr. Lauinger went.
- PG:** Oh, did he?
- FB:** I don't know how long he stayed, though, because they went together. They were good friends. Father was always good friend to Joe Rerick. In fact, when Joe Rerick was in Napoleon, when he had the store, when we went to Napoleon, we always went to Joe Rerick's store to buy groceries. Then, what did Father buy...a washing machine, I think. Yeah, and Joe Rerick delivered it. It was when Father [A454 Griner] was in Napoleon. Father [A454 Griner] even came down with him when he delivered the washing machine, Joe Rerick.
- PG:** So that there was the first washing machine that you had, huh?
- FB:** The one that didn't have to go like this...
- PG:** The one you did not have to pedal by hand.
- FB:** Uh-huh. That wasn't even electric. We didn't have no electricity.
- PG:** Okay, but the one from Joe Rerick that was like a gasoline engine?
- FB:** Must've been. I don't remember that.
- PG:** Where you had to step on it to get it started?
- FB:** Yeah.
- PG:** Do you know what year that was when you got the first washing machine?
- FB:** Well, there was a washing machine there when I started working, but they were all wood. I can't explain that now.
- PG:** Well, you had to push it by hand.
- FB:** Yeah. At home we had one that was a big one that had two handles on, one went this way and one went the other way. You had to go like this. But then, later on, they had some different ones that were smaller. I think they washed a little bit better, but you couldn't get much in there. And that's what they had at the parish house when I started working there.
- PG:** You had to do that by hand, too?
- FB:** You had to carry the water down stairs, heat it on a little kerosene stove and then do your washing and then wash the water out again. We only got facilities in '42 at St Michael's.
- PG:** In school, were there other nationalities besides the German Russians?
- FB:** They were all the same.
- PG:** Were you punished if you talked German?
- FB:** No, not punished, but we had to speak English, of course. But you didn't know anything. All we could say was yes, or no. We couldn't speak English when we started school.

PG: If you were caught talking German, they didn't...

FB: No, they were not that mean.

PG: Did you have any Christmas programs?

FB: Oh, yes. I still remember one time, when I had to...I can't think of it now what my worst was that I had to say? [A493 John Hegal] and I were on the stage, you know - whatever stage it was, I don't remember—and I had a doll. [Sings] "Christmas time is coming soon, now you dear old man, whisper what you bring to me, tell me if you can," [Laughs] I can still..., "Johnny wants a pair of skates, Suzy wants a dolly, Molly wants a story book, she thinks dolls are folly...ask for me my little man, what you bring tonight, Christmas..." now I'm stuck. [Laughs] Yeah, that's over 80 years ago when I sang that program. I said to Sister Jeanette last night, I still know when she said she knows so many things about when she was three and four years old. I said, well I'm sure I was not older than maybe three when I sang songs, you know, that my mother taught me. She put her legs out like this and folded them at the bottom and I sat on her feet and then I sang, [A520 sings in German]. Just imagine...that's a long time ago. But my voice is not good. Yeah, we were singers in our family. My mother, she didn't have a voice to sing, but she liked singing. [A531]. We sang a lot. We were all musical.

PG: Did anybody learn how to play the accordion, or...?

FB: Well, when Fr. Lauinger came to St. Michael's he started the band and Tony was the drummer. And Tony got so good with drumming; he even drummed for Lawrence Welk sometimes. Not in a big band, but when he played at Strasburg. Then Carl played the slide trombone. Wendy played the accordion, but not in Father's band; he was much younger. When he was a little boy, we had a phonograph and that little boy loved music. Oiy, oiy, oiy, was he crazy for music! When somebody, like when Carl and Maggie got married, he was only three years old and Guttenberg played for that wedding.

PG: Guttenberg?

FB: Guttenberg. And Wendy stood where the musician...

[end side A]

PG: Let's talk about church. Did your folks help build a church? Was there a church there, or...?

FB: They helped build St. Anthony, south of Napoleon. They helped build with donating, you know, I don't know if they helped building. Well, sure, they all did, but...

PG: So they belonged to St. Anthony at first?

FB: Yeah, I was baptized there at St. Anthony while Steven Stenger was the priest. He had the beard down like this. I remember that priest. Then, I don't know, St. Anthony— well, that doesn't make a difference when that was built—but St. Michael's was built in 1915.

PG: So you would've been five years old when they built St. Michael's?

FB: Not even, because my birthday is in December. See, the whole year goes by before I have birthday, so I was only four. But I don't remember much about the building of the church. But then, when we went to church there, I remember Joe Vetter, when he was still single and Grandma, they used to come with a

little buggy. He played in St. Michael's; he was the organist there, too. And Grandma would come along and they would sing. She was the singer; she had the nice voice.

PG: You mean Joe Vetter's mom?

FB: Uh-huh. She always wore a black skirt and a white blouse. That's how I remember her.

PG: So, your folks helped build that church.

FB: Oh, yeah. And the parish house then, too. See, the church was built in 1915 and then, when we got old enough to go to First Holy Communion, we had no priest at St. Michael's. We all had to go boarding someplace. We went down to the St. Aloysius, the [B17 creek] they called it, I had to go, too, and I was so homesick. But I could read German, and my mother taught us to pray. We wouldn't really have had to go anyplace to make First Holy Communion because the priest, the [B18 Fr. Municks] was his name, we had school only from morning until noon and then you had to stay someplace. All us kids were running around down by the creek, you know, playing.

PG: Playing in the creek, yeah.

FB: St. Joseph's, that's when I met Sister Imelda. I became good friends with Sr. Imelda at that time and she was my friend all—well, she's not living anymore. But that time is when the St. Joseph's kids and we, from here, I mean from St. Michael's, there was only six: four girls and two boys. And from St. Joseph's, I don't remember, but I remember the Mattern boys, two of the Mattern boys, Matt and John were boys from there and Sister Imelda, but the girls I don't remember.

PG: Then everything was in German?

FB: Uh-huh.

PG: Do you know when they started preaching in English? Or did they never start preaching in English?

FB: Oh, yeah. Well, Fr. Lauinger started in St. Michael's.

PG: He preached in German first. He used to, and then he switched...

FB: Yeah, but then he switched, not too much English even. Oh yeah, he preached in English.

PG: Were people upset when English started?

FB: I don't think so. Well, the older ones, but there were not too many...well, there were old people. Well, they had to because the young kids didn't understand the German.

PG: Well, when somebody died, you had to wait at the house all the time?

FB: Most of the time, yeah.

PG: Then, somebody stayed up all night?

FB: Yeah. I remember when our Grandma Burckhardt died; she died in '17. They stayed up all night, and she wasn't even embalmed. She died in May. I don't remember now, the 16th of May I think. I got everything written down. Anyway, then they had to bury her and hurry up, you know, because they couldn't [wait] when it was warm. Yeah, I remember that very well, too. But then, later on, they were embalmed, like

Joe Geffre, they had him in the house, but he was embalmed. Then, they started having them in funeral homes, too, you know. Like Father's father, he died in the parish house and we were stormed in. He died the 27th of January in '48. And stormed in, then Grandpa died and we got to call. There was no telephone, so somebody went over and called Joe Wolf and at night they went out, including Father, opened up the road to Linton so they could tell the undertaker, you know. In fact, there was no undertaker at Linton; there was an undertaker in Strasburg at that time. Peter Kraft was at Strasburg. So when they had the road open down to the highway and from there they could drive. So they came that night, yet, and got Grandpa. Peter Kraft took him to Strasburg, that's where he was, and then he never got out of St. Michael's. They should have had the service for him there, too, because he lived there 23 years. But, the roads were blocked, nobody would take a chance. So he was buried in Strasburg.

PG: So he's buried in Strasburg?

FB: Yeah, Grandma was already buried there, you know. His father's mother died ten years before Grandpa did.

PG: How did you celebrate Christmas when you were little?

FB: Oh, we had good Christmases...nice. The Krish Kindel, the Belzenickel [laughs] I remember the Belzenickel in sod house. I thought I saw fire coming out of his mouth. You know, kids can imagine a lot of things when they get scared and that was always a threatening thing. [B057 German]. Even if you thought you were good, but the Belzenickel was always there. And later on they had the [B060 Krish Kindel with the easel]. Oh yeah, we had good Christmases.

PG: Did you get any presents?

FB: I had one doll in my life...and a carriage; it had a little carriage. That was in the old house. But then in the new house—I must've had two dolls—in the new house, I had one. It was a china with a china head, you know, and I never used it. I had it sitting on the dresser. It was nice. And that was faded already, the dress was faded. One day I said—they were cleaning grain in the granary, a neighbor and my dad—and I said to my mother, "Can I take my doll," and I don't know how old I was, and she said, "okay." I mean, in German, we talked. Then I took it and I went out to the granary, you know, where my dad was—showing off I suppose—and I dropped it and it broke, and then I cried. That was my last doll. And I was not very big...must've been maybe about five-six years old or something like that.

PG: The porcelain head broke?

FB: It slept, you know, when you laid it down, the little eyes closed; it was pretty...blue dress. Yeah, I can still see that doll. But then you didn't get toys like you do nowadays.

PG: They have so much toys nowadays.

FB: I have a relative, a little girl. She is one year old. And they say, "No more toys; she's got more toys than she'll ever need in all her life." Well, why do they buy'em, so many?

PG: Well, did they take pictures when you were young? Was there a photographer?

FB: Uh-huh.

PG: Who took the pictures?

- FB:** I remember when, well I have a picture...Sebastian was a baby and he's only two years younger than I am and he must've been about a year old, maybe not even. And I remember that, so I was not older than three years. I have picture, do you want to see it?
- PG:** No, not now.
- FB:** Anyway, I remember that the guy that took the picture, it was taken behind our granary that was a little ways from the house that I said a little while ago. The separator and everything was there in the summertime. That was when our grandma Burckhardt was still alive. And this guy, I don't remember, I think he came on a bicycle, and he had a camera, one of these tripods that you set up and the camera was on top and then he took a cloth over his head. We had to stand up, Grandma was sitting in the chair and then Sebastian on her lap and Tony stands on this side. Tony stands like this. The way we figure out, Tony was about twelve. Then, I'm next to Grandma and then Carl, and we hold each other by the hand, Carl and I. Going with Sebastian being a little child, and he's only two years younger than I am, so I wasn't older than three, but I remember that.
- PG:** Any ghost stories in your family? Did your parents talk about seeing ghosts or...?
- FB:** No...Well, like in school or someplace, but we never dwelt on that at all. Bats. [B093]. We had one in the house once. Oh, boy. I heard something about the bat the other day and I always think of that.
- PG:** They were really scared of bats, weren't they?
- FB:** Oh yeah. Still, I don't want any around. I mean, I haven't seen one for years, but I don't know...
- PG:** I think, in Russia, the bats carry...
- FB:** A disease.
- PG:** Rabies, I think. And then, they thought if they get into your hair, then...
- FB:** Yeah, then your hair fall out. That's always what they said. If they get into your hair, you lose your hair.
- PG:** Do you remember about Brauche?
- FB:** Yeah. My mother didn't believe in Brauche. We never had anything like that. When she went to a Braucher one time, she had a rupture—navel. And she went to [B102 Brosey]. He lived west of Wishek and he did that kind of stuff. So anyway, somebody took my parents. They were a couple, I don't remember who they were, but they went over to [B104 Brosey]. She said she had to undress and then he laid the silk, like a silk cloth over her thing, and he blew on it. Well you have to have faith they say. Then she said to herself, "Yeah, you are not going to blow that away," and it never did anything for her.
- PG:** So it didn't heal?
- FB:** No, she had surgery later on.
- PG:** I wonder if anybody actually ever healed a rupture.
- FB:** I don't thing so. How could they? My mother got hers from digging rock. Your skin tears, and...
- PG:** Yeah. If you lift too heavy, it'll rupture, yup.

- FB:** Digging rocks.
- PG:** Do you remember the flu in 1918?
- FB:** Oh, yeah.
- PG:** Were you sick?
- FB:** Uh-huh.
- PG:** Did anybody die that's real close, related to you?
- FB:** No. You know, my mother almost died and Dorothy, too. She was born during the flu: 23rd of November in 1918. I remember when Dorothy was born. Oh, I was so glad I had a little baby sister. I never had a sister. She was born in November and I was eight years old in December. But she was red like a beet, you know, the baby, and Ma was really sick, but they made it. But my dad never got sick and we all were sick. Tony was so sick that he lost all his hair. He had high fever, you know, and no doctors. But they called a doctor when Dorothy was born, but the baby was there when the doctor came: Dr. Wolverton, I think it was, from Linton.
- PG:** Did they have any special medicine for that flu?
- FB:** Yeah, there was a man. His name was [B128], from Napoleon. Did you ever hear about him?
- PG:** Yeah.
- FB:** He was kind of a [B126] herb doctor. And what we had to do, you know, we had nose bleeds so bad, and then he made some tea out of this wormwood. We had to drink that and sniff it up in our nose. It was supposed to stop the bleeding. I don't know if it did, I was...we were all sick, yeah.
- PG:** That wormwood is bitter.
- FB:** Oh, gosh.
- PG:** That's the most bitter thing you can taste, I guess.
- FB:** Well, you can even buy it. You can it buy it in the store.
- PG:** What caused the nose bleed? You said you had nose bleeds?
- FB:** I don't know. Yeah, we had nose bleeds.
- PG:** From the flu? During the flu?
- FB:** I think a lot of people did. But I don't remember now if they all were, but I know Sebastian and I did. We slept, you know, we were in the same bed because everybody was sick and we needed beds. And we were little, you know, so it didn't make any difference.
- PG:** Did anybody die that you knew? A neighbor or anybody?
- FB:** Well, we talked about that the other day when they said this flu was supposed to be as bad this year as it was at that time. I remember at St. Joseph's they buried two from one family and it was a Vetter, I think, in the same grave. Nick.

PG: It wasn't [B145 Nick Bollinger], huh?

FB: No, Nick Mosset. Yeah, see I remember that name. I didn't know the person, but it seems to me Nick Mosset was buried with somebody else. They couldn't even make the graves fast enough. Especially in the winter time, the people were buried. In our family, nobody died, I mean, or any relative during the flu that I remember.

PG: You don't remember when you first got the radio?

FB: Uh-huh. I bought it.

PG: You bought it for your folks?

FB: In the poor years, when they had to sell the cows; the government bought the cattle for 25 dollars apiece. Well, when I was 24 years old, then my folks gave me some inheritance. But the government bought these cows anyway for 25 dollars apiece, so they let me pick four cows. Okay, so I had four cows, and I was already an organist in the church, and I didn't get anything. So, Tony gave me a cow and I - that was for his deuce, part of the deuce, you pay a little bit more than 25 dollars if you could.

So anyway, then I had five cows. Well, you couldn't keep them because there was no feed. So I sold these cows, I had five cows and, I don't remember, I think it was three calves. I got 110 dollars. I thought I was a millionaire. 110 dollars, oiy, oiy, oiy, so I put it in the bank. Oh boy was I rich. So anyway, then at that time we didn't have a radio and Father Lauinger had a, what do you call it...the agency to sell radios at St. Michael, the Philco radios. Two men then, I think they had to get to the supply house in Mandan. Some people had already gotten some radios and then, well, we all like music. Then I said to my mother one time, "We should have a radio, why can't we have a radio, why don't we have a radio." She said, [B174 German]. I had 110 dollars.

So, I made up my mind, well, if I want a radio, I've got to buy it...so I did. It was, I think, 45 dollars, this radio. It was one of those—I have a replica of one, but it's not here anymore, that radio...the original...well, I never had it. When I saw it with my father, that radio didn't go with me. So anyway, then after a year or so, maybe two years after I bought the radio, then my dad came to me and he said, we need a car. Poor-like, you know, everybody was so poor at that time, too. He said, "Would you give me some money, I need 60 dollars." They can have a car for 60 dollars. I couldn't say no, so I gave to Dad a check for 60 dollars. I had ten dollars left of my inheritance. So that's what I got from home.

PG: So he never gave you the money back for the car?

FB: Well, there wasn't anything. You know, when my dad died in '38, that was when the times were still poor, he had one little red copper in his wallet. Ma opened it up and she said [B190 German]. That was sad, ay, ay, ay. His coffin was made by Matt Moser in Strasburg; it cost 25 dollars. Then, when the folks moved in town then in the meantime, they had a cow. They could take a cow along. Then when Dad had died. Ma had to have 25 dollars to pay for the coffin and something else...I think, for the funeral. It seems that priest didn't even take anything or whatever. Then she sold either the cow or the car to pay for Dad's coffin, I don't remember what was what.

PG: Do you remember what kind of a car it was?

FB: It was a Chevy...a blue Chevy.

- PG:** Blue?
- FB:** Uh-huh. Yeah, I can just see it, but I wouldn't know what year it was. It was an old car. It was in good shape, I think, I don't know.
- PG:** Did your mother make a lot of clothes?
- FB:** No, she was not a seamstress. She did some, but not...
- PG:** She patched?
- FB:** Oh yeah. Everything was patched. Nowadays, I don't think people patch anymore, but at those days, they did. They had to.
- PG:** Did you use up the flour sacks?
- FB:** We made bedding with flour sacks, too. Sheets and pillowcases and everything...underwear...
- PG:** Sometimes when you used flour sacks, you had a seam, where you had to lay on that seam sometimes.
- FB:** [Laughs] Yeah, you needed six to make a sheet. You know, four, sewed them together, then it wasn't long enough. Then you had to take one and sew part of it on the bottom to make it long enough for the bed, the sheet.
- PG:** Six flour sacks?
- FB:** Yeah. No, maybe just five...no, I think half of one made it long enough for the bottom, to make it long enough.
- PG:** Do you remember [B216]? Do you remember the corn?
- FB:** Oh yes. I don't know if we ever...I think we slept on corn, too. I don't remember that, but we used to have to make it for the baby's bed, because it needed more fresh stuff. Well, I remember husking corn and then taking the inside leaves, what was more soft. I could still do that if I had to, to this day.
- PG:** Did you have corn; did your folks grow corn all the time?
- FB:** Yeah, we always had corn. Oh, we had so much trouble with the neighbors, sometimes, in the fall, you know, when the cows would...oh.
- PG:** The neighbors' cows would come over?
- FB:** [B225]. It was a lot of trouble with that corn. There were no fences and there was free wheeling.
- PG:** Open range?
- FB:** Yeah.
- PG:** Did your mother have a sewing machine?
- FB:** Oh yes: a Singer sewing machine.
- PG:** Where did they find it, or did they have sewing machines right away when they came over here?
- FB:** I imagine that, they had sewing machines as long as I know.

- PG:** I wonder if they had to worry about buying them right away. But you don't remember when they made shoes, huh?
- FB:** My dad was a [B233 shoemaker]. I mean, he could sole our shoes. He had one of these, what did they call them, a stand, you know.
- PG:** A [B234].
- FB:** Yeah. Ma used to say, [B235]. Well, his father was, they called him the [shoemaker]. They went by that trade. They had different names, but just by that trade, sometimes they didn't even know what their real name was. Anyway, Grandpa made shoes, too. Well, my dad, I don't think he made them from scratch, but he could sole good. I remember he had the knife, you know, to cut. The sole was a piece of leather. Then, he put that piece of leather on the shoe and then measure it off, then cut it with the knife.
- PG:** They bought that leather; they did not make their own?
- FB:** No, Dad never did that.
- PG:** I mean, they could've, if...
- FB:** Yeah, tanning it. Well, the only leather I think they would have had was from cow hide.
- PG:** Well, what else can we talk about...have you got anything else you wanted to say that we didn't ask?
- FB:** I don't know...
- PG:** Do you remember why the St. Michael's people were the [B251 Schtuped]? Do you remember that?
- FB:** Yeah, I remember, but I don't know why. That comes from Russia, too, I suppose.
- PG:** I think it was a town in Russia by that name. [B254 Schtuped]. It had nothing to do with the way the people were.
- FB:** No...well, they don't have to be ashamed. You know, there's a lot of times they say I'm German, but I'm not ashamed of it. I'm glad I don't have to pay money to learn the German language, and I can read German and it didn't cost me anything. I was in the sixth grade in German school and I only went one month. That was over in St. Anthony; I was twelve years old.
- PG:** And that was summertime?
- FB:** During the month of May. It was not in public, I mean, not in English. That was extra. Brown was the organist and...
- PG:** That was by the church and you called it [B263 deutsche school].
- FB:** [B263], yeah. They had 80-some kids and it was just him alone. Then us girls, the ones that were a little better educated, whatever you would call it, we had to help him. I talked to Julius Vetter the other day, they were over here. I didn't know they had a girl that teaches here at the cathedral. His wife is a Wangler and her mother was Magdalena Glatt. I told her, I said, "You know that I taught your mother the catechism, when we went to catechism school" She had such big, nice eyes. She was a cute little girl,

but she couldn't read German. How could they learn? They couldn't...how could they learn from it when they couldn't read?

PG: Right. Was that Martin Brown, was he that mean teacher?

FB: Well, I don't know, he was not mean to me but he was—well, he had to be mean sometimes [laughs], when the boys didn't.... One time he was chasing some of them around the stove; there was a little coal stove in the middle of the school. I don't know, he was a nice man.

PG: Well, I know some people have said that he was so mean. That was quite a ways for you to go to St. Anthony's.

FB: I boarded. I boarded with the organists, with the Browns.

PG: Oh, really.

FB: Well, my folks were always friends to priests and like now the organist they got to be real good friends with, and they used to come to us to visit a lot. And then Martin Brown said to my mother one times, to the folks, "They should send me to German school because I should have German more." He knew that I—and I was not in the choir then, yet. Then Ma said, "Well, because we belong to St. Anthony, how can she go; we would have to board someplace." And then he said, "Well she can stay with us." So, that's how I got to stay with the Martin Brown's. They had no children, but they had an adopted girl, Margaret. She was, I don't remember, I think she was maybe a year younger than I. She was well educated in the German language. She could read good and everything, but I could read good, too. Anyway, this came about. This took a whole month at school.

Then when school started, my folks took me over there and I stayed at Martin Brown's. They were real good to me. She was such a good woman, Mrs. Brown. She was a little thing. He was kind of tall, but she was little. And a real religious family, you know, you prayed and all kinds...I enjoyed it, I liked it. So anyway, then he had classes. They had second grade, fourth grade, sixth grade and I don't know if it went above sixth grade, I don't remember. But anyway, then Thursdays they called it [B313]. If you made a mistake when you read, you either got a step higher or a step lower; you had to move. When I started the first day, he gave me a book. A second reader, I think it was. Well, I could read like everything and he said, "You are not for this," in German, you know. Then, he gave me a fourth reader. Then, I think I was in the fourth reader a week and then they gave me a sixth. I was only a month and I was in the sixth grade, German school. We had taken reading and spelling and all that, too. Then, I don't know how long it was, maybe when I got into the sixth grade there was a Gross girl. You know the Gross boys I suppose: Matt and Ralph. That was their sister Philipina, she died.

PG: Philipina, yeah.

FB: Yeah. Anyway, Margaret was the first, the head, and then it was Philippine and I was the third. That was something great, you know, that I got—I came from St. Michael's. Of course, we belong to that parish, but I didn't have much to do with those kids, we were so far away from everybody. Anyway, this was a Thursday when it was [B331]. Philippine read and she made a mistake, and when I was reading what I was supposed to read, I didn't make a mistake. So, I was supposed to get ahead of her. Then, I would've been second in the whole school. Then, she cried. And we were second cousins, you know, I'm related to the Grosses, to you, too, in the same way, through the Schweitzers. Anyway, then I said to Mr. Brown,

[B339]; "I don't care," she said. "She can stay there." Later on we she died, I was so glad because I could've insisted that I get where she was. She would've been under me then. That was not that great of deal to me.

PG: She died young?

FB: Yeah, she had appendix, I think. Yeah, she died young. So anyway, that was the German school that I got...

PG: Do you have anything that was brought from Russia that your folks brought....clothes or shawl or shoes?

FB: I suppose at first, but then, you know...

PG: They didn't save anything? And the letters...they didn't save any letters?

FB: I used to, but I don't have anything on hand anymore. You know, I'm cleaning out because I have so much stuff and I can't live here forever, but...

PG: Too bad that nobody saved those letters.

FB: I just threw one away the other day; it was written in German, that Father got from a priest in Berlin when he was over the holy land. Not the holy land in Rome, in Lourdes in 1950. He must've sent this priest a care package, Fr. Lauinger, in Berlin. Well, what do I want with that stuff? I've got to clean out and whoever cleans out, they'll throw it anyway, so I read it and then I threw it. This priest had thanked Father for the care package, and he wrote about the hardships they have and all that stuff.

PG: Okay, you said there was a little poem you sat on your mother's feet.

FB: A song.

PG: Okay, can you say they again.

FB: I cannot sing it, I'll just say it. [B369]. But there's more to that, but I forgot. And then there's one that [B379], ducks, swimming in the pond, but I forgot. I know another one.

PG: Oh, that's something like [B381].

FB: [B382]

PG: Well, we're going to wrap it up now; I see the tape is almost full. So, Francis, I thank you very much for the wonderful conversation we had this afternoon. Francis Burckhardt goes by her maiden name because she was never married, and she does not have any children. She spent quite a few years of her adult life as a housekeeper for the priest in her parish, Father Francis Lauinger. That church was only, perhaps, three miles from her home where she grew up. So she spent, really, almost all of her life within just a few miles of where she was born. This church, St. Michael's church, was east and a little bit north of Linton; perhaps, maybe sixteen miles from Linton. After Father Francis Lauinger died, she moved to Bismarck, so she has been living in a house in Bismarck ever since.