

Interview with Matilda (Schlenker) Dockter (MD)

Conducted by Michael M. Miller (MM) and Lillian Mayer Schlecht (LMS)

September 21, 1994

Streeter, North Dakota

Transcription by Rebecca Pettit

Edited by Mary Lynn Axtman and Brigitte von Budde

MM: The date today is September 21, 1994, and this is Michael M. Miller, the Germans from Russia Bibliographer at North Dakota State University in Fargo. I'm in Streeter, North Dakota. This is the home of Matilda Schlenker Dockter and it's a real privilege to be in Streeter, not too far from my home of Strasburg and we're going to visit a little bit with Matilda about her life and talk about her life in Streeter and what she remembers about her family and her parents and so forth. First of all, I wonder, if you would give me your name, your date of birth, and where you were born. Just mention your name Matilda.

MD: Matilda Dockter.

MM: And your family name was Schlenker?

MD: Schlenker, yah. John Schlenker.

MM: That was your father's name?

MD: That was my father's name.

MM: And when were you born Matilda?

MD: I was born in 1895.

MM: And your birthday?

MD: July the 31st.

MM: So you were born on July 31, 1895, and where were you born Matilda?

MD: I was born in Klöstitz.

MM: Klöstitz.

MD: Yah, that was Russia.

MM: Right. I think that was a German colony in Bessarabia.

MD: Yah.

MM: And how old were you when you came to America?

MD: Seven years old.

- MM:** So you were seven years old when you came to America and you came, of course with your parents. Were you..., who else came with your family? How many children, brothers and sisters did you have at that time? Do you remember? You can't remember?
- MD:** I can count them to myself.
- MM:** That's all right. But so there were other brothers and sisters that came with you?
- MD:** Oh yah, there were older ones than I.
- MM:** Right. What was your father's name?
- MD:** My father's name was John Schlenker.
- MM:** And he was, of course, of [from] the village of Klöstitz in south Russia or Bessarabia.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And where and when did he die? Do you remember about when?
- MD:** 1925, I guess.
- MM:** And he died here in Streeter? [ND]
- MD:** No, he died in Gackle. [ND]
- MM:** So when you..., when you came to North Dakota, they settled in Gackle?
- MD:** We first settled in Gackle and in Kulm.
- MM:** Oh, in Kulm, North Dakota.
- MD:** First. Yah. My father we, I lost a little brother, [and] a little sister when we came over from the old country in New York. They got chicken pox or measles or something they got. I don't really don't know what it was. And so they took them to the hospital and they died in the hospital.
- MM:** Was this like at Ellis Island?
- MD:** Pardon?
- MM:** Do you remember when you were seven years old, when you came? Do you remember coming to New York?
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** Where did you come to in New York? Do you remember?
- MD:** I can't remember.
- MM:** Can't remember exactly.
- MD:** They took us in a coach wagon or whatever they called it and [they] took the whole family to that building. Then we had to stay for quite a while there in that building. And then my father had sore eyes and they didn't let him go. So my mother and the family, they went to Kulm, [ND]. March, the 3rd of March.

MM: Of what year?

MD: Came to Kulm.

MM: That was in 18..., what year would that have been? That was seven years, you were born in 1895 so it was about seven years later, about 1892 then. Excuse me 19..., 1902. It was 1902. So you remember that?

MD: Yah, yah right.

MM: In 1902.

MD: Yah.

MM: And going back to your father again. Where is your father buried?

MD: Where he's buried?

MM: Right.

MD: Well, he came over then [to ND] after his eyes were better and then they let him go. But my mother, she took the family and she rented a farm and bought horses and cows and everything and started farming with the boys because my oldest brother, he was about 17 or 18 years old. I can't remember really. And so when his eyes got better, they let him go and so he came to Kulm. And then he, how do you say when you got some land, you know?

MM: Homesteading.

MD: Homesteading, yah. Homesteading. He was homesteading a quarter of land in Gackle. Then we moved to Gackle.

MM: So how long was your father...? Did he have to stay in New York before he could come?

MD: About, about four months.

MM: Four months, huh?

MD: Yah.

MM: That's what they would call, I think, quarantined because of diseases and so forth.

MD: And my..., I don't know what happened to my little brother and little sister. I don't know. I guess nobody, we kids don't know.

MM: How old were they? How old at the time?

MD: The little brother was about a year. Let's see, little brother was about a half a year old and the little sister two years [old], I guess.

MM: But your father today, he's buried. Is he buried near Kulm or near Gackle or where?

MD: He's buried in Gackle.

MM: A cemetery in Gackle.

- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** What was your mother's name?
- MD:** Christina Schlock. See they say, some of us say Schlot, but my mother always say Schlock.
- MM:** How do you spell that? We'll look that up later, on the spelling. And did your mother, do you remember, was your mother also from the Bessarabian village of Klöstitz??
- MD:** Yes. And my grandmother, yes she was [also].
- MM:** And your grandmother. Where, when and where did your mother die?
- MD:** She died in the same Gackle. Over in Gackle.
- MM:** She died and she's buried in Gackle. But do you remember what year she died?
- MD:** 19.., no.
- MM:** We can check that later.
- MD:** I can't remember.
- MM:** And is she buried in Gackle also?
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** But when you came to America, when you were seven years old, did your parents come and some of your brothers and sisters? Then did your grandparents come, too?
- MD:** Just my grandmother. My grandmother was a widow because grandpa died over in the old country.
- MM:** Now that was your grandmother...?
- MD:** That was my mother's mother.
- MM:** Your mother's. And what was her name?
- MD:** Her name...
- MM:** Grandma what? Do you remember?
- MD:** Anne Schlock.
- MM:** You don't remember what her family name was?
- MD:** No. I don't know her maiden name.
- MM:** And so she was quite elderly when she came along?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And so when she came along, she came and settled in with you then?
- MD:** She didn't live with us. She got married. When she came over she got married to a man in Kulm.

- MM:** What was his name?
- MD:** Dobler. Gottlieb Dobler.
- MM:** Gottlieb Dobler. And how old a woman was she when she came?
- MD:** I couldn't say that.
- MM:** She was still young enough to get married?
- MD:** Yah. I got a picture out there where she's on with the new man. Hanging on the wall.
- MM:** Right. We'll have to look at that.
- MD:** She wasn't so young anymore.
- MM:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- MD:** I have four sisters and about eight brothers. Is that thirteen?
- MM:** That would..., with you that's thirteen, yes. So you had four sisters and eight brothers and then with you it's thirteen. But some were born over here then?
- MD:** Yah, some. Four over..., four were born over [here], four or five. Let's see, Alex, Edward, Ted and Paul, Elsie. Yeah five of them.
- MM:** Now Matilda, who's still living in your family?
- MD:** Just Paul, me and Paul. Paul in Gackle, he lives in Gackle.
- MM:** And how old is Paul today?
- MD:** He's eighty-four.
- MM:** He's eighty-four, and you're..., you just turned ninety-nine, huh? Did they have a little party for you?
- MD:** No. I didn't want any.
- MM:** Didn't want any because you haven't got time?
- MD:** Because..., no not that. Because the children would have to come from California and all over and they wanted to come for the Buffalo Supper, so I said, "let the party be." "I had some parties already."
- MM:** Now do you remember? You were seven years old when you left that village, that Klöstitz village in Bessarabia. Do you remember a little bit about that life in the village over there? You were quite young yet even. Do you remember a little about that?
- MD:** Well, I can remember. I can remember how they threshed the wheat. They put the horses, spread the wheat around and put the horses on and [then] chase around on that. That was their threshing. Then they shake [it with pitch forks], the wheat. Then they put the horses on again.
- MM:** Did they do that same thing over here? That farming practice.
- MD:** Not when we were over here.

- MM:** You can't remember that ever being done in the Kulm area at your farm?
- MD:** No.
- MM:** What about with such a big family over there. Was it quite a big house?
- MD:** Yah. Well, there were more beds in one room than [here]. That wasn't just a little bedroom, there was a big room, but my dad owned it all. And his parents passed away, one passed away when he was three years old and one passed away when he was five years old. But I can't remember which was which. Forgot already.
- MM:** Right. And of course, your folks over there in the Bessarabian village in south Russia, were they farmers too?
- MD:** Yah, they were farmers.
- MM:** Farmers over there.
- MD:** But they had a..., how do you say, sickle, to cut the wheat. Then they go and make bundles like here. Bundles and set them up.
- MM:** Did they have some cows, pigs too?
- MD:** Yah. Cows and pigs and horses, chickens. Even my folks they had a..., they raised grapes. Grapes and apples and pears and everything. They had a big garden.
- MM:** And you remember all of..., some of that I'm sure.
- MD:** Yah, I can remember that. My mother, she went out and picked some with a basket and I can see her come down the hill with the baskets on her head. Carrying the grapes on her head, you know. But when I..., when we came over, I was seven years old coming in July. I come became eight and then when I came, we came over.... Is it wrong now? [referring to the tape player]
- MM:** No, no. Go ahead, continue.
- MD:** And then I had to go. Old people didn't have no family and they hired me to herd cattle, to take cattle out and they didn't have no pasture. Every morning and my brother too. He was two years older than I. Then we went, were together. Every morning we bawled when we had to go out in the hills with the cattle.
- MM:** Had to go out and get those cows in, huh?
- MD:** No, we had to STAY with the cows!
- MM:** Oh, you had to stay with them?
- MD:** Yah, we had to herd cattle. Yah we had to stay out there.
- MM:** But at the age of seven, did you go to school over there at all?
- MD:** Not much, not much, very seldom.
- MM:** So you didn't go to school over there at all?

- MD:** No, over there I didn't go to school. And if we did, yah we went. Now this was over here where we herd cattle, not over there. [in Russia]
- MM:** Oh I see, I see, yes.
- MD:** Out there [in Russia], there's somebody came in and got all the cattle out [got them from each household] in one bunch and herd the cattle out there. Out in Russia.
- MM:** Do you remember how that was done? They'd have a sheep's or they have a herdsman and he would come and get the cattle in the morning, wouldn't he?
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** And then he'd take them out [to the community pasture] and bring them home again.
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** Do you remember how the village was set up?
- MD:** Well, after we were done milking, he [the herdsman] came to each place and got them and then in the evening before milking, why he came in [back] and left them by each place.
- MM:** So you remember a little bit of how that village looked?
- MD:** A little.
- MM:** Not too much, but a little bit?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And your mother, of course, did a lot of work in the house and she had to do a lot of cooking?
- MD:** Yah. She had to do a lot of cooking, but not fancy cooking. Strudels and dumplings.
- MM:** Did you learn a little bit of how to cook from your mother?
- MD:** Huh? [From] my mother-in-law. My mom said to my mother-in-law when I got married. Now I was living with her, with my mother-in-law, for fourteen years and then my mom always said to my mother-in-law, "I was suppose to listen if she tells me something." "If I don't do it right then she should tell me what's right." And then when we were married for a while, then we got together. Then my mom asks how I behaved for her, how I do? Oh, my mother-in-law said, "I don't have to teach her anything in cooking," she said, "she cooks, she knows better than I do." She said "you had a bigger family." They didn't have such a big family, my mother-in-law.
- MM:** Going back to that Bessarabian village. Do you remember the house? Were there thick walls?
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** Do you remember a little bit how the house was built?
- MD:** That was real nice. It was sod. Not the sod, it was more built from rocks. But it was [a] big house with big rooms, not small room, big rooms.
- MM:** And what about the barn? Was that attached to the house?

- MD:** That was attached and we could go right in the barn from the house. One door, but out side you could go in [the barn] too, but from the house we could go right in the barn.
- MM:** I suppose that you were too young to have many chores yet.
- MD:** Well, I had to do some.
- MM:** What did you have to do?
- MD:** Feed the chickens, feed the cats and dog. We had a poor dog. He was all white and he must've knew that we were going to leave. Where ever we went, he was right there, all the time.
- MM:** Do you remember when your folks decided to leave and come to America? You know they talked a little about it. Of course you talked in German then. But do you remember what was happening when they were packing up everything? Wondering what are we all doing? Why do we have these suitcases or whatever? Do you remember some of that?
- MD:** Yah, we didn't have very many suitcases. That was tied up in bags and everything else.
- MM:** You had some bags. Do you remember what you decided, what you took along?
- MD:** Yah, I took my doll along that was for sure. I had a doll.
- MM:** And was that a doll made at home?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Was a handmade doll?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** How was it made? Do you remember?
- MD:** They bought a.... My mom bought a head [and] she made the doll. Cut it and sewed it up. Filled it up with cotton and made a doll.
- MM:** And you brought that along to America.
- MD:** I wish I would've saved it.
- MM:** Yes, we wish you would have it too. What about going to the store? Was there a bazaar in that town or did you have to go to a neighboring village?
- MD:** Well, there was a little but not too much.
- MM:** Not too much.
- MD:** If they want to buy more, then they had to get out. [go elsewhere]
- MM:** But you had a big garden over there, I'll bet.
- MD:** Yes, we did.
- MM:** A big garden. And you had big gardens over here too, of course.

MD: Yah.

MM: When you lived in Bessarabia, you only spoke German?

MD: Yah.

MM: You never learned any Russian?

MD: No, no.

MM: Did your folks know Russian?

MD: No. Some words.

MM: Some words.

MD: But not very many.

MM: What about..., was there a church? Do you remember as a child, was there a nice church?

MD: Oh, yah. Oh, yah.

MM: A Lutheran church?

MD: Lutheran church.

MM: And so you remember going to church, even at that time?

MD: Yes, yes. I'd go to Sunday school and church.

MM: Oh yes. All in German?

MD: Yah.

MM: But you made your first communion over here?

MD: Yah, yah I did.

MM: But when you came over [from Russia], you had other kids, neighboring kids, children, friends and so forth. Did a lot of them come with you or did you come alone as a family? Or other neighbors come over with you on the ship?

MD: No. No. You mean over here to this country?

MM: Yes.

MD: No, just we and grandma.

MM: Just came alone. You left all those people behind.

MD: Yah, from that place.

MM: Did some come over later then?

MD: Yah, some.

MM: Some of the neighbors and so forth?

MD: Yah, but not very many.

MM: Not very many. Did you ever recall your father or mother saying why they came over to America? Why did they leave the village?

MD: Yah. My father said, "we're moving to America." My dad was in the war over there, and he didn't like it. He thought some things weren't right. So he said, "he's going to go to America where his boys don't have to go to the war."

MM: Uh huh. And that was one of the main reasons they left?

MD: Yah. That's why he wanted to come over.

MM: So he served in the war over there.

MD: Well, his boys didn't have to go. But then the boy's boys had to go, some of them.

MM: Do you remember when you were a child over there? Did you had some time to play games or sing and so forth? Do you remember any of the games they played?

MD: Yah. We played ring-a-ring-a-rosie. All kinds of those things.

MM: What about singing?

MD: Singing?

MM: Did you learn any songs over there that they brought over here?

MD: Well, but forgotten already.

MM: Of course they sang in church a lot.

MD: Yah, they did.

MM: And praying was important in the home?

MD: And when the [time for] praying was, go to sleep or anything, my mother had a bench. We had to all sit on the bench and my mother stood in front and prayed with us. We had to pray with her.

MM: Do you remember that prayer?

MD: Yah.

MM: Can you say that prayer?

MD: Our Father.

MM: But can you say it in German? Do you still remember it in German?

MD: I don't know. I always say it in English [because] maybe I stumble. [on the German words]

MM: That's all right. So over in Russia you never did attend a school?

- MD:** No.
- MM:** You never went to school over there?
- MD:** But my mother and father taught us in the house.
- MM:** Did they have some books then?
- MD:** Yah, they had books.
- MM:** You had books, huh?
- MD:** We had books.
- MM:** So you were taught at home.
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** Was there a school in the village?
- MD:** Not right there. It was quite [far] out, you know.
- MM:** Quite far away. So they'd have to go somewhere else?
- MD:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** But then when you came over here to America, then when you settled near Kulm. Did you go to school over here then?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Did you start to go to...? Was it a farm school?
- MD:** Right away, yah. Well some of the oldest ones they got confirmed and everything. They went to school but they had to go farther. Then they stayed with some people. Some people took them in.
- MM:** Over here when they settled?
- MD:** Over there.
- MM:** Oh, over there. Oh that's how it was.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** So some of your older brothers and sisters. You don't remember what village they went to?
- MD:** No. No I don't.
- MM:** But they went to another town and stayed there during the week and would come home. Well, that's interesting. So your folks thought that it was important that the children should be educated?
- MD:** Yah. Oh yah.
- MM:** Did they get over there in Russia, do you ever remember? Did they get any kind of a newspaper? Any German newspaper?

- MD:** No, I can't remember that.
- MM:** What about over here? Do you remember them ever getting any kind of a newspaper? German newspaper?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** As you grew up here in this area?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** What was that newspaper's name? Do you remember? Do you remember, was it like *Dakota Freie Presse* or *The Nord Dakota Herold*?
- MD:** I really don't. I couldn't [say].
- MM:** You don't remember that.
- MD:** Can't even say that.
- MM:** So when you came over to America and came to this area, was religion in the family still very important over here also?
- MD:** Oh yah. We had to go every Sunday to church. And that church was Neudorf.
- MM:** Neudorf.
- MD:** Yah. There's a Straße auf der Farm. Da sind wir. That's where I got married.
- MM:** Oh yes, oh yes, Neudorf. Oh my, it's well taking care of! I see this beautiful picture and it says: Memorial site of former Neudorf Lutheran Church 1903-1961. And I'm sure there's many of your relatives are buried there.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Is that where your mother and father are buried?
- MD:** No. No they got buried in town. My little sister, one of my little sister [is buried there]. There was arguments always going on in that church and so my folks they turned away from Lutheran. They went to the Congresor. [? Congregational]
- MM:** What was the main reason? Why were there arguments?
- MD:** Well, I don't know. Kinda [in] the church all the time. So my dad said, "church is not to fight." He said, "I don't like that."
- MM:** But when you were growing up in those early years, all the services were still in German?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Until about when did they switch to English?
- MD:** Well...

- MM:** Was it in the forties, or even later than that? Do you remember?
- MD:** I... couldn't...
- MM:** You can't remember exactly when. Where were you confirmed?
- MD:** I was confirmed in Ashley, [ND].
- MM:** Oh, in Ashley.
- MD:** My grandma, she got arthritis so bad she couldn't help herself. She couldn't walk and help herself. And then my folks they took me down there over the winter. I went to school and helped her along.
- MM:** In Ashley?
- MD:** Ashley, yah. So grandma in the evening, grandma helped me with my German. I got confirmed in German yet. And so she helped me in the evening with that. And during the daytime I went to English school and in the evening confirmation.
- MM:** I forgot to ask you that. Did your grandma or your folks, did they learn English?
- MD:** Talk?
- MM:** Yes.
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** They did learn English over here. So you spoke [it]. But when you were at home, after you were married and so forth, did you talk some English and some German or mostly German?
- MD:** Mostly English.
- MM:** Mostly English. Already then?
- MD:** I had a school teacher in board [kept boarding teachers in her home] so much. School teacher here in town, not in town, out in the country. And they talked English.
- MM:** They weren't German-Russian so then you had to talk English.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** But do you remember the days when [you] Matilda, when you went to school the first time? You only spoke German probably as a child.
- MD:** When we first [come]?
- MM:** When you first came.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Then all the other children, were most of them only speaking German or were there some English students too?
- MD:** Well, there was some English too. But not very many Norwegian people and others like that.

- MM:** But it was a little difficult because all of a sudden you had to switch to English?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Do you remember some of those early days in school?
- MD:** Oh yah. Some but not very much.
- MM:** How far did you have to go? How far was it to go to school?
- MD:** We went about half a mile.
- MM:** It wasn't too far away. You'd walk of course to school.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Remember some of those early days in the farm school?
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** And you went to school how many months of the year?
- MD:** About...
- MM:** Six months, nine months?
- MD:** No. Six months, I guess.
- MM:** Now of course, you remember growing up and so forth. You would attend German-Russian funerals. You know of course, a funeral was a very sad occasion today and even then. But what was it like at a German-Russian funeral? Remember what the ceremony was?
- MD:** Well, that was much, much sadder then when they had a funeral here. They didn't have noise and talking like now after [the funeral]. Everything was quiet and sad and they didn't talk and laugh and things like that.
- MM:** And there was singing, of course?
- MD:** Yah. And there was no eating or anything.
- MM:** Nothing like that.
- MD:** No.
- MM:** And everybody was dressed in black too, weren't they?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And then of course, the person's body would be in the home.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** You remember that.
- LS:** Did you have to get the body ready?

- MD:** No.
- LS:** Did you have an undertaker? Or someone else?
- MD:** Well, I can't remember that.
- LS:** Did the parents have to get the body ready?
- MD:** Not that I know. I really don't know. War weiß early years.
- MM:** Early years they probably did.
- MD:** Well, I suppose early years.
- MM:** Early years yes. Because they had to bury them so quickly after the death. It wasn't a longer period then like today. That's even true in the Ukraine in Russia today. It's that's way.
- MD:** I was by [at] my neighbor. My neighbor was going to go to town in the morning. I don't know, some reason, real early and there was so much snow. Then he pushed the car and he got a heart attack and died. And no undertaker could come and get him. Then they came over to our house and got me and he was laying in bed all day dead. Oh, what a day. Crying.
- MM:** What about Matilda, what do you recall of special holidays like Christmas and so forth. How was Christmas celebrated those early years? Of course, do you remember Christmas yet in Russia as a child? Do you remember how they had Christmas then?
- MD:** Well, if there was sponsors for somebody when they got baptized or something, they always carried something there. I can remember that. But otherwise, no.
- MM:** But over here, how was Christmas? You know, those first years when you immigrated to America, do you remember how they had Christmas? Was there a Christmas tree?
- MD:** Not by us.
- MM:** No Christmas tree.
- MD:** No. Not in church either.
- MM:** Was there a Santa Claus? Did they have a Belzenickel, a Santa Claus?
- MD:** Yah. No, no.
- MM:** No Santa Claus at that time. What did they have? Were there a few nuts around and some fruit?
- MD:** Yah. Some of them, not very much. They divided [out to] each one so much.
- MM:** And I suppose most of the presents, they were all hand-made?
- MD:** Yah. My dad, even my husband, we didn't have no money so my husband even made it [gifts]. Little sleds for the kids and wheelbarrows and if he started early enough then he had to hide them all the time so they couldn't see them.
- MM:** Was there some..., a lot of singing? At Christmas time?

- MD:** A lot. At our house was lot of singing, at my house. Lot of singing [as] we worked together. I worked outside with my husband out on the field and when we were done in the field, then he helped in the house. So when we washed dishes or done something, the kids too, we were all singing.
- MM:** Were there any instruments? Did you have any instruments?
- MD:** Well, the boys had ukelele and guitar.
- MM:** Later on. But those early songs, did you sing in German or English?
- MD:** First, when the kids were real small and we sang mostly German, but then...
- MM:** That's when you were married and growing up?
- MD:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** I don't suppose you remember any of those songs?
- MD:** No. Not very many.
- MM:** What about Easter? How was Easter celebrated when you were a teenager?
- MD:** Well, yah. Even when I was a teenager I don't know much about that. But when we were married already, we colored the eggs [when] the children weren't around. Easter Bunny done all that work, color eggs and everything. Then my husband, he took some eggs on Easter morning, bright and early, and went outside and made a little hole or something and put the eggs in. Then he told the children to go out and they should look around, maybe the Easter Bunny lost some eggs or something. So they went and found the eggs that the Easter Bunny lost.
- MM:** I forgot to ask you earlier but you married whom? Who did you marry?
- MD:** August M. Dockter.
- MM:** August M. Dockter. And did he immigrate from Russia too?
- MD:** No.
- MM:** He was born over here. Do you remember? Was he born in America or was he born over there in Russia too?
- MD:** No. He was born over there.
- MM:** He was born over there. He came over too as a young [person]. And how long had you been courting him? How long did you know each other?
- MD:** Not too long. A man came around and kuppelled us together.
- MM:** Oh yes, tell me a little about that. Who was the man?
- MD:** He died a long time ago. John Saar.
- MM:** John Saar was the name. And he introduced the two of you?

- MD:** Yah. He introduced to me and to my folks and he told my folks to come up and visit his folks and so they did.
- MM:** So it was arranged?
- MD:** Marriage was done.
- MM:** How old were you when you got married?
- MD:** Nineteen, no twenty.
- MM:** Twenty. Did you have a big wedding?
- MD:** Yah, had a barn dance.
- MM:** Barn dance. Who played at the barn dance, do you remember? Don't remember that anymore. But when you were..., that reminds me. When you were growing up as a teenager, you were married at twenty, did you go to dances before that?
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** Where were the dances at? In the barns usually?
- MD:** Barn. Barn. Usually in the barns.
- MM:** With live music?
- MD:** Yah, live music. Oh yah.
- MM:** So there were some bands around here?
- MD:** Oh yah, there were a lot of dances. I mean around Gackle there where we lived. I lived on the farm down [by] Gackle.
- LS:** Did they have accordions?
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** So your family allowed you to go dancing?
- MD:** Yes. My mother said, "that's her life." My mother said, "if you don't go to dances and have fun when you're young, when you're old, you can't." You get older.
- MM:** Were there some friends of yours that their parents didn't allow them to go to the dances?
- MD:** Well, my parents allowed us to go, BUT behave!
- MM:** Right. But there were some that didn't get to go to dances?
- MD:** Yah right. And those done [did] sometimes what they weren't supposed to do.
- MM:** Did you have to help in your family with weddings? If one of your older brothers and sisters got married? Did your folks have the wedding? Did they have the dinner right at the house? On the farm?
- MD:** All. All. Most of them.

- MM:** Big weddings?
- MD:** Yes, yes. The house was full and the band from town came out, the whole band. They blew the horns that the lights went out, the kerosene lights.
- MM:** Oh my! So that's all you had for light then, kerosene lamps?
- MD:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** What kind of food did they serve? They had to prepare well in advance.
- MD:** Yah. They got sausage and ham and potatoes and all kinds of [food]. Wine and schnapps and...
- MM:** Did they make that themselves?
- MD:** No, They bought [that]. Well wine they probably made, but some of them.
- MM:** And you mother, of course, still had to do a lot of cooking? The weddings were big and she'd get some help from the family.
- MD:** Well, she got help from the neighbors. Neighbors, they went together, they helped out each other. Not like now. If somebody supposed to help a neighbor [now], they just [only] say, "how much do you pay?" [At that time] they just they went and helped and then when they [the others] need help, the others went and helped [them].
- MM:** What are some of the dishes your mother [cooked]? The best things that you learned from your mother, like cooking? She was a real good cook? Did she make wonderful Kuchen or was she good at everything or what do you remember? What she always thought was her best?
- MD:** I thought my mother's food was all good.
- MM:** All good. Did she make lots of noodles?
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** Cheese buttons and all those things?
- MD:** I just got a big bag of noodles here the other day from a lady. Mrs. Jack Wieland, Bertha. She brought me two, no three quarts of chicken, frozen chicken on ice and a big bag of noodles for noodle soup.
- MM:** So you do all your own cooking yet, Matilda?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Do you still make noodles?
- MD:** I make noodles. I bake my own bread. I don't buy bread to eat, just for toast.
- MM:** Well, now I know where I can come for some noodles.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** What about...? Going back to the home, we talked about music. Did any of your brother or sisters or anyone in the family learn to play an instrument?

- MD:** We didn't have any until later. I had a brother, he was sick a lot and then my folks bought an organ. He was supposed [to learn] 'cause he couldn't do much work. So my dad said, "Well, maybe [that's] one thing he could do, maybe we could send him to school for a preacher." But then he didn't want to. He said it was too hard on him because when he was sick he had trouble with his heart, kind of blockage. Blood, he was bleeding so much then the blood set in his heart. I don't how anymore.
- MM:** And that relates to medicine. Of course, you left at the age of seven from Bessarabia and then came to America. And at that time there weren't too many doctors around, so you had to do a lot of it on your own. Do you remember some of those home remedies?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Do you still use some of those today?
- MD:** They're better some of them, than the doctors.
- MM:** Matilda, what are some of those? That if someone gets sick with a cold, what do you do, for example?
- MD:** Do you have to say that?
- MM:** Oh sure. Come on, that's important.
- MD:** Kamilletee. [camomile tea].
- MM:** Kamilletee [camomile tea]. Well, I remember that from my grandmother. How do you make that? That's interesting?
- MD:** I boil the water and put it in a little a strainer and put the boiling water in and leave it in the water for a while and put sugar in and if I want lemon, then I put lemon in. That's the way I make it.
- MM:** Do you remember, was there anyone around here that did any Bräuching?
- MD:** Any what?
- MM:** You know, any folk medicine. You know folk healing. Do you remember that around here? That was someone who would, if you were sick or something, you would go to a lady.
- MD:** No. Nobody was around here. No.
- MM:** No one like that. But you've heard of that already?
- MD:** Yah, I heard.
- MM:** What about...? We talked about Kamilletee. Did you do any other kinds of home remedies?
- MD:** There was some.
- MM:** What other ones do you remember? Like today, if somebody or if you have a sore or something, what do you rub on it?
- MD:** Linament or whatever you have.
- MM:** Today. But those early years, of course, they didn't have those.

- MD:** I still do it. They told me. I couldn't hardly walk from my hip down my whole leg. I couldn't stand it, laying or sitting. So they told me I should buy rubbing alcohol and put some aspirin, six aspirin in that bottle and rub it. That helps.
- MM:** Now your mother. When they came to America, did she have any more children over here?
- MD:** Oh yah.
- MM:** How many more children were born over here? You were seven.
- MD:** Five.
- MM:** Five more children over here. Was there a doctor to deliver the baby?
- MD:** She even delivered some of them herself. There was no doctor, but a woman.
- MM:** So there was a midwife.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And she'd come in from somewhere else? And this was all done in the home?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And of course, as you grew up as a teenager, you had to help out.
- MD:** If the weather was bad or something else [and] she [the midwife] wasn't there, why they had to do it themselves.
- MM:** You remember some of those days.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Helping with that, I'm sure. So you had to bathe and take care of the children and so forth?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Did your mother have time to do any crafts? Sewing? Did she do a lot of sewing or quilts? Did she make any quilts?
- MD:** Not quilting. She didn't have time for that.
- MM:** She didn't have time with such a big family.
- MD:** But sewing for the kids, yah she had to sew everything.
- MM:** Do you have anything left yet that she sewed? Did you ever save anything through all these years? Any piece?
- MD:** No.
- MM:** What about crafts? Did you learn to do crafts like crocheting and so forth?
- MD:** Yah, crocheting. Well, my mother crocheted. Oh, my mother made this. Hanging on the wall over there.

- MM:** Oh yes.
- MD:** She made that when I first got married. Then she said, "I should make a pillow out of it," and I had it laying in the drawer all the while. I said, "no, I'm not making a pillow." The kids would throw it around all the time anyway. It would be dirty all the time anyhow. All at once it dawned on me [that] I got this in the drawer. I get it out and get it ready and then my grandson made the frame in 80 [1980]. My son that was here, he stretched it on then.
- MM:** Beautiful.
- MD:** So she made that. That's an antique already.
- MM:** Right. And then through all the years you would do it. Did you have a lot of time to do crocheting and so forth?
- MD:** Yah. I done crocheting in the evening, sewing for the kids.
- MM:** And how many children did you have?
- MD:** Seven.
- MM:** Seven children.
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** So you were busy too.
- MD:** And each one had his own work. And then sometimes one [child] was fooling around when the chore time was and then after the rest got done, [he would ask] "come on, help me." And their dad said, "no, [what] for did you fool around?" "Why didn't [you] work like the rest?" "Do you work yourself."
- MM:** So there was a lot of strict discipline in the home?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Do you remember..., like when you were growing up as a teenager and so forth, the young? Would they sit together and tell stories? Any fairy tales or anything like that? That you read from books and so forth?
- MD:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** And then you would do that with your family too?
- MD:** We done mostly anything. That was not like some people. Some people was going to hide everything when they were saying something to the family or something like that.
- LS:** Did you grandma tell you the story about Eulenspiegel?
- MD:** No. Yah tell me.
- MM:** That's all right. I'm going to mention in our interview today that we have with us Lillian Meyer Schlecht who lives on a beautiful farm near Medina and she's going to be visiting with us and sharing with us some of her memories and then she can interject any questions or comments she may have.

- LS:** The Eulenspiegel story grandma always told us: "Sie hen'm g'sagt, er soll nausgehe, Wage schmiere. No is er nausgange un hat de Wage g'schmiert, aber net de wheels, die ganze Wage g'schmiert." Der war Eulenspiegel.
- MM:** I see. And we talked of this a little bit before. But I'm wondering when you got married and so forth. Did you ever...? You never subscribed to a German newspaper? Did you ever get a German newspaper? You don't remember that?
- MD:** Even if we had one, I didn't have time to read it. I was too busy.
- MM:** You were too busy. What about the Bible, like the catechism? Were those in German or in English?
- MD:** All in German that we had. Bible and catechism.
- MM:** And your children, your seven children, did they...?
- MD:** Not all of them got confirmed in German either.
- MM:** But some did?
- MD:** Some did, yah.
- MM:** But as you were growing, as they were growing up in your family, did you speak both German and English?
- MD:** Both. But towards last, we didn't hardly ever speak German.
- MM:** So your children today, most of them understand and speak German?
- MD:** Well, sometimes they had to listen, the youngest ones they have to listen real good. But the youngest one, maybe you know Howard. He's the youngest one of them all and he...
- MM:** When they come home to visit, Matilda, do you talk to them in German once in a while?
- MD:** Once in a while, yah. Some words.
- MM:** But mostly in English.
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** What about here in Streeter, when you're visiting some of the older folks, your friends and so forth, do you speak in English or in German?
- MD:** English. Everything is in English. When we go up and Senior Citizens or something like that, all English.
- MM:** But as we..., later on in our conversation, if it's o.k. with you, we're going to talk a little bit in German. Simply because of the dialect, because it's interesting for me to know. Because where I grew up in Strasburg it may be a little bit different dialect than the people here in this area, so it's kind of interesting where you came from. You came from a big family and then you raised a big family so you didn't have too much time for hobbies. Did you get involved, like later on, like for example, with homemakers clubs?
- MD:** Not very much.

- MM:** Not too much with that. What about the time, of course, those early years, there was no electricity on the farm till later on.
- MD:** Yah. We had the lamps, kerosene lamps.
- MM:** Kerosene lamps. So then people would they go to bed early at night?
- MD:** Not we, really.
- MM:** What did you do at night? Did you play a lot of cards? In the evening, what would they do in those winter months? You know when there wasn't quite as much work?
- MD:** Well like I, there was always work for a woman. She had to sew or do something. And I usually had a teacher on the board and then before I put all the children to bed and the teacher went to bed, and everybody, my husband [also], and then I cleaned the dining room. We had a dining room out on the farm in the kitchen and I cleaned this up before I went to bed. In the morning, "aye, aye," the teacher sometimes said, "she worked again when we went and rest." But I liked it when I got up and everything was clean when I came out.
- MM:** Did you have a summer kitchen?
- MD:** No.
- MM:** Never had a summer kitchen?
- MD:** Yah. We had one but then the wind tore it down and we didn't build it up.
- MM:** What about a root cellar?
- MD:** We didn't have that either. We went down basement sometimes in the winter.
- MM:** Did a lot of canning and put it downstairs, huh?
- MD:** Lot of canning, lot of canning. I was out in California by my son and there was so many grapes and then wild grapes already. There was a place, somebody was living there, and then my son said, "I'm going to fish mom and you...[cut off at end of tape-side one]"
- MD:** Nine quarts of jelly, when I was out there.
- MM:** Good job. Was this recently?
- MD:** No, about ten years ago.
- MM:** Are you still doing some canning today?
- MD:** Little bit, not much. I said this year, "I won't do very much," but I did.
- LS:** Where did you live from Streeter when you were married?
- MD:** Northwest of Streeter. Yah, northwest.
- MM:** How big a farm did you have?
- MD:** We had six quarters.

- MM:** Six quarters. And this farm, who lives on this farm today?
- MD:** It's all torn down.
- MM:** It's all torn down. Was the land sold to another farmer?
- MD:** Yah, not all. I got two quarters left but I'm going [to] get rid of it, so the family wouldn't have to bother anymore when I am not here.
- MM:** Did any of your children go into farming?
- MD:** Yah. They farmed but then they weren't married, neither one. The women left after they married. [That's] why they didn't want to live on the farm.
- MM:** How long is it that you lived in Streeter?
- MD:** Forty years. My husband is gone.
- MM:** So you've been a widow lady for forty years. Were there still some children at home when he died? Were the children all grown up?
- MD:** No. Two of them, yah. They were all grown up yah, but two of them were living on the farm then after we left.
- MM:** So you were alone here. You learned a lot on your own. You had to take care of the bookwork and everything on your own?
- MD:** Yah, I had to. Mrs. Rembolt, that's my daughter and she had a son and he was with me. He was from baby on till he was twelve years old and then she got married and they took him away from me. Then I was alone.
- MM:** Did you do some [work] when you moved into Streeter here and so forth? Did you just stay at home or did you do some work in Streeter too?
- MD:** I done some work. I worked in the cafe.
- MM:** Oh, did you?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** You were a cook there?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Oh yes. So you made some German food there too, I bet.
- MD:** Yah, all kinds of things. And I worked for people that wanted me to clean house and things like that.
- MM:** Do your children..., did they learn to cook German food from you too? Do they still make some of those German dishes?
- MD:** Yah. I got a grandson in California, he isn't married yet. He was thirty years old. He was going to be a pilot. He was through school and everything and then all at once they told him he can't be no pilot. He's

got stigmatism [astigmatism]. So he's no pilot. Oh my son was so mad. He spent all that money at Grand Forks for the school, you know.

MM: Oh, he went to school up at UND.

MD: So he's still in California. He works still for an airline, I guess.

MM: When you're here in Streeter once in a while, you get together with some of the folks. Of course they're some of the people who are younger than you. They're not in as good a shape as you are, with being ninety-nine years old. You can look back and do you wonder because some of them aren't as good or they're in a home or so forth. But do you guys, when some of you get together, the women or the men, do they talk about the olden days?

MD: Yah.

MM: They like to talk about that?

MD: Yah.

MM: What do they usually..., what kind of memories do they bring up? About what it was like in those early days?

MD: Yah. They always say, "oh, I wish I would be that and that old and how good I was then." "How I could go then!"

MM: Dance and all of that?

MD: Yah.

MM: And that reminds me. We should ask you about, on the farm, for instance. Do you remember the days when the first radio [came out]?

MD: First radio?

MM: The early days you had no radio.

MD: Yah. First radio we had, my husband always said to the kids, "jah, let's go and do the chores," in the wintertime, "hurry up, this and this program is coming on."

MM: What was the..., do you remember those programs?

MD: Little Orphan Annie and all kinds of things like that.

MM: So you remember that. The first time there was a radio?

MD: Yah.

MM: And then you had no telephone either?

MD: No.

MM: Do you remember the first time you used a telephone?

MD: Oh, I didn't have no telephone out in the country. Just in here.

- MM:** Just when you moved to Streeter. What about and then, of course, the first days when you had a TV. That was here in Streeter too?
- MD:** Yah. First I had a neighbor right over here beside me but they moved to California and the house got sold. And then my grandson that was with me, he always [said] "oh, we should have a TV, we should have a TV." I said, "I haven't got too much money." I said, "you know we bought this place and I didn't have too much money." Than I always said, "yah, when we get a little more money, we buy it." So the neighbor over there, he heard it. You know, we were sitting outside, what we were talking about. So he told my grandson he should come over there once, he wants to tell him something. He didn't want to go first. Then all at once I said, "go over once, I don't know what." He said, "what does he want?" I said, "I don't know; go over once and see." He didn't want to but I said, "go once." So he went over there and then he [the neighbor] invited him. He said, "whenever you're done with your work or what grandma wants you to do, you come over and watch TV" Well, he got him that far. Then I finally..., I thought that's maybe too much for him to go over there all the time. His name was Albert Wenz, the neighbor. Then I said, "well, Albert," I said, "that's maybe too much for him to come over there all the time." "No," he said, "as long as we're up in the evening, he can stay." So finally I broke down and bought one.
- MM:** What year was this about? The fifties?
- MD:** Yah, it was in the fifties.
- MM:** Do you remember watching some of those early shows?
- MD:** Some of them, yah. Well, when I come in [to town], then I had to get everything straightened out. Then when we first had it, I didn't have too much time to watch, but he at least [did]....
- MM:** Do you remember some of those favorite early programs of yours?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** What were some of your favorite programs?
- MD:** Forgot already.
- MM:** Did you watch some of those early soap operas?
- MD:** Not very much. I still don't.
- MM:** You still don't. You don't have time for that.
- MD:** No, I got work to do.
- MM:** Matilda, you have a garden I see.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** So you have a nice garden, and you do your own cooking?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Are you active with the Senior Citizen's group in town?

- MD:** Not too much, now lately. I had a heart attack and I'm not supposed to walk so much. It's a wonder that I can talk so much. And so I don't go very much. I was in Jamestown yesterday, I was all in [exhausted].
- MM:** Oh, because of the walking?
- MD:** Yah, and I didn't walk too much.
- MM:** Well you're certainly..., if you could walk as good as your mind remembers all of these things, that's wonderful.
- MD:** But doctor told me, he said, "Matilda, I don't want to scare you." "I want to tell you something." I said, "go right ahead, I'm not scared." Then he said, "o.k., you can fall over and be dead or you can go to sleep and not wake up." I said, "if I'm suppose to, there's nothing to do about that." He said, "you haven't got no heartbeat, just a flicker." I'm not supposed to walk more than I have to and if I feel this coming on, I should go in, sit down with my feet up or lay down. I was laying in the garden twice already and had the hose running, was laying in the mud. I passed out and the water was running and I was laying in the mud, even on my face. Then my daughter came down and she said, "what happened to you!?" I said, "nothing." "Nothing!" she said, "something happened to you." I was just quickly going to change the clothes before she came but I couldn't do it.
- MM:** Matilda, when you think about it, you know. Sometimes you sit with the other women or sit alone and think about those early years when you were a child. When you go back in your mind about things, well you don't remember too much about Russia but you remember a little bit and as you get older you remember more. But what do you think about that, how life was then and now? Not so much the way they have now but think about how those people, what they had to go through and so forth to come over here and of course, you came on the ship.
- MD:** Yes.
- MM:** I forgot to ask you that. Do you remember anything about that?
- MD:** And we were twenty-one days. We were on the ship and the ship was going to sink twice. Then they nailed the window shut and everything else [during] that storm we were on. Twenty-one days we were on the ship.
- MM:** Did they have a compartment for your family, or what?
- MD:** You could. Well, they had beds all over everywhere. They had to throw up [sea sick] and the storm, the ship moved so you flew out of the beds and everything else.
- MM:** You remember that yet?
- MD:** Yes. And I saw a little child [in] the groove where the ship goes in the water. That little child was in that groove for two days. All at once, but it was gone. They said a shark must've got it. It was dead though [the child], but it was laying in there and moving along.
- MM:** So you remember. You remember the time coming over to America. Then of course, landing in New York. We talked about that and your father had to stay in New York for four months and so forth. Then you remember a little bit when you came to North Dakota and again we talked a little bit. But do you remember, did you come on the train?

- MD:** We come up from New York to Kulm on the train and we had..., my folks had some friends in Kulm.
- MM:** Who were those friends?
- MD:** Mock. Their name was Mock.
- MM:** M-O-C-K?
- MD:** Yah, and they had a summer kitchen. There was not much room but we were glad we had it. Then after we came over from New York to Kulm, then we all got sick and got the whooping cough and everything else. Till my mother had a farm, found a farm to move on [to]. Then she bought some horses and cattle.
- MM:** What did they [do]? Your mother had to start out alone, your father wasn't here. That was not easy for her but where did she get the money to buy this farm? You don't remember that?
- MD:** I can't say.
- MM:** So it wasn't easy for her because she had to be out here alone.
- MD:** Well, the neighbors. Those neighbors that we were staying [with], he helped her along. Go along with her and take her and all those things.
- MM:** And the farm they bought, was there already a house on this farm?
- MD:** No, she rented it.
- MM:** She rented it?
- MD:** Yah, in Kulm. And then we moved to..., after that we moved to Gackle.
- MM:** Moved to Gackle on a farm.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** But was this a wood house on the farm or a sod house?
- MD:** This was a sod house down in Kulm.
- MM:** Oh, it was a sod house. So you remember living in that sod house?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And did you live on that farm until you were twenty? When you got married?
- MD:** No. Oh, in Gackle?
- MM:** Yes.
- MD:** No, that was no sod house that was wood house.
- MM:** Wood house. So you lived in a sod house...
- MD:** In Kulm.
- MM:** In Kulm.

- MD:** Then after I got married and come to Streeter, my husband's parents, they had a sod house. They built a sod house and they built wood house but the sod house was right close to the wood house, to the new one. I helped haul that away. My husband didn't like that sod house there so close to the new house. So we all hauled it out.
- MM:** They didn't use it that anymore, so they took it away.
- MD:** Well, they put some in the basement and whatever was left we hauled out.
- MM:** What else can you remember, Matilda? We talked about a lot of things and Lillian may want to check some questions that I haven't asked.
- LS:** Who were your neighbors when you came to Gackle? After you lived in Kulm, then you moved to Gackle? Who were your neighbors at Gackle?
- MD:** Well, there was Meyer and Fruentz and Gunsch.
- LS:** That's the one I wanted you to say because that was my husband's family, Gunsch.
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** And what was the first name?
- MD:** Frederich.
- MM:** Frederich Gunsch?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** G-U-N-S-C-H?
- LS:** Mmm Hmmm.
- MD:** And oh, for them I worked.
- LS:** How old were you when you worked for them?
- MD:** I really don't know. I worked there first about thirteen or so.
- LS:** Thirteen years old.
- MM:** You went to school until you were how old? At the farm school, did you go to the eighth grade?
- MD:** I don't know if I made any grade. I think seventh.
- MM:** Seventh grade.
- MD:** Yah. I think the eighth grade I couldn't go, I got sick.
- MM:** But then you started working already at age thirteen. You were hired out.
- MD:** Yes, I worked a lot. I had to work a lot.
- MM:** Did you live with the family then or did you come home each night?

- MD:** When I worked?
- MM:** Yes.
- MD:** No, I had to live with the family.
- MM:** So you had to take care of their kids and cook and everything?
- MD:** Yah, yah. And milk. I was just little and I had to milk.
- MM:** And did they pay you so much then?
- MD:** A couple of dollars, maybe a month. [laughter]
- MM:** And you'd come home weekends?
- MD:** No.
- MM:** You'd have to stay there?
- MD:** Yah. Sometimes the family that I worked for, they went some place so I had to stay with the kids.
- MM:** And you did this for a few years then?
- MD:** Yah. One family, Philip Meyer, he was living down south. Every time that woman went to town, she had to bring me something home from town. Then I took it home and showed it to my mother, what she brings me when she goes to town. Then my mother said, "she pays you, don't take anything anymore." So I told her, Mrs. Meyer, I told her, "my mother don't want you to buy me anything." Then she said, "you always do more work than I tell you to do and that's why I buy it for you."
- MM:** Wonderful. And you learned that all your life, the hard work?
- MD:** Yah.
- MM:** Any other thing that you can remember that we should visit about? Or if Lillian has any comments. We talked about a lot of things and I'm sure we'll remember some when we're through with our interview in our visit. And I understand you're going to join us for lunch today?
- LS:** Are you going to go with us to the Senior Citizen's?
- MD:** I don't think so.
- LS:** O.k.
- MM:** She's got better things to do.
- MD:** Uh, no.
- MM:** What I'm going to do is close our conversation soon, Matilda. But I remember that I want to talk to you a little bit in German so we can..., I want to see if you understand my German. I want to see if I understand your German and of course, Lillian knows German too so we can all talk German, so we don't have to worry about that. Jetzt müssen wir ein bißl Deutsch sprechen.
- MD:** Sie tut schon anders `zähle wie ich.

- MM:** A so, aber ich versteh' dich doch.
- LS:** Un Sie erzähle grad wie ich...
- MM:** Dialekt. Ihr hen auch Deutsch gesproche.
- MD:** Wir sin ganz deutsch.
- MM:** Was hen ihr g`sagt, hen ihr g`sagt a Hiehner g`sagt, chicken, was hen ihr g`sagt fer chicken? Hiehner?
- MD:** Hiehner, ja. Hiehner un Hahne.
- LS:** Un wann ihr Eier gange, hen ihr g`holt Oier or Eier g`holt?
- MD:** Wir hen Eier g`holt.
- LS:** Wir a.
- MM:** Un was hen ihr g`sagt fer ein Kartoffel, ein potato? Was hen ihr g`sagt?
- MD:** Kartoffel.
- MM:** Nicht Krumbeere?
- MD:** No, Kartoffel.
- MM:** Kartoffel. Un fer horse?
- MD:** Fer was?
- MM:** For horse.
- MD:** No, for horse hen se Pferd.
- MM:** Pferd. See, die hen do schon bißl Hochdeutsch schon g`hatt dort.
- MD:** Pferd.
- MM:** Un viel gebet in Deutsch?
- MD:** Ja.
- MM:** Aber so betsch du noch e bißl in Deutsch manchmal?
- MD:** Ja.
- MM:** Kannscht ebbes sage in Deutsch?
- MD:** Spreche?
- LS:** Bete.
- MM:** Ich mein'
- LS:** Wann ihr esse, was hen ihr g`betet in Deutsch?
- MD:** O, Kumm Herr Jesu.

- MM:** Kanschd sage? Sag's emol.
- MD:** Kumm Herr Jesu, sei unser Gast un segne uns, was du uns bescheret hast. Amen.
- MM:** Un kanschd du noch e bißl singe da in Streeter in Deutsch?
- MD:** No.
- MM:** Singe nimmi Deutsch. Do singt niemand Deutsch, aber du kanschd noch in Deutsch singe, nicht?
- MD:** Nimmi gut.
- MM:** Aber kanschd nur wann'd unbedingt muß. Ja, wunderbar. Jetzt hen wir auch Englisch gesproche, aber man muß unbedingt unser Deutsch nicht vergesse.
- LS:** Wann ihr schlofe gangen sin, hen ihr nicht bete müsse: Müde bin ich, geh' zur Ruh'?
- MD:** O ja. Engele, kumm, daß ich zu dir in de Himmel kumm.
- MM:** Sag's wieder.
- MD:** Engele, kumm, mach mich frumm, daß ich zu dir in de Himmel nei kumm. Amen.
- MM:** Ich denk' du kummst aber sicher. Ich hoff', daß unser Leit wo 99 sin, denke noch so viel wie du gedenkt hascht vun alles.
- MD:** Ich dank vun mei, bet' fer mei ganze Familie, wenn ich schlofe geh', auch noch fer andere Leut.
- MM:** Wunderbar, fer uns alle. We're going to close our conversation today with Matilda Schlenker Dockter. Again, it's the twenty-first of September 1994 and it was a real pleasure to visit with Matilda who was born on July 31, 1895 and so we'll have to be sure and come back to Streeter and celebrate with Matilda. Maybe she'll be willing to have a party when she's so sharp and in such good shape at the age of one-hundred in 1995. I think it's wonderful that we can visit with a woman born in the village of Klöstitz, Bessarbia. Her father's name was John Schlenker and her mother's name, what was your mother's name again?
- MD:** Christina Shlock.
- MM:** And she came at the age of seven, left Bessarabia with a family and raised a family of how many children?
- MD:** Ich.
- MM:** How many children do you have?
- MD:** Siebene. [seven]
- MM:** There was seven children. And today still living of Matilda's brothers and sisters is one brother and Matilda, as I mentioned is ninety-nine. I want to thank Lillian Meyer Schlecht for joining me today in our conversation. And Matilda, if you want to say some final words in our interview, because this will go in the archives now in the University and then we'll transcribe it and send it to you so you can look at what we talked about. But do you have any final comments?

- MD:** Yah, ich dank` vielmals, daß ich die ... g`kriegt hab', ich hab' erst gedenkt, wo ich's g`hert hab.
- MM:** Kannscht auf Deutsch sage.
- MD:** Dann versteh'n's net alle Leut'.
- MM:** Wir kenn auch Englisch spreche.
- MD:** Wenn ich erst g'hert hab', hab' ich net so gut gefühlt, hab' gedenkt, daß fremder Mann neinkommt mich interviewen un ich weiß nicht viel.
- MM:** Weißt viel.
- LS:** Ihr hen gut getan.
- MD:** Dank vielmals. Die Zeit is ganz schnell rumgange.
- MM:** Yah. And Matilda mentioned in her German conversation that she wasn't sure who was coming to visit her and do this interview and she probably didn't have too much to say. But we found in our discussion and the question and answers that she has a lot to say and I'm sure that she would have a lot more to say. It's almost a situation where you need to have someone just visiting and you have the recorder on and they don't know what's happening. But I think we learned a lot today about Matilda and her life and I was especially interested to hear about what she recalls living in that village in Bessarabia. It was very interesting for me when she talked about the ship experience. But we're going to close our conversation again. Thanks so much, Matilda.
- MD:** Danke schön vielmals.
- LS:** Were you excited to hear that I was coming again and bringing this Michael with us?
- MD:** I liked it. I thought before, maybe you come sometimes and see me, but no.
- MM:** But now she has to come more often, now that she's learned a little bit too. And we hope that Lillian can help us with doing interviews here and from this experience maybe she can even help us do some of these interviews for us. We need people all over the state to help us in interviewing because it's not too often that I can visit with someone that's ninety-nine years old and time is going fast and you have so much to tell us. So we need to reach our people. Thank you so much.