

Interview with Edward Arthur Fast (EF)

Conducted by Chris (CM) and Betty Maier (BM)

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BM: Today is February 5, 1998. I am Betty Maier, a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University Libraries in Fargo, and it's a pleasure to visit with Edward Arthur Fast. We are in Apache Junction, Arizona because they call us Snow Birds here, but Ed is originally from Butterfield, Minnesota. So we're going to get started with some of the questions in our interview form. We may not be following it exactly, but pretty much. Ed, do you know where your ancestors came from in Germany? And we're talking now on your father's side, I guess.

EF: Okay, my grandfather came from Selz, Russia. And my grandmother from Hamburg, Germany.

BM: Do you have any idea where they came from in Germany before that?

EF: No I don't.

BM: Now you did say, though that they... where did your family come from originally?

EF: Probably started in the Netherlands. To France, Germany, and then from Germany to Paulsham, Russia, in the Ukraine area.

BM: And do you know why they left and moved around so much?

EF: It was more or less because of the religious beliefs they had. They refused to serve in the military. Religious freedom, really.

BM: And then when did they come to America?

EF: In 1874.

BM: How did they travel in this country?

EF: From New York they went by train to Henderson, Nebraska, and that's where they settled. My grandfather was a young lad at that time--at the age of seven.

BM: Did they homestead there?

EF: Not that I know of. Great-grandmother remarried the second time to Cornelius Edigar Counter:032], and I think the family all lived at home until they were old enough to work.

BM: And that's when he moved to Minnesota?

EF: No, My grandfather and grandmother were married in Henderson, Nebraska. I think there were probably three or four children born in Henderson. Then they moved to Minnesota.

- BM:** Did they ever talk about the old times?
- EF:** Not that I can recall, because I was so much younger. They talked about the times in Nebraska. Grandpa talked about how he worked for the railroad at that time, and they had to go out after a severe lightning storm and check the tracks. One of my aunts is buried next to the railroad tracks... it used to be in Henderson, Nebraska, where the water tower sets now. Grandpa buried her there next to the tracks. They lived in a section house.
- BM:** Do you know the meaning of your family's surnames?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** No special meaning there. What is your name, birth date, and where were you born?
- EF:** My name?
- BM:** Your name.
- EF:** Edward Arthur Fast; I always go by Ed A. Fast. I was born June 8, 1932 at Butterfield, Minnesota in the house just a half mile from where I live.
- BM:** So you didn't move very far.
- EF:** No, not very far. In fact, my son lives on the place where I was born.
- CM:** What year were you born?
- EF:** June 8th, 1932.
- BM:** And what was the name of your father?
- EF:** John Fast, Sr. The reason it's senior is because his dad, or my grandfather... My dad's name was John Fast, Jr. My grandfather's name was John Fast also, but they called him Senior.
- BM:** Okay. It could get to be confusing, couldn't it?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** And your dad was born in this country, then, too.
- EF:** Yes, he was born in Henderson, Nebraska on September 11th, 1890.
- BM:** Yes, we have all that on the sheet here. We'll go by that. So then it was your great- grandfather who came from Russia, and that was when?
- EF:** My great-grandfather died the day before they left Russia. So my great-grandmother came with the five children. My grandfather being seven years old.
- BM:** I think what I'll do is add that on to the end, because we have all those dates and where he was buried on the paper. What was the name of your mother?
- EF:** My mother was Helena V. Vogt, V-o-g-t.
- BM:** Was she born here?

- EF:** She was born in Marion, South Dakota.
- BM:** And her parents?
- EF:** That was Peter Vogt. I don't recall if he had a middle initial or not. His wife, I believe, was Marie.
- BM:** And they were born in Russia.
- EF:** They were born in Russia, yes.
- BM:** Do you happen to know what village?
- EF:** Not at the present time.
- BM:** Did she die here in the United States?
- EF:** They both died in the United States.
- BM:** And they're buried where?
- EF:** One is in Yankton, SD and the other is at Marion, SD.
- BM:** How many brothers and sisters did you have in your family?
- EF:** I had one half-brother and one half-sister. They are both gone.
- BM:** So you were the only child of...
- EF:** From the second marriage.
- BM:** From the second marriage then. Did your mother ever tell you any stories about the old country?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** It was probably, again, about where she grew up.
- EF:** Yes, she grew up in South Dakota.
- BM:** What stories do you remember from your childhood that you could speak in a German dialect?
- EF:** Right off the top of my head I can't think of any, but we spoke in Low German. My parents knew High German, but it was never passed on to my generation.
- BM:** Did you speak it in the home?
- EF:** Yes, very fluently. I can still speak it very fluently.
- BM:** You do, I wish I could converse with you.
- EF:** Yes. [? German - counter:103]
- BM:** What did you say now?
- EF:** I said it's a nice day. The sun is shining so nice.

- BM:** Even though Chris speaks German too, we're talking about two different dialects here. Do you know the name of your dialect?
- EF:** Low German is all I know it by.
- BM:** Just Low German.
- EF:** Just Low German.
- CM:** Could you speak English when you started school?
- EF:** Yes, I could speak some English, but I knew the meaning of things better when the teacher asked the questions. I knew the meaning of things better in German than I did in English. It was quite confusing. Even in high school, I had problems with that.
- BM:** So you were still thinking in German. Is it comfortable for you to speak German yet?
- EF:** Yes, very comfortable. When we get together with people who can talk it, we have a good time.
- BM:** Do you speak it with your wife at home?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Did you teach your children?
- EF:** No. They don't speak German.
- BM:** Now why did you not teach your children?
- EF:** Well, one reason was when my wife started school, the only word she knew in English was "toilet". The teacher asked questions, and she raised her hand once and said, "toilet" and everybody started laughing. She thought she wanted to answer too.
- BM:** In other words, your wife, Gladys has the same dialect as you?
- EF:** Yes, that's right.
- BM:** We're going to hear more from Gladys because we will be doing her interview later. What are some childhood chores that you enjoyed doing that were considered chores?
- EF:** Oh, I liked to feed the chickens and the hogs. And I had to do some hand milking, and turned the old cream separator crank, you know.
- BM:** Were there some chores you didn't like to do?
- EF:** I really didn't mind any chores, as I was a farm boy. Cleaning out the calf pen, was the worst. That was tough work.
- BM:** In other words, your work ethic started early on.
- EF:** That's right, as soon as I could handle a pitchfork.
- BM:** What are some of the special memories about your childhood school?
- EF:** Oh, goodness.

- BM:** What kind of school did you go to?
- EF:** I went to a country school. I don't believe I was in first grade, but I remember they tried to teach us a little High German. There was about a week or two of High German, and that's about the only thing I remember. Oh, the Christmas programs... that was a big deal. It was just like your church services now. At that time the schools could have religion with their school curriculum which was very good.
- BM:** Those were highlights of growing up.
- EF:** You bet they were. For two weeks we were practicing and were on our best behavior.
- BM:** What nationalities were the other students that went to that country school?
- EF:** In our area, it was just about all German. Later when I was about in the 5th or 6th grade, there were a few [?Lutherans? counter:152] that came in. Other than that, it was solid German.
- BM:** Now was this within a Mennonite community?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** So they were all Mennonites then?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** How many months did you go to school?
- EF:** I think it was probably about 8 or 9 months in the beginning, I'm not quite sure. I think it started in September and ended about May.
- BM:** You didn't leave school to do work out on the farm then.
- EF:** Yes, I did in high school.
- BM:** But you didn't quit high school.
- EF:** I did when I was a sophomore.
- BM:** Oh, did you?
- EF:** I had farming in my blood.
- CM:** Had to work.
- BM:** Your parents must have taught you the work ethic very well. Do you recall playground experiences at school?
- EF:** Yes. I remember sometimes we'd throw a ball at each other, and one time I threw a ball at the schoolhouse and broke a window.
- BM:** Part of growing up, isn't it?
- EF:** That's right.
- BM:** Were there any other games that you played?

- EF:** Oh yes, we played softball. In the winter we played "Fox and Goose" in the snow, and when it was storming outside, we played "Duck, Duck, Goose" at the seats. We'd walk around, the one we tapped on the head that's the one that had to chase you. Then you tried to get back to your seat in time.
- BM:** How did you get to school and home?
- EF:** Walked.
- BM:** How many miles was that?
- EF:** It was about three quarters of a mile.
- BM:** During the winter, did you also walk?
- EF:** Most of the time.
- BM:** You didn't have a horse to ride?
- EF:** No horse. Sometimes I'd ride along with the neighbors who had a car.
- BM:** Do you remember anything about your teachers?
- EF:** Yes. I was probably in the 1st grade, when we had a pretty tough school teacher. They hired a man for that year, who was there only one year, I think. Anyway the teacher told... I think they were probably 7th or 8th graders... told him to quit doing what he was doing. At least he didn't quit. And the teacher grabbed a 3-foot pointer and laid him over the seat, and broke the pointer on his seat. Being in the 1st grade, I was scared. I didn't even dare look up. He had no behavior problems after that.
- BM:** Do you remember his name?
- EF:** Yes, it was a Mr. Fressen. I forget what his first name was.
- BM:** Isn't that funny we remember all those? Any other teachers that you specifically remember?
- EF:** There was Frieda Epp, who was a very good teacher. Christina Justina Neufld [? Counter:196], was a very good teacher. And there was a Mrs. Bye [sp?], and a Mr. Peters. That's about all I can remember.
- BM:** Did you realize that there was a difference between rural and town schools?
- EF:** I enjoyed the rural school more.
- BM:** So where did you go to high school?
- EF:** At Butterfield. At that time we didn't have shop or ag or anything like that. I wasn't very interested in history and biology, so I didn't put forth very much effort.
- BM:** Just didn't push your buttons.
- EF:** I just wasn't interested, that's right.
- BM:** In what way was religion and church education an important role in your spiritual upbringing?
- EF:** Well, we were taught not to lie to people, to be honest with them and treat them as you wanted to be treated.

- BM:** Did you learn these at home?
- EF:** Yes, we learned that at home too.
- BM:** From your mom and dad.
- EF:** Very strict. My father was more strict than Mother. He had the old razor strap hanging on the wall, and you'd better behave.
- BM:** Was there family prayer in your daily life?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Also, the Holy Scripture? Did you read the Bible?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** On a daily basis?
- EF:** Not on a daily basis, but we did.
- BM:** On weekends, probably on Sunday.
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** In what language was the church service and the prayers?
- EF:** The first I can remember was in High German, and then in the early or middle 40s, they started English. Probably every other Sunday there was German and English. In the 50s, I think it was just about all English. Maybe one Sunday every two months it was German.
- BM:** Was your family accepting of this change?
- EF:** Yes, they were.
- BM:** Did you have baptism and confirmation?
- EF:** Yes. Usually at the age of twelve or thirteen. That was required of you.
- BM:** For confirmation?
- EF:** Yes. Two years of Christian schooling first. Then Catechism and baptism.
- BM:** Were there special activities when you accomplished this, when you finally had your confirmation?
- EF:** Not really. Maybe had dinner and a few relatives over, and that was about it.
- BM:** Do you still have a certificate?
- EF:** I do.
- BM:** That is framed and is on the wall?
- EF:** It's at home.
- BM:** Were your parents and grandparents involved in founding a church or joining another church?

- EF:** My parents and grandparents both belonged to the same church where I was confirmed.
- BM:** How did your family respond and behave towards death? Did they express grief, or...
- EF:** Yes, very much.
- BM:** Did they have traditional funeral songs that they sang?
- EF:** Yes, and usually... my grandfather I can remember, brought the casket with the body to the home where he lived for one day and then the next day they took it to the church.
- BM:** Then were they usually buried in the church cemetery?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Did they use iron crosses in the cemetery?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** What kind of markers did they use?
- EF:** Marble.
- BM:** They used marble.
- EF:** Not marble, but regular gravestone markers.
- CM:** Like granite.
- EF:** Yes, like granite.
- CM:** Yes, they were not too far from granite quarries?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Did your family keep heirlooms and things that were passed on from one generation to the next?
- EF:** Yes, they did. I have the wooden Russian chest that my grandparents on my mother's side came over with from Russia, made of 2-inch lumber.
- CM:** No kidding.
- BM:** So it was passed down from...
- EF:** Generation to generation.
- BM:** From generation to generation. And what are you going to do with it?
- FE:** I'm going to pass it on to my kids.
- BM:** Good.
- EF:** I have a cane from my grandfather, which I also will pass down.
- BM:** Do your children put a value on those things?

- EF:** They're beginning to. They're at the age where they're too busy making a living, so they're starting to wonder what belongs where.
- BM:** Have you started writing down these things? Have you identified them as to this goes to so-and-so, and this goes to so-and-so?
- EF:** No, I haven't.
- BM:** Gotta do that.
- EF:** You bet.
- BM:** So then you know who the keepers are of these treasures because... are there other treasures that you don't have that might be in the family?
- EF:** Yes, there are other treasures in other families.
- BM:** How were the Christmas festivities celebrated in your family?
- EF:** When my grandparents lived, they usually had Christmas Day at one of the grandparents' home and on the 26th at the other, or visa versa every year. Usually there was a dinner and some peanuts, candy, and a little gift. It wasn't much, but everybody was remembered.
- BM:** You came in a little bit late, but do you remember any of the Christmases during the war years or the Depression years?
- EF:** There were still gifts, but the only thing I really can remember during the war years is when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. We were at my Grandfather's place, and he was one of the few that had a good radio. He was very concerned about all the young men that were killed.
- BM:** Do you know about the Belzenickel? or Kristkindel?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** Did you celebrate Christmas with Santa Claus?
- EF:** No, Santa Claus... we knew the words "Santa Claus" but it was mostly the birth of Christ that we were referring to.
- BM:** What were the special Easter activities?
- EF:** There were a few Easter eggs, and a little basket of Easter eggs.
- BM:** Hard boiled eggs?
- EF:** Yes. In the later years it got to be the hard candies...
- BM:** The hard candies... that I never ate?
- EF:** Jelly beans, that's what I'm trying to say.
- BM:** Did you have what they call an Egg Roll?
- EF:** No.

- BM:** Were there special religious activities associated with Easter?
- EF:** Yes, there was the singing of the traditional Easter hymns.
- BM:** So your Easter activities centered around the church and family.
- EF:** Yes, that's right.
- BM:** Were there special marriage ceremonies?
- EF:** Well, the traditional wedding of the bride having a wedding dress. Usually home baked... at that time you bought your rolls in town because you were putting out... like the traditional weddings are now.
- BM:** Did you have the wedding in church?
- EF:** In church, usually.
- BM:** And the reception?
- EF:** At the church.
- BM:** In the church as well. Did they last just one day, two or three?
- EF:** No, probably about three hours was about it.
- BM:** That was it.
- CM:** They didn't have the old 3-day German deal at all.
- BM:** Did you have any kind of music at the wedding?
- EF:** No, just the...there was probably a song or two, and in later years somebody would sing a solo. That's about it.
- BM:** Did your group dance?
- EF:** No. That was a no-no.
- BM:** The wedding was all in English by this time, I suppose.
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Did you participate in a "chivaree"?
- EF:** Yes, we've done that.
- BM:** What did they do at the chivaree?
- EF:** I wasn't in this particular one, but they took a guy who had a little Ford coupe and set it cross-ways in a horse stall. He couldn't remove it. (Laughter.)
- BM:** Were you and Gladys chivareed?
- EF:** Yes we were.
- BM:** And what did they do to you?

- EF:** Really not much. I think we played games, and that's what we did.
- BM:** You did?
- EF:** Yes, then we had a little lunch that lasted about three hours or so, and that was it.
- BM:** Was it fun?
- EF:** Yes it was.
- BM:** Didn't they even have any noise makers?
- EF:** Yes, they had noise makers.
- BM:** What were the noise makers?
- EF:** Well, they blew the horns on the cars and everybody yelled.
- BM:** This was a surprise, I assume?
- EF:** It was a surprise. We didn't know about it.
- CM:** Washtubs...
- EF:** We were wondering what was coming. Yes, washtubs...
- BM:** So, was there a bonfire?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** No? I've never been to a chivaree that had a bonfire. Did you eat at your chivaree?
- EF:** Yes, we had a little lunch at home.
- BM:** Which brings up the subject of food. Did you have special foods in your family?
- EF:** We had the... my wife still makes the German [? counter:385], or the buns, which are very good. I shouldn't be eating them, but... (laughter)
- BM:** So some of the German foods and dishes have been passed down.
- EF:** Yes, they're still being passed down.
- BM:** Have they passed them on to your children?
- EF:** Yes, they've learned how to do some of them.
- BM:** Good.
- EF:** Even the in-laws which weren't German.
- BM:** Good. Do you cure meat?
- EF:** No, not any more.
- BM:** But you did at one time?

- EF:** My father did. He cured his own meat.
- BM:** Do you remember it, and can you tell me some of the process of that?
- EF:** I know there was a lot of salt used on hams, and I think it was smoke salt. It could have had a smoked flavor to it.
- BM:** Did they make sausage?
- EF:** Yes, we made liver sausage, regular meat sausage with pork or beef, and then hamburger and so forth.
- BM:** What kind of meat did they use?
- EF:** Pork and beef.
- BM:** Pork and beef.
- EF:** Usually butchered their own pork probably the latter part of November or December, and then the beef in January.
- BM:** When you had a day of butchering, were there several people who helped with that?
- EF:** Usually two or three couples...uncles or aunts.
- BM:** And then when they butchered, you went there?
- EF:** My parents went in return to help them.
- BM:** Did you share the meat?
- EF:** A little bit. If the other people were out when they went there. Mostly it was a time of get together and talk.
- BM:** In other words, this was a social event.
- EF:** That's it...a social tool.
- BM:** Were other things made in the family, like bridal clothes, decorations and flowers? Do you remember any special clothes?
- EF:** No, I don't.
- BM:** When you got married, were there certain customs in your church that we should know about?
- EF:** No. About all I could say is that the night before the wedding; we had a rehearsal and regular meal.
- BM:** Were there photos?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** After...
- EF:** Yes, before the wedding and during the wedding.
- BM:** How did you meet your spouse?

- EF:** She played hooky from church. (Laughter)... Not really.
- BM:** Well, should we say that this was an arranged marriage?
- EF:** She was supposed to go Christmas Caroling and forgot her overshoes. It was a slushy December day, so she and her girlfriend were walking along the street, a buddy of mine and myself came along and picked them up for a ride.
- BM:** This was no Lonely Hearts Club then. What other social events were available then, to meet your spouse? The very first time you met her, where did you meet her?
- EF:** This was in town. But about the only other thing we could do was roller skating. Movies were a no-no and no dancing.
- BM:** No dancing.
- EF:** No dancing.
- BM:** So you went roller skating a lot then.
- EF:** That's right.
- BM:** How old were you when you were married?
- EF:** I was twenty.
- BM:** And your wife was?
- EF:** Eighteen.
- BM:** Eighteen. Those were the days when youth got more serious about it.
- EF:** I remember one particular time, my father thought I was too young to get married; he had to sign for me. I remember waking up one morning, and having a very clear, loud voice, he was telling my mother, "They're too young to get married. All they're going to do is have kids, kids, kids!" But I fooled him. I didn't have any more than he did.
- BM:** How many children do you have?
- EF:** Three.
- BM:** I didn't ask you that question before. Where did you live after you got married?
- EF:** I lived on the home place where I was born for about a year or two, maybe three.
- BM:** In a separate house then?
- EF:** No, my parents moved to town.
- BM:** Oh, okay.
- EF:** The farm where we're at now, which is half a mile from the place where I was born, I purchased from my father and we've been there ever since.
- BM:** Boy, that's longevity.

- EF:** I put up just about every building on that place.
- BM:** I'm going to ask you one question about the status of women in the family, in marriage, and in farming. Did they help?
- EF:** You bet, they helped a lot.
- BM:** Did they work inside and outside?
- EF:** Inside and out. My mother made haystacks and grain stacks. It was a two-way street for both of them.
- BM:** Did you milk cows when you were growing up?
- EF:** By hand, yes. Even after we were married I milked cows by hand.
- BM:** Did your mother and wife also help with the milking?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** And the care of livestock?
- EF:** I did most of the livestock chores.
- BM:** How about the field work--like seeding?
- EF:** They helped with that as well.
- BM:** So they actually used the machinery, drove tractors...
- EF:** Yes. I remember one particular time I had bought a new corn picker, and I went out corn picking. And Gladys had to plow. I came home one evening--I had an old plow that didn't work very good. She was so disgusted and said, "If we're going to keep farming and you don't want me to go to Hell, you'd better buy me a new plow." That's when I went to town and bought a new plow. I had no money, but bought one anyway.
- BM:** Did you get a loan?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Those were the days when you didn't have a choice.
- EF:** Four or five hundred dollars was hard to come by.
- CM:** You bet.
- EF:** Very hard to come by.
- BM:** It always amazes me about those loans...they were always paid.
- EF:** You bet they were.
- BM:** It was your good name.
- EF:** You bet.

- BM:** But at the same time I remember stories that you could walk into the bank, and if you wanted to borrow some money they'd give it to you.
- EF:** It depended upon who your parents were also.
- BM:** Yes.
- EF:** Very much. If they had good standing, they figured you would too.
- BM:** We talked about no dancing. Was there music, though, in the home? Did you sing?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** There was no singing. Were there musical instruments, like a piano or organ?
- EF:** Yes, we had a piano. I think in the early 40s my father traded it off for a radio. That was the extent of it.
- BM:** That was it. Do you dance now?
- EF:** You bet.
- BM:** When did you start dancing?
- EF:** Oh, goodness, that's got to be about eight or ten years after we were married.
- BM:** And you were married in...
- EF:** 1952.
- BM:** 1952.
- EF:** I love to dance.
- BM:** Yes, I know. I've seen you and Gladys dancing.
- EF:** See, I'm from the times of my father or grandfather. The reason dancing was a no-no, was because a lot of times the people got boozed up. And then things happened that shouldn't have, so they cracked the whip pretty hard.
- BM:** Now, was this done through the individual families, or was it done through the church?
- EF:** Individual families.
- BM:** So there was no alcohol at home or in your community then.
- EF:** No alcohol.
- BM:** When you said that you went roller skating, are there other social events that have developed over the years that young people can participate in?
- EF:** Now young people go dancing and movies are permissible. I think they do just about anything that anybody else does.
- BM:** Think back about your parents. When they were married, how were they introduced to each other? Did they meet someplace, through families, or was it arranged?

- EF:** I think it was probably suggested by another person. I really...as far as I can gather.
- BM:** Because they wouldn't have had any way of meeting.
- EF:** Well, my mother lived about a block from where my grandparents lived. My mother's parents lived there. So I don't know if that had anything to do with it or not.
- BM:** Do you recall any games or puzzles that you played as a child at home?
- EF:** Chinese Checkers, putting puzzles together, and then we made our own game with a piece of wood with some pegs on it. The center was worth a hundred points, and you'd throw fruit jar rubber rings. That was quite a challenge.
- BM:** I imagine it was. Did you teach your kids how to play that?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** They had all the modern games.
- EF:** Modern toys.
- BM:** Were there any superstitions in your family that came from your parents or grandparents?
- EF:** Not that I can think of.
- BM:** Since you had no superstitions then, was the Holy Scripture recited during times of trial and stress? Did you go to the religious when there was stress in the family?
- EF:** Yes.
- BM:** Did your family use any kind of folk medicines?
- EF:** No, when they got sick they went to the doctor, but you had to be very sick.
- BM:** Are there different sicknesses today than in the past?
- EF:** Well, I think there is more flu now than there was 50 or 60 years ago.
- BM:** So when people got sick in the past, they used quite a bit of home remedy and cures.
- EF:** Yes, that's right.
- BM:** Common sense. Was there a role of midwives in the family?
- EF:** No, not that I can recall.
- BM:** How about your parents?
- EF:** No.
- BM:** When you were born?
- EF:** There was a doctor.
- BM:** Were there any German newspapers in your home?

- EF:** I think the first years, yes there was. Our church general conference sent out a monthly German paper. And I think there was the local town paper, farm paper, and that was about it.
- BM:** Do you remember the name of the farm paper?
- EF:** The Farm Journal and the Minnesota Farmer.
- BM:** And what kind of information did you get from that?
- EF:** It was about livestock, crops and different kinds of seed that were new.
- BM:** When do you recall getting a daily newspaper?
- EF:** My father never did.
- BM:** Did you ever read comics or funnies?
- EF:** Yes, when I went to school. That was a surprising thing, it was so far out then. About what they were going to do in the future, and that has all come to pass.
- BM:** Yes.
- EF:** And we thought it was way out.
- BM:** Did you ever buy comic books?
- EF:** No, we had no money. That wasn't a necessity.
- CM:** Yes.
- BM:** Do you remember when you got your first modern conveniences?
- EF:** Electricity. It was in the spring of 1942 when my father got electricity.
- BM:** Was it REA?
- EF:** Yes, at that time there was a minimum rate we got. I think it was 40 kilowatts for \$4, and you turned the lights off when it was over. You didn't run over \$4.
- BM:** We laugh about it, but that was serious.
- EF:** That was serious. Yes.
- BM:** And when did you get your first car?
- EF:** I was probably 16 or 17, I believe. A hand-me-down from my father.
- BM:** Do you remember the first car that your father had?
- EF:** No, I don't but I can remember him talking about it. It was a Model T. In 1937 he bought that Ford new. I think it was a little over \$700 which was a lot of money. He was proud as a peacock when he got it.
- BM:** What color was it?
- EF:** It was black.

BM: Ooooh.

EF: One thing I remember distinctly from him is my birthday on June 8th. That was the [? counter:720] I've got that car now, and its my antique car. It's a 1966 Ford. He would not come out to my birthday dinner. I had to go and get him because of rain, as he didn't want to get it dirty.

BM: How about the telephone?

EF: The telephone, I think we got it about 1946 or 1947.

CM: After the war.

EF: That was the first phone we had. The old crank kind.

BM: Any windmills?

EF: No windmills.

BM: How did you pump water for the cattle?

EF: My father had a gasoline engine before we had electricity.

BM: Did you ever have to pump water?

EF: Not that I can recall.

BM: That was one of my chores. What are some of the things that you remember about the early days of radio?

EF: Amos and Andy, Lone Ranger, the news and that was about it.

BM: What do you remember about those shows?

[End of side 1 of the tape. Reset counter to 000]

[lost a little of the conversation in the transition]

BM: And then after radio there came television.

EF: Right.

BM: When did you get television?

EF: I think we had our first television in about 1956 or 1957.

BM: What did you first watch on television?

EF: Jackie Gleason, Red Skelton, mostly comics. The guy they were imitating the other night, did you see that?

BM: Burl Ives?

EF: Yes.

BM: Not Burl Ives... we're having a "senior moment", Milton Burl.

- EF:** Milton Burl and Jack Benny were very good programs.
- BM:** Did you watch the Lawrence Welk Show?
- EF:** Yes. Very good too.
- BM:** Which member of your family do you remember the best?
- EF:** Of my immediate one?
- BM:** No, of your ancestors I should say.
- EF:** Well, I think maybe my grandfather and my grandmother on my father's side. I remember one particular time during the war my grandfather figured he had to do something to help the boys. There was a labor shortage. So he was 72 or 73 years old, went and unloaded several carloads of coal. And one carload in two days, which was a lot of work. After doing that, he got a cough as a result and couldn't stop coughing. So we had a doctor in the same town where he lived, and went to see him. I call him sort of a horse doctor. The doctor told him to start smoking. Grandpa never smoked before that. He got himself a homemade roller and tobacco paper and a [?counter:028], and he sat on the front porch and rolled his cigarette, and smoked it. It cured his cough.
- BM:** Hmmm.
- EF:** I can remember Grandma distinctly. She'd be in the kitchen and would be talking in German, "You've got to quit smoking because you're going to burn in Hell".
- BM:** Did he quit?
- EF:** He did after a while, yes.
- BM:** He did and the cough stayed away?
- EF:** The cough stayed away.
- BM:** Well, I don't understand that one.
- EF:** I don't either.
- BM:** Did their life have an important impact on your life? Were there family values from your grandparents that you learned from them and what were they?
- EF:** Like I said before in the earlier part of the interview... to be honest with people and treat them as you want to be treated.
- BM:** Then those family values passed on from one generation to the other.
- EF:** And I passed them on to my generation too.
- BM:** Is there any other topic that we haven't discussed that you'd like to make a comment on? I'll let you think... are there some things that we've missed here?
- EF:** I can remember one other time during the war years, I was probably twelve years old. My father wanted me to drive the tractor on the grain binder. And, of course, he had to take it off the truck wheels [?

counter:049] we called it. This was behind a grove of trees. At lunchtime my mother brought us lunch, and she was upset that I was going to have to drive that tractor. My dad said, "Don't get so excited he can drive that tractor better than you can." And I had to drive the tractor.

BM: How old were you?

EF: I was probably twelve or thirteen at the most.

CM: What kind of tractor was it?

EF: It was a full swath [?counter:056] and you know you cut a close swath with the...you didn't leave six inches of empty...where the sickle ran and didn't cut anything. You cut full or you heard about it. Square corners would have to be made.

CM: Did you ever work with horses?

EF: Yes. I cultivated corn and plowed with horses.

CM: How many horses did your family have?

EF: I think at one time my father had eight.

CM: And they were all work horses?

EF: All work horses, yes.

CM: You never had any saddle horses, or pleasure horses?

EF: One or two horses you could ride. We never had saddles, but you could ride them.

CM: Did you ever meet with your neighbor kids with your horses on Sunday afternoons or...

EF: No.

CM: So you never got to race your horses with your neighbors?

EF: No.

CM: Can you speak several words of German to us?

EF: Oh, yes. [??? counter:074 ->] That means "let's go to town." [? counter:076] That means "It's a beautiful day."

CM: [?German. Counter:078]

EF: [? counter:079]. That's kind of mixed up there.

CM: And you say that your parents spoke primarily German in the family?

EF: Low German in the family at home.

CM: [more German. counter:083]

EF: That one I can't get.

CM: Did you do any praying when you went to bed in the evenings?

EF: Yes.

CM: Do you know one of your evening prayers or mealtime prayers?

EF: I can just remember part of it. The last part was [? counter:088], and that was High German. I had to say that by my grandma's all the time. I don't quite know what it meant, but I had to say it. And another one I can remember... I had a week or two of High German school when I was in preschool. It was just a little bit of it I can remember, it was [? counter:093], and I don't know what that means either.

BM: Thanks so much Ed. We appreciate you taking your time this morning and visiting with us and sharing some of your thoughts. We will get the other information that we need on you from your wife, Gladys.

EF: Okay.

BM: What was her maiden name?

EF: Gladys Schmidt.

BM: Oh, a good German name. So thanks again.

[end of tape]