

Interview with Sister Alverna Goldade

Conducted by Joyce Reinhardt Larson (JL)

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- JL:** It is April 10, 1996 and I am Joyce Reinhardt Larson, a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at NDSU libraries. Today I am interviewing Sister Alverna Goldade, and we are at St. Francis Convent in Hankinson, North Dakota. Sister, I'll begin by asking you to state your name and your date of birth and where were you born?
- AG:** I was born December 15, 1926 at Pierce County, Selz, North Dakota.
- JL:** In the northern part of the state, right?
- AG:** Yes. It's about, I would say, 50 miles south of Rugby, which was our county seat. Right at the end of Pierce County. And to the east a mile was Wells County, and to the south a half-mile was Benson County. So we lived in the corner between two counties.
- JL:** Really close, then. What is your father's name, and what village did he come from in South Russia?
- AG:** My parents were born in North Dakota. So it's the grandparents, who have both died. They were from Germany and then went to Odessa, Russia, and then came to America. My father's parents came to America in 1896 and they first lived in Emmons County. Then in 1898 Grandpa walked to Selz from Emmons County to find the...
- JL:** Better land or something?
- AG:** Yes. And then I guess he walked back and brought Grandma, and they had two children, I believe.
- JL:** Oh, for heavens sakes.
- AG:** And the rest were born over here.
- JL:** What was your father's name?
- AG:** John.
- JL:** John Goldade.
- AG:** And Grandpa's name was Gottlieb.
- JL:** And how about your mother? What was her name, and then her maiden name?
- AG:** Mary Eva Sander, and her parents lived south of Rugby. Their address was Orrin, North Dakota. They lived north of Orrin, a few miles north of Orrin. I don't know when they came. I think I had it someplace, but that's the thing I was going to look for and forgot.
- JL:** Okay.

- AG:** I had it someplace when my mother's parents came over, and my mother was born in North Dakota also, in Pierce County at the farm. See in those days they were all born with a midwife.
- JL:** Yes. Did she talk about that?
- AG:** Not too much. Grandpa, when people came to see him, he had so much to say about the old country, but as children we just had no interest in that.
- JL:** That's understandable.
- AG:** Like my sister now. She is four years younger than I am. She was home longer than I. I left when I was fourteen, so...
- JL:** You did?
- AG:** Yes. I came to Hankinson.
- JL:** At age fourteen. So did you go to high school here?
- AG:** I went to high school here and then went through religious training. I was young when I left home, and like I said before, we just weren't interested in that. And now sometimes I get different things from my sister.
- JL:** How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- AG:** Two. Two of each. Two sisters and two brothers.
- JL:** I see. Were you the only one that went into the religious area?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Where do they live now? Are they near?
- AG:** My sister next to me lives in Florida.
- JL:** What is her name?
- AG:** Magdalen. And she lives in Jacksonville, Florida. She was in the Air Force and once she retired from the Air Force she went to work for the Postal Service, and now she's retired. She and her husband are retired. Then my next sister lives in Bismarck.
- JL:** What is her name?
- AG:** Cecilia. Then my oldest brother lives in Fountain Valley, California.
- JL:** And his name?
- AG:** Peter. And he's retired. Then James is the youngest one and he lives in Bismarck also.
- JL:** So you get to see two of them more often.
- AG:** More often than the others, yes. I was to Florida two years ago. My sister Cecilia and I went to Florida two years ago. And then my brother from California comes... he usually tries to come every fall out here

to hunt, so last fall when he was in Bismarck in October, I went to Bismarck for two days so I could see him.

JL: Well, that's great. At what age did you think you wanted to leave home and come to the school here?

AG: It could have been when I was fifteen.... Fifteen, I was fifteen, and then I left (unclear) because I was home a year. I was home after grade school because my mother wasn't well. So I was home a year before I entered.

JL: What made you decide to do that? Were there other people in your extended family that...

AG: No. Well, there was just one, but I didn't know her too well. She was a very distant relative, and before she went to the convent she was my dad's bridesmaid when my parents were married. But there were Sisters in what we used to call Catechism school, in Selz at the parish, and that's how I got acquainted with the Sisters.

JL: Oh, I see. What distinctive religious customs were practiced in your home? Like Feast Days and Name Days.

AG: We didn't celebrate birthdays. It was Name Days and, well, Christmas and Easter.

JL: You mean you didn't celebrate birthdays?

AG: Not like the Name Day. Like when my dad's Name Day... well, we had a... the neighbors all came and they danced in the front room. Somebody played the accordion and...

JL: What is a Name Day?

AG: Like my dad's name was John, so the Feast of St. John, which is December 27... so when that day came, all the neighbors came and we had quite a big dinner and then dancing in the evening.

JL: Oh, I see. So whatever day ... explain that to me, I guess.

AG: See, like there are feasts... like St. John the Apostle has a certain feast, and the other Apostles, there are certain Feast Days. And then usually, years ago, people were named after saints, you know... saints names.

JL: After Biblical names.

AG: Yes. So whenever these Feast Days... it was usually when this person died and was sainted, and they were named after these persons, like St. Peter and Paul, they have their feast June 29th.

JL: Oh.

AG: And St. John is December 27th, and then there's St. James... there are two different St. James. One is in July, and then St. Ann is July 26th. So people that were named after these saints, well they celebrated their Name Day, and that used to be it... now it's more birthdays. Even in the convent, we do birthdays too.

JL: But not all children were named after saints, were they?

- AG:** No. Then some are kind of... well they're supposed to be saints' names, but they're kind of late. A lot of them had nicknames, like I have a niece... they named their children all like, they didn't take Constance, one is Connie, and they say it's not Constance, she was baptized Connie, not Constance. And then the next one is Debbie. They said it's not Deborah, it's Debbie.
- JL:** Were any names done, referring to Old Testament names too? Like I know a lot of people named Jacob, and Joseph.
- AG:** Oh yes.
- JL:** Would you call that a Name Day then?
- AG:** Oh yes. The Feast of St. Joseph is March 19th.
- JL:** So there are a lot of them, aren't there?
- AG:** Yes, oh yes.
- JL:** I see.
- AG:** And like James... they said Jacob and James would be the same thing.
- JL:** And they were two different people in the Bible.
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** Do you think that was maybe the oldest child that was named more so after a saint?
- AG:** A lot of times, too, after like the grandparents. Like I have my mother's mother's name. It was Christina, and my name is Christine. And then my sister next to me has my dad's mother's name, Magdalen.
- JL:** Yes.
- AG:** So a lot of children were named after their grandparents.
- JL:** What were strong religious influences in your daily life? In your home... like did you have devotions?
- AG:** Yes. In the evening we lined up. Usually when there was a baby, Mother sat with the baby and the rest of us stood there and said our prayers.
- JL:** Together?
- AG:** Together, yes. And then when there was devotions in church, we always had to go. When there were different devotions, like in May and October, we went to church for devotions.
- JL:** Were there certain prayers that you said, or were they just not memorized prayers? I suppose they were memorize prayers.
- AG:** Yes, like the Lord's Prayer and things like that. In those days there was no spontaneous praying like now. Now it's more spontaneous.
- JL:** I guess that's what I was wondering.
- AG:** Yes.

- JL:** More of a ritual?
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** Is there more of that in the convent here now too?
- AG:** No, it's either memorized or spontaneous.
- JL:** Okay. Beyond prayer and worship, what other involvement did you or your family have in the parish?
- AG:** When there was (unclear) or special devotions. In those days when I was home, there wasn't so much like now. Now you have feast groups and different groups. But when I was young we just never did any extra special groups or...
- JL:** There is more of that now.
- AG:** Yes, there's more of that now than when I grew up. When I grew up there was nothing for children.
- JL:** Was the community of Selz, then a pretty Catholic community?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** So you had a big Catholic church there in town?
- AG:** Yes. And it was just the Catholic church, because there were no others.
- JL:** Just one church in town?
- AG:** Just one church. It was just a little village. There were older people that were retired.
- JL:** And the others lived in farms around the community.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** And did you say you grew up on a farm?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** How far were you from town?
- AG:** 3-1/2 miles east of Selz we were.
- JL:** So, horse and buggy days then, or...
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Or would they have had a car by the time you were born?
- AG:** I remember the car, but in the winter the car was put in the garage and it stayed there because I remember we were going to church and to school in the sled. And then I remember too, after the snow was gone, when in spring... when my dad did spring's work my mother would come and get us in the horse and buggy at school.
- JL:** Oh, your mother did that, huh?

- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Well that was a means of travel then.
- AG:** Yes. I remember that so plainly, that buggy, what it was like.
- JL:** Was it covered?
- AG:** No. No.
- JL:** In the wintertime, I suppose you were bundled up.
- AG:** Well, then we had the sled, and then we usually had... my dad had straw in the bottom of the sled and blankets. We would lay in there and he would cover us up with the blankets and hook up the team.
- JL:** Pretty cozy.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Did they ever do anything to keep your feet warm like... what did the people do?
- AG:** They heated bricks.
- JL:** No kidding. We never did that.
- AG:** Yes, there were people who heated bricks and then put them in. And then my grandparents, they had this... I forget what you call them. They had their sleigh thing covered when they went to church and they had a heater in there. And along the outside they had benches... my grandparents in Orrin. They had this covered thing.
- JL:** That was kind of fancy.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Maybe they had further to go.
- AG:** It could be. Their roads weren't even gravel... just this path, where we had a better road going to Selz than they had going to church. I know sometimes, summers I would spend with Grandma and Grandpa at their farm north of Orrin and our roads were much better than what they had.
- JL:** What particular religious training did you receive? And from whom... parents, Sisters, priests?
- AG:** Priests, yes. When I grew up we had to do Catechism on Sundays that the parish sponsored. Then during summer for two weeks, the Sisters came.
- JL:** Was that like Sunday school? Did you call that Sunday school?
- AG:** Yes. Then two weeks in June, the Sisters came. Well the first years, when I made my first communion, then it was our parish priest and the organist. She had her group, she had the small one, and then Father had a group. Then only later on did the Sisters come, in the '40s.
- JL:** Is that right?
- AG:** Before that it was the parish priest and the organist.

- JL:** Where did the Sisters come from?
- AG:** Here.
- JL:** From Hankinson. So you naturally were drawn to this spot.
- AG:** Yes. Because these were the only ones I knew.
- JL:** Your memories of those Sisters... what are those memories?
- AG:** Those that came in those days have passed away already. I have good memories about it.
- JL:** Was there someone who influenced your choice of this religious vocation? Was it the Sisters?
- AG:** Yes. The Sisters that came to Selz for vacation school.
- JL:** What was your parents' reaction to that, that you were going to become a nun?
- AG:** They thought it was alright, because they always said, "if you don't like it, come home." They had nothing against it if I didn't want to stay. I remember the first Christmas I came home, when I was a freshman. They said they didn't know now, how should they write... did I want a round-trip ticket, or did I want to stay home? I remember that so well!
- JL:** I'll bet you do. Was there ever any question in your mind?
- AG:** No.
- JL:** So you came here and you knew it was for you?
- AG:** Well, as it went along, during high school, it wasn't like "I have to make up my mind this day"... I still had time after that, to really decide.
- JL:** Yes. Could you leave, pretty much, any time that you wanted?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** I supposed even now you could leave.
- AG:** Even now. There are still Sisters who leave after they've been in the convent for a number of years.
- JL:** I imagine it doesn't happen too often, but at least there is that freedom to do it.
- AG:** Yes. Yes there is.
- JL:** So how was your communication with your family, then, once you joined the convent here? How often did you get home?
- AG:** Well, in the beginning it was eight years. My mother, every time she came, she said, "Can't you come home yet?" The first time it was eight years, and then it was either six or seven. But then it was changed. Now we can go home every year. And if something extra comes up, if there is a wedding or a funeral, now we can go home. But those days, it was really strict. You couldn't go home for weddings. So I really don't know... I have gotten to know my brothers better now than I did then, because they were small when I left. So I really didn't know them.

- JL:** Were you the oldest?
- AG:** Yes. I was the oldest. And the youngest one wasn't even in school yet when I left. So I didn't get to know them. I get to know them now better than I did then.
- JL:** Eight years... but your parents could come and visit you?
- AG:** Yes, they could come and visit.
- JL:** Anytime?
- AG:** Well...
- JL:** Like a few times a year? Or were there special times?
- AG:** Well, in those days they didn't travel so much and they came by train. They couldn't drive that car that far. I think they came about once a year, and then they came with the train. Nowadays, you couldn't even come with the train anymore, because there isn't one. But they had good connections from Harvey to Hankinson to here. We lived ten miles from Harvey, so there was good train connections.
- JL:** So that was the way it was. So did they stay a few days then?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Could they stay here?
- AG:** Yes, they stayed here.
- JL:** So there was a place for families.
- AG:** Yes. Yes. They could stay here.
- JL:** Oh, I'll bet you were glad to see them.
- AG:** Yes. Then later on, they would come by car. After I was in the convent a number of years, then they would come by car, but in the beginning they took the train.
- JL:** You really had to grow up then, didn't you, if you knew that you wouldn't be going home.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** That was dedication.
- AG:** I think it was harder on my mother than on me, really.
- JL:** Yes, that you were gone... I believe that.
- AG:** Because each time she would come she would say, "Can't you come home yet?" And she knew it would be eight years... each time, "Can't you come home?"
- JL:** When did your mother pass away, then?
- AG:** I was going to write it down. I keep forgetting... I have it here. My mother was born November 5th, 1902, and she died December 30th, 1985.

- JL:** So she was what, 83 years old when she died?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** So that isn't so long ago.
- AG:** No.
- JL:** Did you get to see her more frequently later on?
- AG:** Yes. The last years... whenever anybody went to Bismarck for a convention or a meeting, I was allowed to go along.
- JL:** Did she live in a home there?
- AG:** No, she was... see my sister lived with... my sister Cecilia lived my parents. She had an apartment downstairs. So she was home until, I think maybe she was... they had an extended care at St. Alexis Hospital. I think she was there maybe two weeks before she died. My father too.
- JL:** When did he pass away?
- AG:** In '89. November 11th of '89.
- JL:** So he lived longer than your mother.
- AG:** Yes. And we always thought because he had diabetes, and he had problems, and my mother was more healthy. But she died before he did.
- JL:** And that's not very long ago.
- AG:** And he too, he was at home until... I think he fell a few times. He had this Life Line, and then whenever he was alone at home... my sister worked, and then I think when he fell once and they had to take him to the hospital, and it was just a short while before he died. Just a few days.
- JL:** That's a blessing.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Do you recall Anti-Garb legislation? That happened in North Dakota in the late 1940s.
- AG:** Yes. I remember that because our Sisters were teaching at the public school in Selz. And they had to go in their secular garb.
- JL:** Why was that? What made the state of North Dakota pass such a law?
- AG:** Gee, that I don't remember. I think they said Sister Barbara Marie was going to talk about that because she was one that had to change to secular garb.
- JL:** But you didn't?
- AG:** No, no. See it was just the Sisters that were teaching in public schools, at the time. I think they said people voted for it, but it was written so that there was confusion. People voted for it without realizing, they didn't want to, but did, because of the way it was stated. And you know those people in those days, they weren't educated to understand.

- JL:** And there wasn't the publicity on the television and radio like we have now.
- AG:** No, no. No way. There was no television then, and not too many people had a radio either.
- JL:** So your experience with the Anti-Garb Law... there was no experience with that.
- AG:** No. I just know that some of our Sisters were involved. It was only those teaching in the public schools.
- JL:** Has that changed?
- AG:** Oh yes, that's changed. There isn't anybody teaching in the public schools now, but I'm sure it has changed. Unless they just don't teach in public schools anymore. I don't know.
- JL:** So, do you recall the community reaction to such legislation? You were here then, I guess, so you probably don't know.
- AG:** Not too much, because it didn't concern me. I think I was working in our hospitals in those days, so I had no contact with the teachers.
- JL:** So your personal reactions are that you didn't really have any involvement in it.
- AG:** No, I didn't. I just remembered the Sisters getting ready for it, you know.
- JL:** Is there anything else you'd like to say about your life here as a Sister?
- AG:** I doubt it. Since I first came to the convent... like the garb, things have changed so much. It used to be in the garden, every morning everybody went out and did the garden work. Now so many of the Sisters are old and they can't anymore. It's just the numbers are down, that we just don't do such things anymore like it used to be.
- JL:** Does that sadden you?
- AG:** Well, in a way, you know... it was nice doing all those things together.
- JL:** So now, what I'm seeing is that one person is more or less assigned to that... everybody has their own thing?
- AG:** Their own thing, and you don't do the things together.
- JL:** Well, that's the way the whole society has gone.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** And even here then.
- AG:** Yes. Yes.
- JL:** What do you get involved in?
- AG:** Like doing dishes. Well, there are certain things we do together. Doing breakfast dishes, or doing dishes at noon and after dinner, so there are three groups each day. And there are secular people in the laundry, so we don't do that anymore.
- JL:** So what have you been doing here? What has been your primary job?

- AG:** Since I don't work in hospitals anymore, I do a lot of the driving for the Sisters. And I pack the Altar breads for the parishes. See we get them wholesale by the thousands, and then we pack them for the different parishes, on a monthly basis, whatever they ordered. There is a standing order, so I do that twice a month. We have two shipments going out. And then there are other parishes that call when there are needs, so I just pack them up and bring them out whenever they call.
- JL:** And you do the driving, so how often do you leave the convent then, a week?
- AG:** Sometimes every day... five days a week. Sometimes I go to Fargo three days a week. Like this week and last week, I was really home a lot.
- JL:** Now that the weather is nice.
- AG:** Yes, now that the weather is nice. Today I would have had to go to Wahpeton, but because of this, somebody else had to go. And tomorrow I go to Fargo.
- JL:** Do you enjoy that?
- AG:** Yes, I do. I do. And then I do a lot when I go do individual Sisters who can't go and do their shopping. They give me their money and then I shop for them. So when I get up to the counter, I tell them right away that there is not just one payment. This one I pay for, and then that one I pay for. To keep their accounts straight. I don't mind it. It's hard sometimes to shop for someone else because it is difficult to get just exactly what they want.
- JL:** Sure. Sure.
- AG:** But then I gladly do it. Rather than put them in a car, take them out... it is so much easier for me to do it than to take them along.
- JL:** Yes. How many Sisters are here?
- AG:** There could be around fifty.
- JL:** And how many would you say are not able to go?
- AG:** Oh, I'd say the majority.
- JL:** The majority?
- AG:** Yes. It's so different now. Years ago when everybody was able to move around and to work, and now there are just so few of us.
- JL:** You need some young people.
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** What language did you speak as a child? Did you ever know German?
- AG:** German. German. When I started school, I didn't know a word of English, because I was the oldest one. I didn't know any English.
- JL:** Do you know what dialect was spoken?

- AG:** German Russian.
- JL:** Oh, I see.
- AG:** That whole area was... those that had older brothers and sisters would learn, but I didn't have any, I was the oldest one, so I didn't learn any English.
- JL:** And you went to a country school?
- AG:** A country school, yes.
- JL:** And the teachers that were there?
- AG:** She happened to know German. The teacher that was there for my first, second and third grade.
- JL:** You mean no English.
- AG:** She knew German, but you had to... I mean she could understand us.
- JL:** Which was unusual, because they really wanted you to switch to English then.
- AG:** Yes. They put down that you had to speak English, but you know, you had to learn it first. You couldn't be in groups and speak German, no way.
- JL:** Then you gradually learned English, and did your parents learn it then too?
- AG:** They knew some, because they had English in school, but they were around Grandma and Grandpa, and my dad's parents lived with us. So they didn't know any English, so we just always spoke German. But Mom and Dad knew some English, yes, because they went to grade school over here, so they knew English.
- JL:** So do you still remember German?
- AG:** Oh yes. Well, even with... because the older Sisters here, but they speak a different German. Sister (unclear) came from Germany, but they have a high German. But I still participate in it.
- JL:** At least you can still understand those Sisters, can't you?
- AG:** Yes. The common words. The common everyday words. But there are different dialects. Some of the Sisters and their relatives come from Germany... with some of them I have a hard time with the different dialects.
- JL:** So what do you remember about home? Did you have to work pretty hard?
- AG:** Yes, yes. We had chores. We had to milk the cows and do the chores before we went to school in the morning. And when we came home we had... there were the chickens to feed, and the pigs, and we gathered the eggs. We went out with a basket and gathered the eggs and milked the cows.
- JL:** Did you have to help in the house then too?
- AG:** Oh yes.
- JL:** Did you have to help with cooking?

- AG:** Yes. And did the dishes and cleaned the house. Mop and dust and wash up the clothes.
- JL:** Do you remember German cooking?
- AG:** Yes. We had sauerkraut. Not too many dampf noodle... do you know what a dampf noodle is?
- JL:** Yes we like them.
- AG:** Dampf noodla and sauerkraut and kuchen. My sister still makes kuchen.
- JL:** Oh... That's a treat, isn't it? Do you get that here?
- AG:** Not too much. Sister (unclear) cooks for us now, and she's so young. But like when my nieces got married, my sister made all the kuchen because they were so used to it. These young people they don't know how. My brother's wife, she doesn't know anything about kuchen. When their girls were married, my sister made the kuchen.
- JL:** Oh. How about knepfla?
- AG:** Yes, yes. We had those for many years.
- JL:** How did you make the knepfla?
- AG:** Well, I don't remember so much the ingredients, but then how we made them. We rolled them out and folded them by hand.
- JL:** Then you cooked them in the water? In a broth?
- AG:** It was in a little water and lard, not too much juice. Just a little water and lard, and cooked them in a frying pan.
- JL:** Oh, I see. How about fleich kuchla?
- AG:** Yes, yes. That was like noodles. Things come back now. You forget about those things.
- JL:** Yes, that is something I find people in the eastern part of the state. They sure don't know what fleich kuchla are. And in my part of the state, they still make them all the time.
- AG:** I think there is even a restaurant in Bismarck that makes fleich kuchla.
- JL:** Bismarck is a little more German. They have one pizza place that used to make them. Of all places. But it was well used, you know. So, tell me what it was like in school then, in your grade school.
- AG:** Well, we all had our lunch buckets. We had outdoor toilets of course. The water, we carried in from the farm that was closest to the school. The boys usually had to carry the water so we had drinking water at the school. We cleaned... we had to clean the classroom.
- JL:** Was it a one room school?
- AG:** It was a one room school house. All eight grades.
- JL:** What subjects do you remember? What subjects did you like?
- AG:** Oh, I liked arithmetic. I really liked it. I wasn't too much for science.

- JL:** Did you think you had good teachers, then?
- AG:** Oh yes.
- JL:** What did you do at recess?
- AG:** Oh, we played ball or Hide and Go Seek. We had a barn there for those who drove themselves, to put the horses in, so we played Hide and Go Seek around the barn. And then baseball, we picked sides, boys and girls together. Red Rover, Red Rover. And there was something where we had two lines, and then we'd run back and forth.
- JL:** That could be a rough game.
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** Trying to wade through the other line. How about Anti-I-Over?
- AG:** Anti-I-Over, yes, yes.
- JL:** Over the barn, I'll bet.
- AG:** Over the barn. Over the barn, yes.
- JL:** And King on the Mountain.
- AG:** King on the Mountain in the snow, yes. Once I fell. Somebody had dug a hole in this big snow bank and I fell down in it.
- JL:** Did you get hurt?
- AG:** No, I didn't. Luckily I didn't.
- JL:** Those young bones, they bounce right back.
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** Are you familiar with wrought iron crosses as grave markers?
- AG:** In some of the cemeteries, yes, the older graves. Yes we had some in our cemetery.
- JL:** Did your parents, well your relatives have any of those on their graves, then?
- AG:** I think my dad had a younger brother who had one. He was shot when he was fifteen accidentally.
- JL:** Did you know anybody who made them?
- AG:** No.
- JL:** They are very pretty.
- AG:** Yes, they are.
- JL:** Some of them have very nice ornate designs.
- AG:** Yes, and these tombstones now, they have nothing. Yes. Those were beautiful yet.

- JL:** Does your family have any heirlooms or objects of sentimental value that have been passed down, like special kinds of embroidery or crocheted things?
- AG:** Not that I know of.
- JL:** Did your mother crochet?
- AG:** Yes. And Grandma. Grandma did, my dad's mother. She did a lot. But you know, I was gone. In those days they got rid of everything. Like there were so many nice things that I wanted... but the folks had an auction sale when they moved off the farm and moved to Bismarck, and well, everything was sold. My sister in Florida and I felt so bad. Everything went in the auction sale.
- JL:** They just didn't put that much value on it. They just thought that's something old and...
- AG:** Yes, that's something old. It's too late, but my sister always mentions that too (unclear).
- JL:** Oh, she does?
- AG:** Yes. That they got rid of all those things. In those days, "oh, I'll find something" you know.
- JL:** Yes. Do you remember those old shawls that the old grandmas used to wear?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Did yours?
- AG:** You know, I still have one of those. It's falling apart up there on my dresser.
- JL:** You do?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Oh, what color is it?
- AG:** It's kind of a cream colored.
- JL:** And your grandma wore that?
- AG:** Yes, Grandma wore that. That's one thing I got. It's falling apart, but I...
- JL:** You're treasuring it.
- AG:** Yes. I keep a plastic over it on my dresser.
- JL:** Did it have some crocheted edge then?
- AG:** Yes, and it was embroidered, and it had tassels on the ends.
- JL:** Ann would probably like to see it. They had some on display in that exhibit when they went to Beulah. What kind of clothes did your grandma wear then? Like my grandma never wore pants.
- AG:** Oh, no, no. And she had these longer dresses. Like this is my mother's parents. I don't know what year that was taken though, I wish I knew. I know there were pictures around too of my dad's parents, but see I never got any of those since I left home so early.

[end of side 1 - some conversation lost in the transition to side 2] [reset counter to 000]

JL: Your sister had given you some information about your parents, was it?

AG: My Grandparents. My grandparents left Germany... Jochren, Germany and went to Selz, Russia in 1808. And then Grandma and Grandpa came to America in 1896 and lived in Emmons County until 1898 and then they went to Selz, North Dakota.

JL: The very same community name as back in Russia.

AG: Yes.

JL: That's interesting.

AG: I can't remember. I think I was told once by my mother parents... I think when my brother was over there in Germany... I can't think where they came from. And the Sister Jean Louise said, "did you have any family pictures?" Well, I have my parents' wedding picture. They were married in North Dakota.

JL: Oh, my goodness. What an elaborate veil she had.

AG: I often wonder... I should ask my sister what they did with it, because I know as long as I was home, she always had it in the closet, her veil and...

JL: I wonder where that is?

AG: Probably when they moved it down, they probably threw everything you know. And then this was taken when I was home. My last time at home before I came to the convent to stay. It was in June of '45. See, then I came to the convent.

JL: Which one is you?

AG: The middle one.

JL: That's what I thought. Yes. The middle one.

AG: And see, my brothers were small then.

JL: Yes. This is a very nice picture. This is very nice. A nice looking family you come from. You all are.

AG: Thank you. But now it's...

JL: We'll show this to Mike later. It's very nice. I love those old pictures. I'm treasuring them more than I used to.

AG: Seeing the years go. I feel so bad, there's so much that we... even my sister who gets rid of everything. You know at the auction sale everything had to go, and now she says, "oh I wish... I wonder where that is and where this is..." But in those days we didn't go home, and I couldn't go home and say, "don't throw this and don't throw that" because in those days I couldn't go home when they had the auction sale, and just everything went.

JL: Were you there?

AG: No.

- JL:** That was within that eight years when you...
- AG:** Yes, I was in the convent and I couldn't go home. They moved to Bismarck, and they were in Bismarck a few years before I could go home to see where they lived. But then the last years, as my parents got older, there was about two or three times a year that I could go and visit them.
- JL:** Did you ever go back to the farm together?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** You did?
- AG:** I think almost every summer my sister and I would drive from Bismarck. See, she's a widow and she doesn't drive. She has her own car, but she doesn't drive out of Bismarck alone. So when I'm there on vacation we drive up to the farm.
- JL:** Well what a treat for her and for you.
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** And they you'd take your parents along as long as they were able to go?
- AG:** As long as they were able. And even once, it was way back... it must have been in the '80s... when they came here, my sister... Well Mom and Dad drove. Anyway, they came here and then we drove to Florida because no way would my mother fly. The first time they went to California to visit my brother, they went by bus. I think they flew once. And then my sister in Florida said, "you made trips to California and you never came to Florida to see me." Well, my mother said no way would she fly. So we drove to Florida.
- JL:** Well, you got to see a lot along the way.
- AG:** Yes. And we took it in, we didn't rush it. We stopped in the evening to get a motel and stayed overnight and the next morning we'd drive again.
- JL:** Did you do all the driving?
- AG:** No my sister and I took turns.
- JL:** That was special.
- AG:** Yes, it was.
- JL:** I'll bet that was quite a memory. How was Christmas celebrated in your family?
- AG:** At home, well at that time we called it the Christ Child... the Christ Child was coming. And Grandma and Grandpa lived in their own house. So they'd bring our gifts in our front entry, then we'd think that our parents didn't put them there... things just appeared. Of course Grandma had them and after we girls were older, we knew that Grandma had our dolls. As girls we got dolls, and Grandma put them... and they must have made out the time because all of a sudden, the parents would say, "well I think the Christ Child came, we'd better look." And they'd open the door and our things were there.
- JL:** Well, did you ever think it was Santa Claus?

- AG:** Yes. Santa Claus or the Christ Child.
- JL:** So Santa Claus... and you're saying the Christ Child... you're meaning the same thing.
- AG:** Yes. Yes. I think in the Catholic faith it was more Christ Child than Santa Claus. Until we got older.
- JL:** What kind of festivities did you have at Christmas time, then... I mean at church.
- AG:** At church, there was Midnight Mass of course. We went to Midnight Mass always.
- JL:** And were those Masses done in Latin?
- AG:** Yes, in those days everything was Latin. And then the priest had... the first years when we were young, he had the sermon in German and in English. One in German and one in English, because the older people couldn't understand.
- JL:** How long did those services last?
- AG:** Couldn't have been over an hour.
- JL:** So it wasn't so very long.
- AG:** Oh no. Nobody complained about it, like now. In those days it just was that way.
- JL:** Yes. What about the tradition of... I don't know if it was in your church then... did they have like sacks to hand out to the little children after Midnight Mass, or I mean at Christmas time?
- AG:** Not those days. Not when I grew up. I think later on they did it, but not when I was growing up.
- JL:** Sacks of peanuts and oranges and things like that.
- AG:** Yes. Yes. But in my time there just wasn't.
- JL:** Does Belzennickel mean anything to you?
- AG:** Belzennickel? Yes that I think was Santa Claus. "Der Belzennikel ishkomma."
- JL:** You said that, or how did you say the Christ Child in German?
- AG:** Christkindel.
- JL:** Were you ever afraid of the Belzennickel at all?
- AG:** No, no.
- JL:** I heard that in some families they would say that if you didn't behave, he would come and punish you.
- AG:** Or he would come and you wouldn't get anything.
- JL:** But not like that.
- AG:** No, no.
- JL:** How about Easter?

- AG:** Then we got our Easter basket too. The basket, that was put out too. That we didn't too. That was put out... snuck around too, so we didn't know who put it there. I suppose Grandma put it there again too.
- JL:** And what was in the Easter basket?
- AG:** Oh, dyed eggs and Easter candy.
- JL:** Did you help dye eggs then?
- AG:** Oh yes, yes.
- JL:** Did you have like vegetable dyes, or did you buy those dyes like we do now?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** And you had chickens then, so you had lots of eggs to dye?
- AG:** Yes, we had our own. We had our own eggs.
- JL:** Then for the next few mornings there would always be hard boiled eggs?
- AG:** Yes. Or whenever we wanted one.
- JL:** It was kind of fun. Still is.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Did your mother have to work outside and help with things?
- AG:** Oh, yes, she helped with all the chores and helped milk the cows. My dad never milked the cows. Just Mom and us kids.
- JL:** Then in the house, of course, your mother had to do everything in the house?
- AG:** Yes. She sewed, washed clothes, and like on Sunday we had to carry... we didn't have running water when I was little. They only got it after I was in the convent. The well was outside a few feet from the house and we'd carry in the water, and put it in this big thing... We still have one in our room over there. You know these big boilers. We'd fill it up, and it was on the stove, so on Sunday morning when the fire was started, water would heat to wash clothes. We would carry all the water in.
- JL:** Did your parents live close to relatives? Were there relatives close by to visit?
- AG:** Well, my mother's family lived at Orrin, and then my dad's parents lived there in the same place where we did. Then my dad's brother lived about two miles south of our place, but his sisters lived a ways away.
- JL:** Do you think they ever were lonely, or did they always have relatives close by so they were really never too far away from each other?
- AG:** They never said that they were lonely.
- JL:** Did you have neighbors close by so you could visit back and forth?
- AG:** Yes, yes.

- JL:** Was there a certain day that was a visiting day? Was that Sunday?
- AG:** Well, Sunday... mainly Sundays, because during the week you worked. Sundays were feast days.
- JL:** So when the neighbors came over to visit, was that a treat for everybody, did you kids enjoy it too?
- AG:** Oh yes, well the children came along and the kids played outside or else if it was cold they could go inside. The kids were in the kitchen while the adults were in the living room.
- JL:** Always separate, though?
- AG:** Yes. Sometimes when we went visiting or the children were in our house, they'd say, "kids, you're too loud!"
- JL:** What kind of games did you play then, like if you were stuck inside in the kitchen, what did you play?
- AG:** You know what we played a lot was "Church." One of the boys was the priest and he would give us a sermon.
- JL:** Is that right? (lots of laughter) Oh, my goodness. Well, any other games?
- AG:** I can't think of them now. Isn't that awful... it was so long ago. But anyway, we played games because we got awfully loud.
- JL:** Yes. Do you remember "Button-Button"?
- AG:** Yes. Button-Button, or "School"... We played a lot of "School" too. Yes, Button, button, who has the button.
- JL:** How about "Three Blind Mice"?
- AG:** Three Blind Mice, yes. (more laughter) After you say them, yes.
- JL:** I just talked to my dad and he mentioned those games.
- AG:** We played Church and School. We played School a lot. And we played Church when there were boys. But the neighbors closest to us had all girls and we were girls, so then we didn't play Church.
- JL:** How about Fairy Tales? Did your mother ever tell you any Fairy Tales or Nursery Rhymes, or any special poems, or...
- AG:** No, not so much.
- JL:** Did you have a lot of singing in your home? Was there any musical... anybody musical in the family?
- AG:** No, not until later on, in the high school, with my brothers. They went to Selz to high school when the Sisters were there. Then they took piano. The Sisters gave them lessons. See, in the country school, we did singing without instruments.
- JL:** That was probably a class, huh?
- AG:** That was a class, yes. I think every Friday we had singing.
- JL:** Do you remember some of the songs?

- AG:** Yes. That Little Brown Church, Oh Susannah, and what's the other one... the farmer...
- JL:** The Farmer in the Dell?
- AG:** Yes, and there was another one.
- JL:** Patriotic songs, I suppose you sang?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Did you start school every morning with the Pledge of Allegiance?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Or did you have...
- AG:** Old MacDonald Had a Farm.
- JL:** Oh, yes.
- AG:** Yes every morning we started with the Pledge of Allegiance.
- JL:** How about singing prayers in your school?
- AG:** No.
- JL:** It was a public school.
- AG:** Yes. When we all ate lunch, you prayed by yourself. We all had our lunch, and we ate sitting at our desks.
- JL:** What was a typical lunch?
- AG:** Jelly and bread. Let's see what else... sometimes we'd have a cookie, sometimes an apple.
- JL:** Sausage?
- AG:** Yes. Sometimes.
- JL:** Your parents butchered and I suppose made sausage?
- AG:** Yes, we made our own sausage. And we had cheese. Sausage and had cheese.
- JL:** Liverwurst?
- AG:** Yes, liverwurst too.
- JL:** I don't miss that.
- AG:** No, but the other sausage I liked. My brother still makes some sausage. They go hunting. When they hunt their deer they make sausage from some of the meat.
- JL:** Well, that's good.... Did your parents like to dance?
- AG:** Yes. My mother did more. My dad wasn't so much for it, but when they these dances in the house, you know. But they would never go out to public dances, but in the homes they would.

- JL:** Was there an accordion player around there that you could always call on?
- AG:** In the neighborhood, yes.
- JL:** Did you learn to dance too?
- AG:** Yes. In school, in public school, one of the boys played the harmonica, and then we danced in the school basement. Or sometimes for recess, we danced down in the basement.
- JL:** You had a pretty fancy school if you had a basement.
- AG:** We had a full basement.
- JL:** Really?
- AG:** Yes. See the furnace was down there. One was the furnace room, and a small room was the coal bin, and then a large room. When we couldn't go outside, we'd play down there.
- JL:** How many kids were in your grade?
- AG:** Two.
- JL:** Is that right, just two of you. All the way to the eighth grade, and it was probably that same person.
- AG:** Yes. Two girls.
- JL:** How about like medicine and, did you have a doctor close by?
- AG:** Oh, in Harvey. I know one winter my dad had the itch. He walked. We were ten miles from Harvey. He walked to Harvey to get something for the itch.
- JL:** Is that right?
- AG:** I can't remember why he didn't go by his car. He walked.
- JL:** Were there any people around there that did "Brauche" (folk medicine)?
- AG:** No, they talked about it, but we didn't ever have it. But what we did a lot, like if somebody hurt themselves or had an infection, was chamomile tea, you know?
- JL:** Yes.
- AG:** Soaked it in this chamomile tea.
- JL:** Oh. You mean...
- AG:** You know, if you have injured something and gotten an infection or something, you just soaked it in this hot tea water. When this chamomile tea was blooming, my mother would take whole bunches and save it upstairs in the house... we would save it upstairs to use.
- JL:** Did you ever drink the tea?
- AG:** Yes, we did that, yes. My dad never was a tea drinker, so when he was gone sometimes during a meal, my mother made this chamomile tea, and we'd have salt crackers and chamomile tea.

- JL:** Oh really? Did you add honey to it?
- AG:** No.
- JL:** Just plain?
- AG:** We put a little sugar in, but I think later on they did add honey, later on.
- JL:** What other kind of medicines were used in the home? What other things did you use?
- AG:** My mother made the mustard plaster when someone had a cold in their chest.
- JL:** With dry mustard?
- AG:** Yes. After I was in college, she was going to be sure it was strong enough when my dad got a chest cold, and she burned him. She made it too strong. She was going to be sure it was going to be strong enough to get rid of his bronchitis, I suppose it was, and she burned him.
- JL:** You mean she got it too hot.
- AG:** She put too much mustard in.
- JL:** And then that burns the skin?
- AG:** Yes. You have to be careful how much mustard you put in it, because you push it down against the skin.
- JL:** Do you think it worked?
- AG:** They thought it did. Those home remedies... I don't know what other home remedies they had. Oh, when you had a sore throat, you took off the stocking and put the warm stocking around your neck. That was really good relief for that.
- JL:** You wore it first and then you put it around your neck?
- AG:** Yes. See, it was warm from the body, to put the warm stocking around your neck. When we got a sore throat, even when you went to bed you took your stocking off and put the warm stocking around your neck. Rubbed it with liniment. And then there was a lineament too that was for drinking. It's a white liniment, and it really burned out your...
- JL:** Took care of any sore throat.
- AG:** We got it from the Watkins man, the Watkins man always came around with it.
- JL:** What else did you get from the Watkins man?
- AG:** Oh, vanilla, liniment, and I think cinnamon.
- JL:** I remember the vanilla too. Did you get newspapers in your home then?
- AG:** Yes. The Pierce County Tribune.
- JL:** No German newspapers, huh?
- AG:** Grandpa did. He always got the Staatsanzeiger. He would always read from it and read from it. He was always very interested in it.

- JL:** There was probably some news of Russia in there.
- AG:** Yes, and Germany. He even wrote articles for the Staatsanzeiger. My sister was involved with the Heritage Center, and she'd go there and look... but my grandpa wrote articles for the Staatsanzeiger about farming and things he knew about North Dakota.
- JL:** Did he write them in German?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** I suppose. I mean the whole paper was German, wasn't it?
- AG:** My sister would send me the German articles, then one of the German Sisters translated them here so we'd know what they were about.
- JL:** I remember that from the last visit here. You had some down there in the lunch room. Yes. Do you remember when you got the first car at home? I'll bet that was a big event.
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** What kind of car did you get?
- AG:** A Model T.
- JL:** Do you remember the days of radio?
- AG:** Yes, that with a battery, yes. And then when the battery ran out, Dad would have to take it to town to get it charged. Sometimes they would take so long that Dad would have to make a few trips to town with the horses to get this battery, and they would say, "oh, we had too many to charge, or we forgot it, or..." And he would get so disgusted because we kids wanted to listen to the radio.
- JL:** What did you want to listen to on the radio? Did you have favorite shows?
- AG:** Yes.
- JL:** Like what?
- AG:** Most of it was music things, and then there was Fibber McGee and Molly, of course. Jack Benny.
- JL:** Oh, yes. Well, is there anything else you'd like to say, any memories... something about your life being a Sister, a nun?
- AG:** I'm 50 years in the convent now. It just doesn't seem that long.
- JL:** It's been good, hasn't it?
- AG:** Yes. And my health and everything has been good too.
- JL:** What do you do for pastimes? What do you do as a hobby?
- AG:** I collect stamps. I like to read, I wish I had more time to read. I always take reading along when I take Sisters to the clinic. I used to embroider in the hospitals, but I just don't have time anymore to embroidery.

- JL:** How many years have you worked in the hospitals?
- AG:** Thirty years, at least.
- JL:** And how long have you been right here, then?
- AG:** Since '91. Up to '91 I was over in St. Gerard's. '79 to '91 I was in St. Gerard's.
- JL:** What did you do in the hospitals?
- AG:** The last years over at St. Gerard's I worked in radiology. A technician trained me for it. And before that I did Nurses' Aid work.
- JL:** I see. Did you miss that when the hospital closed?
- AG:** Yes, I kind of did. But then I came over here and I went so much... I drove and drove and drove. And actually I didn't really miss x-ray that much. I really didn't care for it that much to begin with. But they needed somebody over there. But my other work, I missed being with people. That I missed the most, I think. Getting to know people. I got to know a lot of people working over there.
- JL:** But you knew some of these Sisters over here, didn't you?
- AG:** Yes, yes.
- JL:** So you just worked with the public more, then, helping...
- AG:** Yes. But I knew the Sisters here. We would come here for different occasions. I knew everybody by name.
- JL:** Well this has been a very interesting interview, and I sure do thank you. Sister, I just really enjoyed talking to you. Thanks so much on behalf of the NDSU library, we thank you.
- AG:** Thank you. Someday when I come to Fargo and I have some extra time, I'll come and visit you.
- JL:** Yes, you should do that and we'll show you all the things that we have, or that we're trying to get organized. There's a lot there.
- AG:** And I'll fill this out today, then you can have it before you leave. Okay?
- JL:** Yes. Thanks so much.