

Interview with Richard Haring (RH)

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JL: Today is January 13, 1995, and I am doing an interview with Richard Haring for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the NDSU Libraries. Richard, what is your full name, your date of birth and where were you born?

RH: I am Richard James Haring. I was born on June 23, 1909, in what is now Grant County, North Dakota.

JL: What is your father's name and what village in South Russia did your father's family come from?

RH: His name was Edward Haring. They came from Waterloo, South Russia.

JL: When and where did he die?

RH: He died in Portland, Oregon, on April 29, 1970.

JL: Where is he buried?

RH: He is buried in the Johannestal cemetery, which is fifteen miles north of New Leipzig, North Dakota.

JL: What is your mother's name and what village did she come from?

RH: My mother's name was Ida Treichel. Her parents came directly from Germany to Canada and she was born in Canada.

JL: So they didn't immigrate to South Russia.

RH: No, not that group. They came to Canada about 1883.

JL: When did she die and where is she buried?

RH: She died in the Bismarck hospital and is buried in the Johannestal cemetery north of New Leipzig.

JL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

RH: I had six brothers.

JL: Can you give their names in order of their birth?

- RH:** I can, but that's where I have to refer to my book.
- JL:** So no sisters, right?
- RH:** Yes.
- JL:** Oh, we'll start with the brothers first. Sounds like you came from a big family.
- RH:** Yes, there were six brothers.
- JL:** So Ted was the oldest then?
- RH:** I was the oldest, then there was Ted, Milton, James, and Helmuth, he lived to be eight years old. He died in an accident with a pony. There was Leslie, Ervin, and then I had one sister born in January 1923, and she died in 1923, about twelve days later after her birth. Her name was Clara. Then my mother died when I was thirteen and a half years old. My father remarried for a short time and I have a half sister by the name of Gloria and also a half brother who did not live.
- JL:** Do you know how parents decided on children's names in those days?
- RH:** No, I don't. Apparently we had no special way of doing that.
- JL:** You weren't named after grandparents that you know of then?
- RH:** No.
- JL:** What about middle names? Were middle names important?
- RH:** They were important to the extent that everybody had a middle name. But I don't know that anything particularly referred to any ancestor or parent or grandparent.
- JL:** Do you remember your grandparents?
- RH:** Yes, I do.
- JL:** Tell me about your grandparents.
- RH:** Well, my grandparents came over in 1893, they settled in Yankton, South Dakota, for a short time then moved to North Dakota in 1895. There they settled where we lived in that area north of New Leipzig. I'd say about twenty miles north of New Leipzig; a little bit closer to Glen Ullin, in that area. They lived there for at least twenty-five years.
- JL:** Had they homesteaded?
- RH:** Yes.
- JL:** Is that what brought them out there?

- RH:** As far as I know. My parents also homesteaded in that area and so did at least some of my uncles.
- JL:** So that Homestead Act went for quite a long time, if your grandparents had the chance to do that, and your parents too?
- RH:** I don't know how long it went, do you?
- JL:** No, I don't. Probably should know that but I don't. Was that your grandparents, the Harings that homesteaded?
- RH:** Yes.
- JL:** How about the other grandparents?
- RH:** They homesteaded farther to the north and east a little bit from that same area.
- JL:** Oh, same area.
- RH:** When they came in from Canada, somehow or other they settled in that Glen Ullin area too. So they were in the area.
- JL:** Why did they come from Germany? They heard about the Homestead Act too, I suppose.
- RH:** I don't think they knew anything about it until they got to Canada. They left Germany because they were basically servants working as indentured servants in Germany, which was very common. Things got a little hard for them and I suspect they left because of extreme poverty. You will find that there are quite a few Germans that migrated to Canada and then into the United States. That was a shortcut, apparently, of some kind and it was used by quite a few people. Mike Miller might be about to tell you about that.
- JL:** What did they do in Canada? Did they live in Canada for a while?
- RH:** My grandparents lived in Canada for two years. So I think what they did was odd jobs. I don't know that they farmed or anything of the kind, although they grew up with farming in areas of Germany. But they came into the United States two years later in 1885.
- JL:** Do you remember them talking about the old country, either set of grandparents?
- RH:** Not really, probably because I never paid any attention to it when I was a kid. I do have a letter that I picked up. One of my aunts wrote to one of my brothers at one time, and in this letter she described conditions that existed in Germany as far as she knew. She was not born in Germany, but she knew about it. She described the situation.
- JL:** Do you have that letter?
- RH:** I have that letter.
- JL:** Maybe we could get a copy of that if you think it would be useful.

- RH:** Right now it would be a little hard for me to dig it out.
- JL:** Oh yes, not now, but we'll talk about that later. So your grandparents, the Harings, did they talk about South Russia?
- RH:** There again, if they did it was not a great deal. The only discussions that I remember would be about one of the family members, an uncle of mine that did not migrate to America with the rest of the family. He stayed in Russia because he was a teacher, minister, and more or less a community leader. He stayed in a German community in Russia. Of course, as you probably know there was a great deal of upset when the Communists took over in 1917, and he hit upon extremely hard times, he and his family. I'd like a chance to try and find out where they're at today. I suspect they were sent to Siberia like so many people were and then came back, maybe, we don't know. I have a copy of two letters from him in here.
- JL:** Where was he at when he wrote those letters?
- RH:** Neudorf.
- JL:** And that is in South Russia?
- RH:** That is in South Russia, in the area of Odessa.
- JL:** So he was an educated man?
- RH:** Basically, and he was fairly well off, until he lost all of his property and goods.
- JL:** So you don't know what life was like in South Russia for your grandparents?
- RH:** I can't tell you anything.
- JL:** Do you remember any times when they talked about being homesick for the old country?
- RH:** No, that never came up, as far as I knew. I think probably after they got to the United States and when the revolution took place over there, they were probably glad to be here.
- JL:** Did many of their relatives come with them or did some stay there? And like you said, an uncle stayed.
- RH:** Well, our family, my ancestors were pretty close-knit so a large number of them either came together or very shortly before or thereafter. Other relatives, other friends, and neighbors came from Russia too.
- JL:** A whole group on the boat, maybe?
- RH:** I would like to get hold of the ship's manifest for that time. I haven't succeeded in doing that.
- JL:** Do you think they came through Ellis Island?
- RH:** I think so. They came in 1893.
- JL:** Do you know anything else about when they came or anything about their situation when they did come

here?

RH: Not really to talk about. I know my father was eight years old when they came; so you see he was still quite young. There wasn't very much information that I got from him.

JL: Did you live close to the grandparents?

RH: Yes, as a matter of fact we lived in western North Dakota, of course. They were about two miles from our place.

JL: Did the grandparents live on the farm then?

RH: Yes, they did farming.

JL: How was the land and all that passed down or inheritance dealt with in those days?

RH: As far as I know there was no special procedure.

JL: There wasn't, between the boys and the girls?

RH: No, our grandparents' land, for example, ended up being sold. I knew some of the later owners of that area and that place, over the years. So nobody inherited that, and it was sold. I know my father didn't have any of it, but if any of the rest of them did, they sold it later on.

JL: So your father went and bought his own land. Was he one of the oldest ones?

RH: About in the middle. Yes, and I think when he came of age to own land, he probably homesteaded. That's as far as I could say. He had a good-sized homestead, like I said, about two miles south of my grandparents. My mother, before they married, had another small plot of land homesteaded in another area, which she sold later on.

JL: She did, she bought her own land or got her own homestead?

RH: Yes, you have a book in the library in the college about the women homesteaders.

JL: *Land in Her Own Name?*

RH: Yes. My mother's name isn't in that book.

JL: But it should be, shouldn't it?

RH: It should be. There again, I probably should have contacted the agency office in Dickinson sometime to find out if they have a record [of it].

JL: Did you speak German when you were a child?

RH: We spoke German until, I'm sure I was in my twenties.

- JL:** Do you know what dialect?
- RH:** Schwäbisch, except my mother's parents were Plattdeutsch.
- JL:** Is that right?
- RH:** Low German and that created somewhat of a conflict, by the way. Because my father is Schwäbisch and my mother's parents were low German and conversation among them was sometimes a little rough.
- JL:** It differed that much?
- RH:** Yes, and sometimes created hard feelings. I don't know why.
- JL:** Maybe because of the meanings of the words probably, right?
- RH:** Now my paternal grandfather was a little outspoken, and that didn't help any.
- JL:** Can you tell me any of those expressions? Do you know of any they may have said which you probably haven't heard for a long time?
- RH:** No, I haven't thought about it for so long and I'm not sure that I want to try now.
- JL:** It would be interesting. One of these questions is about expressions in other languages and Plattdeutsch is in here.
- RH:** Yes.
- JL:** What were some of the childhood chores you enjoyed doing? You were busy on the farm, I suppose?
- RH:** Everything we did was connected with the farm. I think I liked herding the cows; you know we had to do that once in awhile, keep them within a certain area and get the cows and bring them home at night. That was usually interesting.
- JL:** Did you fence the land?
- RH:** Yes, by the time I grew up we had fences. There were some areas that were not fenced that we used in the fall of the year for pasture. Then we had to have someone watching the cattle, herding them.
- JL:** Was it one of the kids, probably?
- RH:** Yes, usually.
- JL:** So did you have range cattle and dairy too?
- RH:** Well, in our case they were mixed, I mean, we didn't separate them.
- JL:** Didn't you milk cows?

- RH:** Oh yes, we milked cows.
- JL:** By hand, I guess?
- RH:** Yes, we did quite a bit of milking.
- JL:** Sold the cream?
- RH:** Oh, yes, that's how you made money; you sold the cream, the eggs, and so on.
- JL:** So that was a big part of your income.
- RH:** Sure, Saturdays we would go to town with the cream and eggs and buy sugar, and flour, and the clothes we needed.
- JL:** How far was it to town?
- RH:** Eighteen miles.
- JL:** That was New Leipzig or Glen Ullin?
- RH:** Glen Ullin. Because we were north of the Heart River, north of New Leipzig, and sometimes the river was hard to cross so I think that was the reason we chose to go to Glen Ullin.
- JL:** That was your hometown then.
- RH:** Yah, basically.
- JL:** Although it may have been shorter to New Leipzig.
- RH:** Probably not, about the same distance.
- JL:** What was some of the work that you had to do that you didn't enjoy?
- RH:** Oh, picking corn and hoeing the garden.
- JL:** Did you have to help out all the time?
- RH:** Yes, we always had to help with the choring, to do chores. That was just part of life for us.
- JL:** Did you have much playtime then, freedom?
- RH:** Well, no. Once you got old enough to do some of the chores you didn't have that much time. Except maybe on Sundays, Sunday afternoons.
- JL:** Did you get together with relatives on Sundays?
- RH:** Well, Sundays were church days, as you probably well know from some of your interviews.

- JL:** Oh, yes. What church did you go to?
- RH:** We went to the German Congregational Church. You would go to church in the morning, take lunch along and you'd stay for the service, an hour service in the afternoon. Then we'd go home. Or sometimes go visiting with the neighbors, but basically that's when we got together with the friends and neighbors.
- JL:** There wasn't work done on those days, was there.
- RH:** Sundays?
- JL:** Yes.
- RH:** No, well, except take care of the chores that had to be done every day.
- JL:** What about the church then? Were your parents, your mother and your father, were they both Congregational?
- RH:** Yah.
- JL:** So they had their own church then, a country church, I suppose?
- RH:** Oh, yah.
- JL:** Were you surrounded by German Russians?
- RH:** Yes, but they were a little bit segregated as far as church is concerned, because we had - German Congregational was the church we went to. Most of our neighbors went to that church. But we had other neighbors that went to the Catholic church, of course. And they were probably in another neighborhood. And then farther away there were some areas where there were Baptists, which was too far away for our usual contacts, but they also had a church group.
- JL:** So you did associate with the other people that were of different religions? I mean, there was no hard feelings about any of that, was there?
- RH:** No. During certain times of the year, for instance, harvest time or threshing time, you'd get together with quite a few of the others because they exchanged help and exchanged work.
- JL:** You'd have a threshing crew?
- RH:** Oh, yah.
- JL:** What was that like?
- RH:** Well, it's hard for me to explain what it's like. It was a day's work!
- JL:** A hard day's work, huh? But wasn't it kind of an exciting time, though, because there were so many people around?

- RH:** Well, you were working generally [with] somebody in the neighborhood or several probably. They joined together to buy and operate a threshing machine and the equipment. That threshing machine then would make the rounds in the neighborhood threshing the crops. And in order to keep it operating you had to have help, and most of us when we were old enough in our late teens, probably, were pitching the grain into the machine. That was the job we had. To pick up bundles, haul them into the machine, pitch the grain off the stacks into the machine for threshing. We operated that way, probably if we had a good fall season, in the area we'd probably operate for about a month, you know, picking up from one neighbor to the next.
- JL:** Do you remember, was there a cook car that went along with the threshing crew?
- RH:** No, not in our area. When I was old enough, the steam engines were already gone too. You may hear about that. No, the meals were provided by the people we threshed for. At any particular time we were threshing for this neighbor or that neighbor, they provided the meals.
- JL:** The woman would provide the meals then.
- RH:** Yah.
- JL:** My mother-in-law had a cook car and went to different places for threshing.
- RH:** Yah, those existed largely, I think, when the steam engines were being used for threshing crews. They had bigger crews because they had to haul the fuel for the steam engine and the water besides hauling the grain or handling the grain with the threshing machine.
- JL:** That's why. Do you remember what it was like to go out and set bundles?
- RH:** Oh, yah, I did a lot of that.
- JL:** Was that fun?
- RH:** You call it shocking. It was hard work, especially when it got hot. But always the grain had to be stacked with the kernel side up, you know, the heads of the grain up, and that is to protect them from water or rain. They dry out faster.
- JL:** Then did you have to let them sit for a few days to dry? About how long?
- RH:** Oh, usually they'd set maybe a week or two before the threshing crews came in.
- JL:** Then you'd sell the grain. About how much did grain sell for in those days?
- RH:** I have faint memories of prices of grain. I think there was one time we were getting as much as \$5.00 a bushel for the wheat, but also there was another time when I was old enough to haul some, and we were getting as little as about 35 cents.
- JL:** When was that when it got so low? Not the depression?
- RH:** Yah, at that time. Yes, it was during the depression, during that period. If you go back and start checking

some of that you will find out that we had a real surplus, corn surplus in those days, of all kinds of farm products. It was one of the reasons for the prices that way. Hogs were selling for as little as 5 cents a pound.

JL: About when was the time it was \$5.00 a bushel? Those were good times!

RH: I think that was back in the late '20s before the depression came in, because the big economic crash was in 1929, and before that, as far as I remember, there were some very good prices and good wages but then it became very bad.

JL: If you didn't do some of the work that was expected of you, what form of discipline did your parents use?

RH: You'd probably get yelled at.

JL: Ah huh, in Deutsch, huh?

RH: Yah. I mean, no particular discipline or action that was taken, it was just part of what was expected of you, in order to exist, I guess.

JL: They treated you pretty fairly then.

RH: Oh, I would say so.

JL: What are some other memories you have of growing up then? Any come to mind?

RH: Not a great deal more. You see, my mother died when I was fifteen and a half and I was the oldest one in the family. And I ended up, after a certain amount of help we got from relatives, I ended up more or less in charge of the family at home. So I did some interesting things that some people haven't had the opportunity to do. I learned to cook and clean, run the sewing machine, and do things of that kind.

JL: Would you say that was a useful experience?

RH: Well, like I told my wife many times, "Don't forget. This is my second family."

JL: Yah, so then your dad remarried?

RH: For a short time, only.

JL: Was it a lady that had some children?

RH: Yes, and that what was the problem. That became quite a big problem.

JL: It didn't work out, huh.

RH: No.

JL: Was she German too?

- RH:** Oh, yes. You see, when these people came – well, when they went from Germany to Russia, remarriages were very common over there.
- JL:** They were?
- RH:** Yah, because of disease and difficulties they had in Russia, many of the people died young. In many cases the women died in childbirth and so one of the stipulations that you will find in this history is that the Russian czar, in this case I think it is Alexander I, made a proclamation that the Germans who come to Russia will have certain privileges such as forgiven taxes for ten years and the like. Those are all on record. Another stipulation was that these be family groups that migrate to Russia and they were required to maintain a family. Of course, it was built-in that if there was a family, the family had to be maintained and when one of the spouses died, there would be a remarriage and another family group would develop. But by the time they got to the United States that kind of system no longer worked very well because we had changed our ways.
- JL:** Like what, what changed?
- RH:** Well, I suppose the social attitudes toward families, children, and economic situations. Because there was no way that in our case, and I think there were other cases [at] that time, they could get along with the number of children. They were fine as individual families, but once they remarried and more children came together and that created problems.
- JL:** Had she been a widow?
- RH:** For some time, not for very long I don't think.
- JL:** So after that ended, then your dad never remarried?
- RH:** No.
- JL:** But he lived a long time, didn't he?
- RH:** Well, he was 86 or 87.
- JL:** You don't maintain contact with those stepsisters?
- RH:** My half sister? Yes, constant contact. The other half sisters and half brothers - I didn't keep very contact with them. I know where, even now, I know where at least one of them is.
- JL:** How much schooling did you have then?
- RH:** I have a master's degree in school administration.
- JL:** So your parents must have encouraged education? Your father -
- RH:** I think it was my mother's wish that I go to school. Because after she passed away my father insisted that I go to a certain college. So I think it was her wish before she died. She died in the era right after the

flu epidemics.

JL: So you went to a country school, I suppose?

RH: Yes, a country school, and went high school at Hebron, and undergraduate work at Dickinson, North Dakota, and graduate work at Greeley.

JL: Colorado. Did the other kids in the family get that kind of education too?

RH: Ah, no.

JL: You being the oldest, was that the reason?

RH: I think that was part of the story and part of the story was my mother's wish. And part of it was that the rest of them - they decided by then that they had to find jobs and find work, and take care of themselves. You see, while they were home, I had been doing a lot of the work in taking care of them. So that's the way it worked out.

JL: How old was the youngest when your mother passed away?

RH: About a year.

JL: Oh. That's quite a responsibility.

RH: They're all still living except one. I lost one of my brothers.

JL: Is that right?

RH: And the younger one that I mentioned earlier about having died in the accident. That was long time ago.

JL: Was religion important in your family, in your upbringing?

RH: Yah, it was a part of life. You went to church and participated and that was part of it.

JL: Was there much religion outside of Sundays, I mean, like during the week? Was it important then? Devotions and -

RH: Yes, with some families it was more important probably than with others. But, yes, it was something that they kept in mind and then there were special church holidays and so on that you always participated in.

JL: How about baptism and confirmation?

RH: That was important. Everybody was baptized and everybody was confirmed.

JL: Was that done in German – confirmation? Like when you were twelve years old, thirteen maybe?

RH: Well, I was thirteen or fourteen, I can't remember now.

- JL:** About that age, right? Were the church services in German, I suppose?
- RH:** Yes, we had church services in German until, I suppose, about 1930. I'm not exactly sure when our church changed because I was already leaving home or was gone. I was working for myself but, ah, about that time.
- JL:** Do you think there was a problem with that in some families, or in your family that they resented the change from German to English?
- RH:** Some of the older folks, yes.
- JL:** Do you remember that?
- RH:** But you see, by that time the younger folks were already picking up English in schools and so on. That was the reason for - I suspect that was the reason for the change, the biggest reason, because of the young people beginning to speak in English - speaking to each other in English, going to school in English.
- JL:** Did your parents take classes to learn English?
- RH:** Not that I know of.
- JL:** Like moonlight schools, are you familiar with that? They had classes in the evenings for adults that wanted to learn English.
- RH:** No, we didn't have that. I don't know of any effort that was made in our area for the purpose of speaking English. There is one thing, these people in our area, at least the Germans from Russia, when they came to this country, I believe they had made up their mind that they were going to be members of this country. For that reason they had to learn their English. They had to learn the ways of the people in the United States and they did.
- JL:** So you don't feel that they wanted to hang on to their old traditions?
- RH:** Yes, they wanted to hang on to the old traditions but they weren't against accepting the new ones. They had to be part of the United States. We didn't do like they do in some areas today, like over here in Moorhead. People migrate from Mexico and then want to change the ways up here to Mexican or Hispanic. We didn't do that. We became Americans and that was the intention of the folks and that was the goal. To make this interesting, my grandmother, of course she was born and raised in Russia. She learned to speak German because the background of the family was German. She could speak German excellent. She could write and read. While in Russia she also learned to speak Russian and by the time she died over here, she was already beginning to speak English.
- JL:** How did she learn Russian?
- RH:** Well, they lived there.
- JL:** Yah, but there they were pretty clustered in their little villages and they really didn't -
- RH:** No, the history - remember when the Russians became jealous of these Germans. These Germans were

doing very well over there.

JL: Farmers –

RH: And along about, oh, I don't remember the time, about 1871, the Germans were ordered to change the language in their schools. They were ordered to accept Russian ways of doing things. Then I suspect that my grandmother was – she was keeping up with the times over there.

JL: I think that's why many of them left at that time, or a little after, didn't they?

RH: At one time there was a young lady whose background was Czechoslovakian. She was a teacher out in the Glen Ullin area. At one time I took her and introduced her to my grandmother. This young lady spoke Czechoslovakian, that was her background. She was an excellent teacher too. My grandmother spoke Russian. After I introduced them, I left them alone in the room and they carried on a conversation for I don't know how long.

JL: They could do that? That's interesting.

RH: My grandmother lived a little longer than my grandfather. She was quite a bit older. She was very active. She lost her eyesight because of cataracts and her last ten years of life she was blind. But we had no particular problem. Like now you have to have special laws for handicapped.

JL: She probably had somebody to take care of her?

RH: After a fashion, yes. She spent a lot of her time with her two youngest daughters, one in California, and one in Hebron, North Dakota.

JL: How did people in those days, your family, deal with death and grieving?

RH: I don't remember anything out of the ordinary in connection with that. It was the usual thing. Of course, there's always a burial service at the church and so on, but nothing special that I can recall.

JL: Do you remember any funeral songs or -

RH: No, whatever songs were used for that purpose were part of the hymnal in our church. I still have several copies of those.

JL: You do, in German? What are some songs that come to mind?

RH: I'm sorry, I can't [remember].

JL: Are you familiar with the wrought iron crosses?

RH: I am familiar with them, but they were not used in our church.

JL: Do you know why?

RH: No, I don't. I expect the reason is that these were a custom – the result of a custom developed over in

Rumania and by the Catholics.

JL: I know that those shapes had special meanings.

RH: Yes, they did. I think also later on they were replaced with gravestones, the granite stones. I don't know too much about that.

JL: What was Christmas like in your family? What did it mean to the family?

RH: Did you attend the Moravian Christmas service this year?

JL: No, I thought about it.

RH: You'll have to go that.

JL: Is that in south Fargo? South of Fargo, that church? I've been in there, but not for Christmas.

RH: Yes, they put on a real old German Christmas celebration. They have a tree with candles.

JL: And you went out there?

RH: Yah, we were there this year.

JL: Did they have singing that was familiar to you?

RH: Yes, we're familiar with the Christmas carols and the ones they used there were in German.

JL: Did they have a good turnout?

RH: The church was full.

JL: Could most of the people sing those songs; were there a lot of older people there?

RH: Well, I couldn't tell you how many. There were quite a few that did because they were singing.

JL: I like those old German – well, the Christmas carols in German like "Silent Night".

RH: Yah, what they are are the Christmas carols in the German language. The melody is the same.

JL: Yah, it is. How about Easter? Was Easter an important Christian holiday?

RH: Yah.

JL: How about the Easter bunny and Santa Claus?

RH: We colored Easter eggs.

JL: You remember doing that. How about Santa Claus? Did you have Santa Claus?

RH: Oh, yes, we did. My memory is that when I was a kid it was already accepted as a custom in the United States, so I don't remember anything else. I do remember the amount of gifts we had, each got one thing and that was it. But in talking about Christmas in the church, you know, one of the things that was done in the church in the Christmas celebration on Christmas Eve, the kids would all have to recite their verse for Christmas. At the end of the service, each one of the children would get a little bag with nuts and an apple and some hard candies. It was customary every Christmas.

JL: I remember that too. Do you think that was a German tradition?

RH: I don't know but we sure did it.

JL: How were marriage ceremonies performed? Was there anything special about that?

RH: No, I don't remember anything special that either. I suppose, again, that by that time they were conducted pretty much as they are today.

JL: Did they have receptions at home then?

RH: Yes, basically.

JL: In your family was there a lot of partying going on, like dances?

RH: No, the German Congregationalists didn't, nor the Baptists.

Break in dialogue

RH: We had some people that learned to play accordion but dancing was out. Card games were out too. I'm sure they were played on the sly, though, and dancing was done that way too.

JL: How about drinking?

RH: Drinking is another story. Beer was a very acceptable drink. Of course, that goes back to the fact that the settlers felt it was safer to drink beer than some of the water.

JL: They made it too?

RH: They made it. Hard liquor was used too, to some extent, but drinking too much was frowned upon.

JL: In your church?

RH: In the church and in the neighborhood as well.

JL: What kind of food do you remember being served at the wedding?

RH: Traditional, nothing unusual that I recall. Nothing outside of what we had usually, like cake on Sunday.

JL: What were the German foods?

- RH:** Oh, there was plenty of kuchen, dumpling soup and homemade bread and that kind of thing.
- JL:** Were the decorations and flowers made by the family?
- RH:** What we had, yes. That was at a minimum because you couldn't get too much, you know.
- JL:** How were wives and husband chosen? Probably the days of choosing a mate were in the past, huh?
- RH:** As far as I was concerned. I don't remember any family that did that. Well, they probably made suggestions and all that.
- JL:** But no actual arranged marriages.
- RH:** No.
- JL:** Did the women help with the outside chores?
- RH:** Yes, some more and some less. For instance, there were times of the year when the women would do the milking or at least a big share of it - do the chores, feed the chickens and so on. The men were working in the field and taking care of the horses. The women would more or less take care of the gardens. During the harvest time, many times they had to help with stacking of grain.
- JL:** Besides doing all the cooking in the house. I don't know how they did it all.
- RH:** Well, there was time provided for it. If they did one thing they probably didn't do the other most of the time. There was somebody else doing that.
- JL:** Did the people in the family get along pretty well, as far as the work arrangements, who did what? Did your parents agree on things?
- RH:** I think so, pretty well. The man's work was outside and in the fields, the women's work was basically in the home. Which was just as well, because fieldwork took an awful lot of energy and strength in many cases.
- JL:** Would you say that your father was the boss of the family?
- RH:** I think so. That was more or less the accepted situation. But in many families the women had a lot to say. It depended on personalities.
- JL:** Who was the better manager and things like that?
- RH:** That or who could out yell the other one, I guess.
- JL:** So your father was the decision maker pretty much? Financial decisions and -
- RH:** Basically, yes, that's right.

- JL:** Your mother made the decisions in the home, I guess, made more so with the children too.
- RH:** As long as she lived she was quite capable in what she was able to do. That was not a problem, making decisions. But, of course, you realize she didn't live that long.
- JL:** Did she have control of the money too?
- RH:** No, that was basically my father's domain, I guess. No such thing as a separate bank account or anything of the kind.
- JL:** Did they use a bank?
- RH:** They used the bank, yes, but not like you do today. Dad wrote checks sometimes, I think, but most of the time what was handled and spent was cash.
- JL:** But he trusted a bank, huh?
- RH:** Well, not - I wouldn't go so far as to say that he trusted everyone; because if you go back into the history of the '30s, banks caused a great deal of concern. So the trust was always shaky.
- JL:** But before that too?
- RH:** Not really, I think the trust was much better before that, before the banks went broke.
- JL:** I think I asked you, was there music and entertainment in your home?
- RH:** Some, yah. In our particular case there wasn't an awful lot. We did have an old pump organ and so we had a little music.
- JL:** Who played that?
- RH:** Well, my dad was basically the one that played that; later on some of the kids did a little bit. None of it ever developed into a great deal of music.
- JL:** Did your parent's encourage it, encourage the kids to play?
- RH:** Yes.
- JL:** They really supported education, didn't they? Learning and -
- RH:** In our family, yes, education was supported.
- JL:** Would you say that wasn't the norm?
- RH:** Probably that's correct. Because in many families they didn't have the opportunity or even the resources to go to school beyond the eighth grade. But by the time I finished the eighth grade, I guess we had reached the point where you were required to finish the eighth grade by state law. But you didn't have to go beyond that. But there were many people who, like I said, didn't have the resources or the time. Or if their help was needed at home, they couldn't go to school. In our case, my brothers didn't get to

college, except business college or something of that kind.

JL: But not as much as you had.

RH: No.

JL: When the adults had company on Sunday afternoons or whenever, were the children allowed to stay with them?

RH: Probably in the next room, or outside, because the kids could make a lot of noise.

JL: It was just kind of accepted that the kids would not be in the company of the adults.

RH: Well, no, they wouldn't be sitting around in the same group; they were just too impatient for that.

JL: Do you remember any songs from your childhood, like from school?

RH: Faintly, I haven't reviewed any of that for a long time. If I did a little digging I could probably come up with one of the songbooks that we used in school. I guess I saved some of those. *The Golden Songbook* was one of them and it had "Home Sweet Home," "America," "Star-Spangled Banner," the "Mason-Dixon."

JL: Oh, those are English, now, do you remember anything in German?

RH: Not taught in school. We didn't speak in German in school.

JL: In your grade school? Wasn't that German?

RH: No, no. You hear people today complain about how they can't speak their language in school. I know all about that. And, as a matter of fact, it doesn't hurt.

JL: It doesn't hurt?

RH: No. It was good for me to learn to speak English because we were speaking German at home.

JL: Right, so you had two languages you know.

RH: Absolutely.

JL: Do you remember being punished if the kids did talk German in school?

RH: Yes, if you were caught speaking German on the playground, you might lose recess time.

JL: Did you have some pretty good teachers?

RH: Yes, not too highly trained, because in those days you could teach school with one year of high school. But there were some pills too.

- JL:** Was there a community meeting place for young people?
- RH:** Ah, no, the only place that would count as that would be the church or school program. In those days we had - in the country school you'd have a program for several of the holidays and everybody, of course, would go to that. There'd be events at the church where everybody would go. In the summertime, we often would have a picnic. We lived close to the river so that was an attraction. We'd have picnics with only ice cream.
- JL:** Was that with relatives?
- RH:** Relatives or friends or neighbors.
- JL:** Like for July Fourth maybe?
- RH:** You bet.
- JL:** Were there firecrackers then?
- RH:** Yes. You couldn't afford too many of them. Yes, we had firecrackers.
- JL:** That was probably a real treat to get a few firecrackers. Did you play games then?
- RH:** Yes, we played games; sometimes ball games.
- JL:** Baseball?
- RH:** Baseball came in, you know, when we were a little older; just tag or something of that kind when we were younger kids.
- JL:** Do you remember the names of some of those games?
- RH:** So many of them were played at school. There was tag and pomp-pomp-pullaway and anti-i-over, you know you threw the ball over. Those were outside games and we had some games that were played inside. Spelling bees were very common inside games.
- JL:** Spelling bees, educational too and fun.
- RH:** That was part of the reason for it. We even had math contests.
- JL:** Is that right? That's interesting.
- RH:** Yes.
- JL:** Were your parents or grandparents superstitious at all of anything?
- RH:** No, I don't recall any of that. The only thing I can remember is my maternal grandfather, like I said a while ago, he was very outspoken. I think when he came over here somebody told him there were Indians in this country, and I don't believe that he ever saw one. But he was always prepared for an

Indian to show up. He had a loaded shotgun behind his door.

JL: Well, if they came in 1885?

RH: Somebody told him a good story somewhere and he was prepared. But part of that was his nature. No, I don't know of any other superstitions that existed really.

JL: Did they rely on a lot of old healing techniques, or like predict the weather; anything they may have used in those days? Let's say for predicting the weather, or anything to do weather related?

RH: No, I can't think of anything. The wind, and the clouds, and the sun, you know, paid attention to that, but that was nothing out of the ordinary.

JL: Moon phases?

RH: Not really.

JL: How about healing techniques, folk remedies, do you know of any?

RH: There were some talked about. You know we talked about folk remedies and what you would call 'quacks' today. And some of their work, some people tried those out but, no, I don't have any knowledge of anything special that came up with that. We did have a doctor available when I was a kid, but he was a long ways away, as you can imagine eighteen miles. If you got sick, you could get the doctor, you called him out. Otherwise you'd just sit it out, I guess.

JL: Are you familiar with *Brauche*?
[*Brauche* comes from the folk healing tradition of *Braucherei*, which is ancient healing lore combined with Christianity in remedy for the aches and pains of daily life. There were specific prayers for certain ailments, and the use of healing herbs and accupressure massage.]

RH: I should know what that is, but I can't recall definately.

JL: That was older women - would probably massage a certain area of the body.

RH: Okay.

JL: Are you familiar with that?

RH: Yah, but we didn't use it really that I know of.

JL: But there were women that did that then?

RH: Yes, and you heard about it.

JL: So they were in use then by people, did people call on them?

RH: I don't know of anybody around in our area that did that. The only thing that I know in the area of health or medical, we had a Lutheran pastor in our area and people went to him for help when they were sick

or for any illness really. He could set bones, broken bones. He was very good at that. The story behind that is before he got out of Russia, you know, and migrated to the United States, he served in the Russian army as a medic and was trained in that field. So, he was not only a pastor in his church, but he served hundreds of people when they were sick or broken bones or -

JL: Do you remember his name?

RH: Heupel. You've heard the name?

JL: Yes, I have.

RH: I think there's some Heupels in Fargo.

JL: I'm familiar with the ones in Hebron - Pastor Heupel. I don't know, maybe his father did that too. Do you know what you call that in German, when you set the bones?

RH: No, I don't. They didn't have any special name for it.

JL: Oh, okay. How about midwives? Do you remember midwives?

RH: That's the only way we were born in our family.

JL: Who were the midwives then?

RH: I don't remember the names; they were relatives or neighbors in the community.

JL: How were they paid for their services - the same with this Pastor Heupel?

RH: That's an interesting question. You paid if you had money.

JL: And if you didn't have money?

RH: Well, you probably gave him a chicken or whatever.

JL: But you gave them something.

RH: Well, if you had any conscience at all, you certainly gave them something. But I don't remember that Pastor Heupel, for example, ever insisted on getting paid, but I'm sure he did. I'm sure so many times he didn't [get paid].

JL: Do you remember German newspapers?

RH: *Der Staats Anzeiger*.

JL: Do you remember getting that at home?

RH: Yah, at times.

JL: Did you read it too?

- RH:** Parts of it. I think I should mention in this connection a church paper for the German Congregational church that was printed, *Kircheboden*. That's a church publication.
- JL:** That was put out by the Congregational church?
- RH:** Yes, at the headquarters in Redfield, South Dakota.
- JL:** Did your parents look forward to getting the newspaper and *Kircheboden* too?
- RH:** Yah.
- JL:** And they both read the papers?
- RH:** Well, at least parts of it.
- JL:** Did the children too?
- RH:** Not to any great extent. I don't know if my brothers read much of it or not. I suspect that two or three of them did. But I read at least some of it too.
- JL:** What kind of information were they looking for in the paper do you think?
- RH:** Well, the *Staats Anzeiger*, for example, was state and area newspaper. I think it was published in Bismarck at the time. It seems to me the Bismarck Tribune eventually replaced some of that.
- JL:** Oh, could be. Do you think that people looked for information from the old country in those newspapers?
- RH:** Yes, whatever they could get, which was probably quite limited.
- JL:** Especially as time went on.
- RH:** Yah. Some of the people that came over from Russia probably contributed some articles occasionally.
- JL:** Yah, you would think like your grandparents would have read that, you know.
- RH:** Um hum.
- JL:** Do you remember when your family got their first modern conveniences?
- RH:** Oh, golly, I don't know.
- JL:** It must have been a big event to get the radio and telephone.
- RH:** Well, I think the radio was - more or less got sneaked into our community. But I remember those early ones you had to hook up to a big storage battery to make it go. Then the battery would run down. I can't remember the years.

JL: Television, do you remember television?

RH: Well, that was modern days.

JL: Do you remember watching Lawrence Welk?

RH: No, not a great deal on television. I remember him on radio. Lawrence Welk and Whoopee John, those were the bands of the time.

JL: Was that listened to by the young people more so than the older people?

RH: Both.

JL: Did you sit by the radio and listen to programs at a certain time of day or -

RH: Later on, yah.

JL: In the evening probably.

RH: I remember "Amos and Andy," and an earlier one was "The Breakfast Club," morning broadcast.

JL: Ah huh. If you're thinking about your family now, who would you say you remember the best and who did you look up to?

RH: I'd say my paternal grandparents and then one of the older uncles, possibly.

JL: Is that right? What was special about him?

RH: I don't know whether I can tell you or not, probably just his character and his ways.

JL: You learned from him?

RH: Um, hum.

JL: Well, this has been very enlightening and I thank you very much Richard.

This is an addendum to the oral history - about schools.

RH: Yes, during the summer, during the regular school vacations, for several years I remember that we attended a German school. Our parents got together and organized what they called a German school. We kids would go to school and they probably had a minister or some other capable person in the community teaching the school. We would be reading German books, maybe confirmation books, maybe Sunday School books, or the German alphabet readers, to maintain our ability to speak and read in German. In some cases some of us actually learned to write too.

JL: Was it held in the school?

RH: In the schools.

- JL:** Was that allowed then?
- RH:** You bring up an interesting question. Nobody questioned it then. The school belonged to the community and if they wanted to use it that way, I guess they could. I don't know.
- JL:** The taxes paid for it, I suppose.
- RH:** Sure.
- JL:** So it's interesting that they wanted to maintain that culture, even though they were willing to become Americanized.
- RH:** Yes, they were not opposed to the American way of life, speaking the American language, and accepting the American economic situation. But they also wanted to maintain their German language, the German culture - their ways.
- JL:** How about the political ideas? Did they go along with the government pretty much, I guess?
- RH:** Oh sure.
- JL:** Pretty patriotic?
- RH:** They took sides in political parties.
- JL:** What was your family?
- RH:** Republican, for the most part. One of the most effective politicians that we had in North Dakota, and you'll recognize the name, a man by the name of Bill Langer.
- JL:** And he was neither - Republican or Democrat.
- RH:** He was a good politician anyway. But when he campaigned in western North Dakota, a large portion of his campaign speeches were in German. And the people turned out to listen to him and that's why he got elected.
- JL:** I didn't know he was German.
- RH:** Ah, he could outpreach any German minister.
- JL:** Was he from Germany or was he German from Russia?
- RH:** Langer? German.
- JL:** Did your parents respect him then?
- RH:** Oh, yes!

JL: All the way, huh?

RH: All the way. My dad and I had a big argument one time about that. When I was old enough to vote, he said, "You vote for Bill Langer." I said, "I'll give it a little thought first."

JL: Did you?

RH: I did!

JL: Who was the other one running?

RH: Well, all of the people in politics at that particular time were quite interesting. There was a Lemke; there was a man, who was not German, by the name of Townley; the Burdicks had their start at that time.

JL: Well, this has been very interesting. Thank you.

RH: Okay.