

Interview with Helmuth Herbert Huber (HH)

Conducted by Joyce Reinhardt Larson (JL)

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JL: This is Joyce Reinhardt Larson. It is December 15, 1994 and I am at the home of Helmuth Huber from Fargo. We are going to do an interview for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at NDSU Libraries. We'll start with these general questions and I guess I'll call you Herb rather than Helmuth.

JL: What is your name and your date of birth and where were you born?

HH: I was born Helmuth H. Huber in Ashley, North Dakota on December 18, 1927.

JL: What is your father's name and where did he come from?

HH: My father's name is Henry H. Huber and that's where I got my middle initial. We both had the same middle name. His name was Henry Herbert Huber and mine is Helmuth Herbert Huber. My dad did not come from the south Russia area. He came from the Volga region. My family was one of the first ones that came to the Volga area when Catherine the Great opened up the plains of Russia.

JL: Do you know about when that was?

HH: The first Huber came to the Volga..., well, he started in 1763 and he got there in 1765. He came with his wife and two boys and that's where our heritage started, as far as my father's side from the Volga area.

JL: I see. How about your mother?

HH: My mother is direct descendent of South Russia because her father came from Hoffnungstal in Bessarabia, South Russia and my grandmother came from Borodino, South Russia. But my mother was born in America in Ashley, North Dakota. My mother's oldest brother was born in Hoffnungstal, Bessarabia in Russia.

JL: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

HH: I am the oldest of a family of three. My other brother Eugene, he is two years younger than I am. Then I had a brother Jim that still is on the farm and he is seven years younger than I am.

JL: I see. On a farm near Ashley?

HH: Well, he is farming land that my father acquired.

JL: As a homesteader?

HH: No, no, he bought it. My father came to Menno, South Dakota when he came over. He came over when he was seventeen years old and he worked that and then down there he got in touch with my dad's uncle who had come up earlier through Canada. Then he came down to Menno and there they worked

together until they had enough money acquired. Then they came to Ashley, North Dakota in 1919. Then they bought some land there and that's how he got to North Dakota.

JL: Do you have any idea on how parents decided on their children's names? Like you said your middle name was...

HH: Like my name is Helmuth. Helmuth is a very German oriented name if you go back in history. That's where that came from. They wanted some connection with my father and then my father's middle name was Herbert. When you look at it and write it, my father had three H's in his name and that's what I ended up with.

JL: I see. And that's very German?

HH: Yah. Eugene, which is "Igen," and that's German also. And that comes out Eugene in English. My brother is James, which is Jacob in German. But those were the German names, but being they were American, they translated them into the English. They are all basically German heritage, those three names.

JL: That's interesting. Was the custom of naming a child after a grandfather or grandmother a way of carrying on the family name too?

HH: Yes. More so in the early years than it was after they came to America. It was the Russian custom. When I was back to see my relatives in 1992, Jacob and Heinrich and those names were carried on. Each family carried that name from generation to generation, if they had children. Sometimes, like my father's oldest brother was John, but he died. But they had another son younger than my father and they named him also John or Johannes, to keep the name going.

JL: Were middle names important then?

HH: In a way, yes. Because my brother next to me, Eugene or Igen, he has two middle names, Fred and John and those names were from my mother's two brothers. So, they tried to intertwine the names of the family.

JL: Mother or father, it didn't really matter, right?

HH: Yah, either side. But, I think what happened in my case was dad had the first pick and then I was the first born and mother made the choice on the second child. That's kind of the way it turned out, I think, and that's where the two names for my younger brother came from.

JL: Did your mother tell you anything about the old country in South Russia?

HH: Not too awfully much. Basically what I learned, more where my mother came from, is the little bit I learned from my grandpa, Grampa Wall. He talked to us a little bit about that.

JL: What was his name?

HH: Fred Wall, Senior.

JL: What did he tell you?

- HH:** Well, it was something about the orchards and they had wine. That was different for him coming to North Dakota. They tried to raise some of the fruit down there where I came from, some plums and some apples and things like that, but it was not like where he came from in Russia.
- JL:** You don't remember anyone else telling you anything else about South Russia?
- HH:** Well, from listening when the families would visit when I was around. But nothing direct. I learned more from my father, he was interested in history. I learned quite a bit more about the Russian heritage from him and what they did and so forth. He came directly from there and I guess that's why he was more interested. He left when he was seventeen.
- JL:** So, he had a lot of memories?
- HH:** Oh yes, from going to school and so on.
- JL:** So, he was from the Volga area rather than from the South Russia area?
- HH:** He came from the Volga area, the village of Balzer.
- JL:** Did he ever talk about their home in the village there? Did they have villages there in that area too?
- HH:** His explanation of it was what they called a Dorf. That's where they lived in a group and they farmed the land and worked the land. Somebody would come and pick up the cattle and take them out and herd them. They had a herdsman and so forth. But everyone lived in the village and everything was done around it. They had one central place, like a central square and they had a spring for the central village and so forth.
- JL:** It was sure different there than things were when they came over here. It made them much less dependent on each other because they were homesteading and had their own land and lived far apart.
- HH:** Yah, and that was the thing that my dad probably talked about the most was the way that everything was done in unison when they were in the dorf. Now, my grandfather had a flour mill, so he was never really on a farm. My dad worked in the flour mill until he was seventeen. It was a wind mill, not a water mill.
- JL:** Is that right? Do you remember times when you talked to them? Did they mention being homesick for the homeland?
- HH:** Well, as you know, men are more stoic than ladies, and as I grew up, I never really noticed this in my father. But, he did write to them and so forth that it really bothered him. At one time, we had a Wall reunion, which was all the family on my mother's side that got together and I thought something was wrong with my dad. That's what it was.
- JL:** Is that right? Well, they were bound to get lonely and homesick for their homeland.
- HH:** Yah. Then he never saw them again. They lost track of them after World War II and after that it only got worse. We only heard from them twice after the war. And later on, I found out there were some living cousins over there that I got to see and so forth.
- JL:** That's quite another story, isn't it? How was property inherited in your parents and grandparents generation?

- HH:** If I would have stayed on the farm, I would have had the farm. The first born usually got the farm. But I didn't stay because I had two younger brothers behind me and we didn't have enough land for three of us. So, I went and then my second brother went and the younger brother got the farm. But, that was what was basically done down around Ashley. The older brother got the home place.
- JL:** So really, each child didn't inherit equally then?
- HH:** Well, they tried to. My father had it done that way. James got the home place, but he got a little extra for staying on the farm and taking the home place. But from then on, it was divided among the three of us.
- JL:** So, fairness was important then?
- HH:** Yes.
- JL:** Did sons inherit differently than daughters? If you would have had a sister, how would that be done?
- HH:** Well, I don't remember. I just don't. But, if I would have stayed on the farm, I would have probably gotten a little bit more as far as the estate goes and the land and so forth. That's what we did, how we treated my brother Jim. We left him the better and closest land to farm, and whatever else dad had, we just split amongst the three.
- JL:** This raises the question. Do you think there was ever anger in families about inheritance issues?
- HH:** I'm sure there was. But of the people that I knew down there personally, I don't know of any.
- JL:** Did you speak German as a child?
- HH:** Yah. I talked German before I talked English. When I went to school, I didn't know any English when I started.
- JL:** It was always spoken at home, then?
- HH:** Very much so. Because we had an uncle that lived with dad and mother and us and he couldn't speak any English at all. So basically, I spoke German until I started school. Then it was a little easier for my brother, because in two years, I had learned a little bit. So, he learned from me and so forth.
- JL:** Sometimes, they would have the teacher live with them. That was one of the reasons that they would want the teachers to live with them, was to learn a little English.
- HH:** I never had any problems because of it. I don't remember anyway. We must have had some pretty good teachers.
- JL:** What were some of the childhood chores that you enjoyed doing and some that you didn't enjoy?
- HH:** Well, on the farm, I enjoyed the harvest time the most, when I got old enough to work to work in fields. I had to chop down the wood and some of those things and those were not to my greatest pleasure. But, I liked to work with horses and work with the tractors. I enjoyed the field work.
- JL:** The threshing time?

- HH:** Yah, that was the most fun. I was pretty young when I started, but it kind of puts you in the manhood area. When you got your own bundle team and two horses and went from farm to farm. That was quite an experience for a young man.
- JL:** It was a lot of hard work, but it was a time for many people to get together to help out?
- HH:** Yah. We had a crew of.... I suppose... Well, we usually had about six or eight teams, couple of spikers and pitchers, machine men, and there were about ten or twelve us all the time.
- JL:** Now, if you didn't do the work, how were you disciplined?
- HH:** Well, I don't know. Dad had an old razor strap. That came in handy once in a awhile. He didn't abuse it, but we knew what it was for.
- JL:** And after a few times, you probably didn't need it anymore? Do you have any memories that really stand out from your childhood years on the farm?
- HH:** Oh, there are lots of memories. You know, when I look back on it, it was really a great time. We had a hill and did lots of sledding. We went hunting and we had a neighbor that would come with us. We made toys out of next to nothing. Stick horses, broom horses and all that stuff and homemade slingshots to shoot the flies and all that stuff. We had all kinds of things to do. We always had enough to eat. I never felt deprived of anything. The memories that I think are most important to me now is the visiting that we used to do amongst the cousins and relatives. That doesn't happen anymore today because of the way people are spread out. But on Sunday, even in the middle of harvest, we were either at an uncle and aunts place or they were at our place. I think that's something that our kids miss today. At the reunions, the cousins get together and we have a good number of them. We all knew each other pretty well from growing up.
- JL:** I think you're right. That's very true. The Sundays were a day when you didn't work, did you?
- HH:** No, my dad didn't believe it that and neither did my mother. We did the normal chores, but other than that, we weren't in the field.
- JL:** How much schooling did you have? Did you go to a country school?
- HH:** I graduated from the eighth grade in a country school. Then I went to four years of high school and one year of college. Then I went to a business college. Interstate here in Fargo.
- JL:** What was it like in your school?
- HH:** From what I remember of it, it was a great time. I don't have any bad memories of it. My grades weren't the best and not the poorest either. I was an average student, I guess. I enjoyed the math and history, which I'm glad I did, because now I'm using it.
- JL:** Were there kids of other nationalities in your school?
- HH:** No, not that I know of. That area where I grew up was, oh, I suppose, 95% German Russian. Like I said, through eighth grade was all German Russian children.
- JL:** You went to country school to the eighth grade? Where did you go to high school?

- HH:** Ashley High.
- JL:** Was it far from the farm?
- HH:** When I used to walk it along the railroad track, it was about a mile and half, and by road, it was about two and a half miles. When it was nice, I walked it until I got old enough to drive. In the winter time, I used to walk it on the weekends and stayed with my uncle during the week in town.
- JL:** Did you think there was a difference between farm school and town school? You know, you hear that it's a different kind of experience.
- HH:** The only thing I can compare it to, is from town school to high school. The town school, being a freshman, you were more on your own. I always put it, like transferring from high school to college, or like from grade school to high school. You got a lot more attention in grade school. You were all in the same room, the teacher was always there.
- JL:** How many kids went to your country school?
- HH:** Well, I have to count in my head now. I think in my eighth grade, there must have been ten or twelve.
- JL:** That's pretty big?
- HH:** Yah. Earlier, there were quite a few more kids. The reason there were ten or twelve is, because the school that I started in, they had closed that. Because they consolidated two country schools, and that's why the second one got bigger.
- JL:** Was that just one room?
- HH:** One room with a little shanty and a barn outside for the horses.
- JL:** And an outhouse, I suppose and a potbellied stove in the middle of the room?
- HH:** Oh, yes. And we had a big, old coal furnace stove to the front and left hand corner of the room.
- JL:** Did the teacher always fill the stove with coal, then?
- HH:** Well, we used to bank it at night. Sometimes, we helped and sometimes, we didn't. But, we used to keep it going. As I remember, she would come early on Monday and get it started. The second time around, when we were in grade school, I suppose we were about three miles away and there were neighbors that were closer where the teacher lived.
- JL:** In what way was religion and church important in your up bringing?
- HH:** On Sundays, we went to church and Sunday School. We were all confirmed and my father was a deacon in the church and read in the church. Those were the kind of values we were taught on the farm.
- JL:** What kind of church was it?
- HH:** Reformed.
- JL:** Oh, it was a Reformed church?

- HH:** Yah. My mother was a Lutheran, which is what a lot of the people were, from South Russia. But, like I said, my dad came from the Volga and that's where the Reformed church was stronger. There was a Reformed church in Ashley too.
- JL:** I knew some people from that area that went to the Reformed church and they were mainly Dutch.
- HH:** Uh, huh. Dutch or German. See, that's basically where my father came from, that church goes back to the Dutch Reformed. Came from the Dutch to Germany, and from there, they took it over to Russia.
- JL:** And then, it made its way over here? In what language were the church services and prayers?
- HH:** It was in German. I was confirmed in German and the prayers and reading and all was in German. I can't tell you the exact date. My brother was confirmed in German also. Then, my youngest brother, who is seven years younger than I am, was confirmed in English.
- JL:** So, when did it switch to English about? What year about were you confirmed?
- HH:** So, it would have been in about 1939 or 1940.
- JL:** How did your parents feel about that change?
- HH:** I don't really remember. Again, it was something that the Reformed church was more.... Well, the Lutheran church was already in English. The Reformed church held on to the German service longer than the Lutheran church did.
- JL:** What did confirmation and baptism mean to you?
- HH:** Baptism, as you know, we baptized just like the Lutherans do. I don't remember it. Confirmation was to me, strictly a learning experience. We learned a lot of things. I couldn't repeat very many of the things that we were supposed to memorize.
- JL:** Lot of memorization in German, wasn't there?
- HH:** Yah, there was. Like in confirmation class that I went to, I don't know how it is now, but we had one special day for discussion. Half a day we sat up front and the minister went around and asked questions verbatim and each individual had to answer. We never knew which question was coming at us. It was a stressful day.
- JL:** Yes, that has changed. How did people deal with death in the family? How did people grieve?
- HH:** As you know, I'm emotional and my mother was too. I can still remember when my grandfather died and my dad came home and told my ma. There was a lot of crying and so forth.
- JL:** Do you remember anything about the funerals?
- HH:** Oh, yah. I was a pallbearer for my grandfather. All the boys from the brothers and sisters were.
- JL:** But that was in a funeral home, I guess.
- HH:** In the Lutheran church.
- JL:** But years before, they would have the body in the home. But you probably don't remember that.

- HH:** Yes, I do. When my Uncle Solomon died, all the sisters and brothers would take turns sitting at the wake. They called it a wake then. They would sit there at night, around the clock. The body was never alone.
- JL:** Do you remember any of the songs?
- HH:** No, not really.
- JL:** Are you familiar with the wrought-iron crosses?
- HH:** I wasn't until I got to Russia. Because we never had them down there. There were none that I saw. You can go to the Lutheran cemetery there now and it's all granite. I don't remember any wrought-iron crosses.
- JL:** I don't either, really. I think it's mainly Catholic, but that isn't strictly true.
- HH:** The wrought-iron crosses, when you get to Germany, like the German Russians, they use them. I don't know if it's a take-off from what the Russians do. But they still do.
- JL:** They still do?
- HH:** Yes, they still do.
- JL:** Do they have a special design that means something, do you know?
- HH:** That I don't know.
- JL:** It was done by blacksmiths that were artists, you know.
- JL:** What did Christmas mean to your family?
- HH:** Well, it was kind of a special time. I remember it was the only time of the year we had chocolate cookies and walnuts. We were in a very small house, but somehow mother always scraped up enough to have enough for a Christmas tree and so forth. I have some fond memories of Christmas, but there was never a lot of packages or anything. It was basically the home-made stuff, the cookies, the gingerbread men she used to make. Like I said, the chocolate cookies and nuts was a big thing to us.
- JL:** Any German foods that were special at that time of the year?
- HH:** Well, we always had goose for Christmas dinner and stuff like that.
- JL:** A goose that was raised on the farm?
- HH:** Yes. And like I said, the food she made was cookies, gingerbread men, kuchen and those were always special treats.
- JL:** You didn't have kuchen year round?
- HH:** Oh yes, but she made some extra fancy ones for Christmas sometimes.
- JL:** Like goose, that was kind of a German tradition, wasn't it?
- HH:** Yes, we still do it.

- JL:** You do? I had it years ago and it was so good. Do you remember Christmas during the war years or the depression? Did that make Christmas any different?
- HH:** No. That's when I basically start remembering Christmas. Like I said, it was sparse. There wasn't that much, but they hid everything and we never knew what we were getting. The way I grew up with Christmas, the Christmas tree didn't go up until after we got to bed. We had the little Christmas tree. Mother and Dad put up the tree when we were sleeping and the presents were under it by Christmas morning.
- JL:** They put it up themselves?
- HH:** Yah.
- JL:** They went out to the woods and got a tree?
- HH:** Well, no. We didn't have many trees out there. Like I said, I don't know where they hid all the stuff. The tree was hidden too. That's how I started remembering Christmas, growing up on a farm.
- JL:** How about Easter?
- HH:** Easter was kind of a solemn event. Good Friday and also Easter Monday, which was also a Easter holiday, as far as we were concerned.
- JL:** Any activities that were special at Easter?
- HH:** Well, coloring the eggs. I don't know if you call that a ritual or not, but that was something we did every Easter. Then we used to have the egg fights. Do you remember them?
- JL:** No.
- HH:** Well, whoever had the strongest eggs pecked the [other's] eggs, and whoever was [not cracked], was the winner of that round. That's one of the traditions we still do.
- JL:** That's kind of a game that you kids played, then?
- HH:** Oh, not only kids, everybody at the table.
- JL:** How about the Easter bunny?
- HH:** No, not much. That was not part of our Easter celebration.
- JL:** Was Santa Claus at Christmas?
- HH:** Yes. Well, they called it Belzenickle.
- JL:** Oh, they did? So, Belzenickle was a good guy?
- HH:** Yah, it was.
- JL:** Sometimes, I've heard it said...
- HH:** Yah, sometimes it was the other. That's how I remember my dad calling it. They called it different in different areas. As I remember it, maybe I don't remember it right, but I thought that's what my dad would call it.

- JL:** Oh, my dad did too. And it was a positive thing. I talked to someone and Belzenickle was a fearful things, that he would come and get kids if you didn't behave.
- HH:** No, that was not our situation as I remember it.
- JL:** How were marriage ceremonies performed? Were they performed in the church?
- HH:** Some were in the church as I remember. I don't think I've ever been at one that was in the home. They were always in the church when I grew up.
- JL:** Was the reception held at the home then?
- HH:** In the home or in the hall, sometimes in a special place. Like one of my cousins married in Ashley. They had kind of a hall that they had the reception in afterwards and the German wedding dance.
- JL:** What was a German wedding dance like?
- HH:** Oh, that was a fun time. You had to drink the schnapps as you went in, and then there was schnapps and beer available. You know, a lot of food.
- JL:** What about that schnapps, then? That was served right at the door, wasn't it?
- HH:** Yes, they still do that.
- JL:** That's an old tradition, I bet. Do you know anything about it?
- HH:** No. That's about the only time I ever drank schnapps was at a wedding. We drank wine at home, but never had schnapps at home.
- JL:** Was the schnapps homemade?
- HH:** I think so. I don't know.
- JL:** Oh, I've heard it called red-eye.
- HH:** Well, that's alcohol. That is 190 [proof]. Some served that, too. There were two [kinds, the schnapps and the red-eye].
- JL:** I remember some people cooking brown sugar and water and that was some kind of hochzeit drink then.
- HH:** Yah. I can't remember that one. I've heard of it, but don't know about it.
- JL:** How long did these wedding activities last?
- HH:** Well, the ones where I grew up, they would start usually in the afternoon. The wedding was in the afternoon, then you had a big meal, and sometimes.... Well, one I remember, we ate lunch, then had the wedding and then they had a big supper, then the hochzeit dance, the auctioning of the bride's shoe and all that. That went on as long as people stayed. I can remember going home when the sun came up.
- JL:** Did they have accordion music?
- HH:** Yes, basically the accordion.

- JL:** What kind of dancing?
- HH:** Oh, the waltz, the two-step, the polka, and one other one I can't remember anymore. The schottish and the bunny-hop.
- JL:** Do you remember people getting up and singing songs, German songs?
- HH:** Oh, yes, they used to sing. I don't remember the names of them anymore. They used to sing right after supper, or the evening meal and have a songfest for awhile, before the dance.
- JL:** Is that right? You don't remember the names of any songs?
- HH:** No, uh hun. "Three Red Roses," [said in German]. That one, we used to sing. One of the few I remember.
- JL:** "Three Red Roses?"
- HH:** Yah.
- JL:** What kind of foods were served at the wedding?
- HH:** Oh, gosh!
- JL:** Traditional kind of foods?
- HH:** Wurst was always one of them. Seemed to me, one of my cousins had a wedding late in the fall and they had hams. But sausage was always one of them. Then, the German potato salad and always kuchen.
- JL:** Was the sausage summer sausage?
- HH:** Country fried. Not summer sausage. It was hot.
- JL:** Did you have homemade beer, too?
- HH:** My dad made homemade beer.
- JL:** Were the bridal clothes and decorations made by the family? Do you know?
- HH:** Well, I never had any sisters.
- JL:** How were the wives and husbands chosen? Were there any arranged marriages that you know of?
- HH:** Not that I know of.
- JL:** That was probably earlier?
- HH:** It was earlier. It did happen where my father came from in Balzer, and I'm sure it happened in South Russia too. But in America, as far as I know, in the time frame I'm talking about, I don't know of anyone that did.
- JL:** Did the women help with the outside chores?
- HH:** Oh, yes. They worked. How my mother ever got it all done, I'll never know.
- JL:** What did your mother do?

- HH:** Well, it depends on the time of year. Her's was the garden, that was her main outside thing. But, when the harvest started, like when we used the hedder, she used to drive the horses and stood on the hedder box. And then, when there was milking to do, when we were busy in the evening, she'd come and milk. But other than that...
- JL:** Otherwise, it was always the men's job to do the milking?
- HH:** Well, she helped. When she had time, she helped us milk. But she would do it alone, when we were harvesting.
- JL:** All that hand milking, no machines then?
- HH:** Well, we had as high as fifteen cows. That's a lot of milking for one person.
- JL:** Do you remember some of the German cooking your mother did?
- HH:** Oh, yah. The knepfla, schuppnudla, kuchen naturally, plagenda, and then the canned chicken and canned pheasant. That was the best, I think. Like the canned chicken and pheasant, that's even better than the fresh, I think.
- JL:** My mother still does some of that. The canned chicken and sausage, too.
- HH:** Oh, yah, yah. Well, when I grew up on the farm, we never had any electricity. So everything we had, had to be preserved by smoking or canning. We never had electric power on the farm. We had a gas wash machine.
- JL:** Was there music entertainment in your home? Was your family at all musical?
- HH:** Mother could play a little piano, but that's about all. We had such a small house. We only had two rooms and an upstairs that wasn't even finished. So we didn't have room for anything else.
- JL:** So, you didn't sit around and sing at night?
- HH:** No.
- JL:** When they got company, were the children permitted to stay in the room? Stay with the adults?
- HH:** No, no. My father always said, and I think my mother said it too, that children are to be seen but not heard, you know. Usually, a lot of the company we had were the relatives. So, when the cousins came, we went outside and played, you know. We got out of the way.
- JL:** Did you attend dances?
- HH:** Oh, yah. I learned to dance at the wedding dances.
- JL:** Where did you attend the dances?
- HH:** Oh, gosh. The Pavilion. This was when I was in high school. The dances were held in the barns or else, wedding dances in the halls.
- JL:** Who went to those dances?
- HH:** The regular dances were mostly the young people. The kids from high school or to about [age] 21 or 22.

- JL:** I'm sure that's how many of them met?
- HH:** Yah. That's about the only place we had, except the pool hall and the girls weren't usually in there. So, that's about the only place.
- JL:** What was the attitude of the older generation toward entertainment?
- HH:** Well, my folks didn't have a problem with it, as far as dances go. They liked it and went to dances too.
- JL:** So, it was never discouraged?
- HH:** It was never discouraged would be more correct.
- JL:** Do you remember some of the games that you played as a child?
- HH:** Well, we played with horses we made out of sticks. Being on the farm, we did a lot of hunting. Played marbles a lot.
- JL:** Oh, I see. What did you hunt?
- HH:** Oh, pheasant, rabbits. Did a little trapping in the fall, like weasels. Hunted a lot of gophers in the summer time.
- JL:** How about deer?
- HH:** No, we never hunted deer. I don't know, for some reason there weren't a lot of deer in the area we were in. Maybe that had something to do with it. I've never shot a deer.
- JL:** Were your parents or grandparents superstitious about certain aspects in life?
- HH:** I don't think so. Not that I'm aware of. If they were, it wasn't very obvious.
- JL:** Do you remember any special healing techniques that were used?
- HH:** Are you talking about Brauche?
- JL:** Yah. That's my next question. Do you know anything about it?
- HH:** Well, no. My mother had a midwife when she had some children, but there was a doctor that was there when I was born. But they had a lot of their own home remedies.
- JL:** Can you tell me some of those?
- HH:** Oh, yeah. My daughter still gives me a bad time. Oh, a few years back, I punctured a nail into my leg. So, growing up we never went to the doctor. So I got some bacon and salted it down good and wrapped it around my leg as a poultice. She thought that was terrible, but that's what I learned from at home. The same way with mustard plasters. The same way with Mentholatum. We never were without that. That was an inhalant.
- JL:** You mean Vicks?
- HH:** They used to call it Mentholatum. It used to come in a round can. Mother used to heat it and we had to sniff that if we had a cold or something like that. Or, if you had a sore throat, you put around your throat and put a sock around it.

- JL:** I was thinking that was like Vicks.
- HH:** The same base. A menthol base.
- JL:** It got kind of hot and made you feel good. Are you familiar with "heil blätter?" One of the people I interviewed talked about it and I'm very curious to find out what kind of plant it was. It had a pretty big leaf.
- HH:** Oh, I've heard of it, but I don't know what it is either. They used it as a poultice, I think.
- JL:** When the kids would get a sore or something, the mother would say, "run out and get some heil blätter." She said that the plant would grow in the corner of the garden and was kind of a weed.
- HH:** If my mother or dad were here, they would know. But another one of the older remedies [that] was a poultice was fresh cow manure. That doesn't sound very pretty, but it was pretty strong and we used to use it on horses too. Wrap it around the leg as a poultice if there was an infection.
- JL:** You mean wrap it up then?
- HH:** Yah. You never heard of that?
- JL:** No, I haven't. That's new to me. What about Brauche? What do you know about it?
- HH:** I've heard talk about it, but I know very little about it. I think it goes back to something. I don't know if it's superstition, but I never saw my folks use it. So, it's all I know about it.
- JL:** Did you know anybody who was supposedly a Braucher?
- HH:** Well, I don't know if midwives were the same as Brauchers, but I don't know anyone who did that.
- JL:** It's a little different, but some midwives did have those abilities.
- HH:** I understand that they did that too. I read about it sometime. I don't know if they did or not.
- JL:** There is supposed to be a lady in Ashley that still does it. You probably know who she is but I don't know her name.
- HH:** I've heard of her, but I don't know her name.
- JL:** How were midwives paid?
- HH:** The only ones I know of is that my folks had one come and check on mother when she was carrying me. But other than that, I don't know.
- JL:** Did your parents use any expressions in other languages? Like old Russian or Platt Deutsch expressions?
- HH:** Oh, I can't think of any. Are you talking expressions or sayings?
- JL:** Anything like that.
- HH:** Well, they used to say, "heile, heile, [533]. Do you remember that one?
- JL:** Kind of.
- HH:** It goes back to what I said that poultice was. You know what, " _____ " is?

- JL:** Yah.
- HH:** Like my dad brought one back from Russia, but he used to stand behind you and go [543] Do you know what that means?
- JL:** No, I haven't heard that one.
- HH:** Well, I don't know what _____ is, but that was kind of a saying. Then the _____ means how many fingers were standing up, and then you'd have to guess how many fingers were there. That's the kind of a thing that went around at our house.
- JL:** Kind of a game?
- HH:** Yah, but it was something that he brought with him. I don't know if it's German or Russian.
- JL:** That's interesting. Do you remember any German newspaper that you received in your home?
- HH:** Oh...
- JL:** I have on here the Nord Dakota Herald, the Dakota Freie Presse.
- HH:** Yah, the Dakota Freie Presse.
- JL:** What kind of information did they look for in the paper?
- HH:** Oh, I think basically what my dad looked for was any news from the area that his people came from. They had local news, but if I remember right, they had information that people got from overseas, from Russia.
- JL:** And then people would share that information?

END OF SIDE ONE --- BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

- JL:** Do you remember when you got modern conveniences? Electricity?
- HH:** We never had electricity on the farm. Well, we didn't get electricity until Dad bought a house in Ashley and they moved in 1941. But the first major thing was that we used to have an old hand pull wash machine and we got one with kerosene motor on it, and we didn't have to pull that handle all the time. That's one of the first ones, I remember. I can't remember when. I was born in 1927. I must have been six, seven years old when that happened.
- JL:** Did you have a windmill on the farm?
- HH:** Yah. We had a windmill and that's our running water. Run and get it. We never had inside water at all.
- JL:** How about telephone?
- HH:** Well, we had it. That was a funny thing down there. They used to have a telephone and in fact, we had a phone in our house. But when the tough times came along in the thirties, they couldn't keep it up. So

the lines were down and we didn't have it. They never got them back up again until the forties, when they got it going again. But by that time, we moved to town.

JL: Do you remember the early days of watching television?

HH: Yes, that happened in Fargo here. That's where we were married.

JL: Do you remember watching Lawrence Welk?

HH: Oh, yah. Yah.

JL: Was that kind of a weekly event?

HH: Yah. That and "I Love Lucy" and a few other ones like that.

JL: Did you like the Lawrence Welk show?

HH: Yah. It was..., it brought back memories. We were down in Branson just this last week and we saw the Lawrence Welk show. They have a theater down there and kind of a little museum of Lawrence Welk. The Lennon Sisters were there and it kind of brought back... Well, it was a very good show.

JL: Do you remember the radio?

HH: Yes, yes. That was our basic information. I remember hearing the beginning of World War II and Pearl Harbor on the radio.

JL: It's interesting how many people say that. That was a very important thing that came across on the radio.

HH: Yah. That's how we found out.

JL: You remember it, too? Which family member do you remember best? Who did you look up to? Grandfather, mother or who?

HH: Well, I don't know if this is typical family or not. Father was kind of the one that laid down the law and mother, she was the one we went to if it was something we didn't want to talk to dad about. But they were both pretty strict, not abusive or anything. But when I think back now and what I see now, I'm kind of glad it happened that way.

JL: So your mother was pretty strict, too?

HH: Oh yes. Well, like I said, she had a small house and she tried to keep it clean, you know. And in those respects, we had to tow the mark, keep it clean. Keep ourselves clean, all that.

JL: Good values to teach.

HH: Yah. Like when we did something, she made sure we did it well and stuff like that. I can't remember, but she said something like, "once a job once begun, don't never leave it until it's done." Or, "do it well or not at all." Some of those are things she said.

JL: You probably passed those on to your kids too?

HH: Well, we tried.

JL: Well Herb, this has been very interesting. I sure thank you for sharing your information and maybe we'll go on to more questions some other time.

HH: Okay.

JL: Thanks so much.