

Interview with Edna Goebel Johnson (EJ)

Conducted by Joyce Reinhardt Larson (JL)

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JL: I am Joyce Reinhardt Larson and I am interviewing Edna Goebel Johnson. We are in Horace, North Dakota. This is October 28, 1994. This interview is for the North Dakota State University Library, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection.

JL: So Edna, we are going to begin asking your name, date of birth, and where you were born.

EJ: My name is Edna Goebel Johnson and I was born in Lehr, North Dakota, on June 2, 1918.

JL: So, that makes you how old now?

EJ: I am 76.

JL: What was your father's name?

EJ: My father's name was Friedrich Goebel and he came from Glückstal, Russia and he was only four years old when he came here.

JL: Who did he come with?

EJ: He came with his parents and his brothers and sisters. There were just five in the family. There was two boys and three girls.

JL: They came from Glückstal then?

EJ: Yes, in South Russia.

JL: What was your mother's name? Did she grow up in Russia too?

EJ: No. My mother grew up in Eureka, South Dakota. Her maiden name was Katharina Kessler Goebel. They too only had five in the family. There were four girls and one boy.

JL: Her family, they had come from Russia earlier?

EJ: I imagine they came from Russia, earlier.

JL: Was there a big age difference between your father and mother?

EJ: No, there was only four years. My mother, her parents died when my mother was only thirteen years old. The baby was four months old, so they were just given out to whoever took them, of the relatives.

JL: Is that right? So, how many sisters and brothers did you have in your family?

EJ: I had three brothers and six sisters. That would make ten of us.

- JL:** Well, that would make nine. But with yourself, were there seven girls?
- EJ:** Seven girls and three boys.
- JL:** What are their names?
- EJ:** Yes. There was Anna, Ted, Magdalena, Martha, Erna, [? Herman], Walter, Edna, Violet, Esther, and Eldon.
- JL:** Did your father or grandfather ever tell you anything about the old country in Russia?
- EJ:** Not really, because my dad was only four years old and my grandpa died when I was five years old.
- JL:** So, you just wouldn't have any memories?
- EJ:** I just don't remember. I imagine he talked about it but...
- JL:** So, you don't remember any old stories from the old country?
- EJ:** I really don't. All I remember him saying is, that it was so beautiful over there and then coming to settle. The area they settled [in] was so rocky and hilly. That's the only thing I remember of him saying, how beautiful it was, where they came from.
- JL:** I've heard that before. That it was quite nice over there, and coming over here was a shock.
- EJ:** But yet, we can be so thankful that our parents or our ancestors made that [trip]. Where would we be today if our ancestors wouldn't have made that?
- JL:** Yes. You hear about people that did stay behind and they have had just nothing but trouble. Very tough life.
- EJ:** That's right. So, we can be very thankful that they ventured out.
- JL:** Right. Was the church an important part of your life when you were growing up?
- EJ:** Yes, it was.
- JL:** And where was it that you did grow up?
- EJ:** I grew up at Lehr, ND. We first lived out on the farm, about nine miles north of Lehr. Church was a very important thing in our life. We went by sleds, by buggy.
- JL:** Was it quite a ways from the farm?
- EJ:** Well, I would say it was about three miles from the farm.
- JL:** What kind of church was it?
- EJ:** It was a Baptist Church.
- JL:** Was it a pretty big church?
- EJ:** No.
- JL:** Were you surrounded by people of other religions?

- EJ:** No, not really. It was mostly Methodist and Baptist in that little area. The Lutherans came in later on, but it was mostly Baptist. Some Seventh Day Adventist.
- JL:** Did you speak German growing up then?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** So, your songs were sung in German?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. And had to go to Sunday School in German.
- JL:** Was there confirmation in German then, too?
- EJ:** We didn't have confirmation.
- JL:** Do you remember a lot of those German songs?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. We had a song book, I think I still have it here. A songbook that had the verses in English and German.
- JL:** That's helpful. Was music a part of your family at all?
- EJ:** Not really.
- JL:** Not a musical family then? Just singing in church and so on?
- EJ:** Yes.
- JL:** How about like school and your education?
- EJ:** See, I didn't go to the country school, but my older sisters and brothers went.
- JL:** Oh.
- EJ:** See, when we moved into town in 1923, and then I went to school in town.
- JL:** Oh, I see. Because you were younger? So, did you go through first grade through eighth grade there or what?
- EJ:** Through high school in Lehr.
- JL:** That was done in English then?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** But your sisters and brothers, did they go to a German speaking school in country school then?
- EJ:** No. The country school was in English too, at that time. The teachers usually boarded at my parents house.
- JL:** Oh, they did. So that was a way to learn English too, I suppose.
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** Did your parents push education? Where they all for that?

- EJ:** Not really. You couldn't afford it.
- JL:** Was there too much to be done around home?
- EJ:** My sister and I both went to Ellendale to school. I just went to one year and she just went one year too. She taught school and I did too, after just one year. I wasn't cut out to be a teacher, though.
- JL:** You mean after high school in Lehr, you went to Ellendale to college?
- EJ:** See, we didn't have..., when my sister went to high school, we only had a two year high school. Then she finished up in Ashley and then later on, they had the full four years of high school in there. But when she was going, she went to Ashley to finish up her high school.
- JL:** Did she always want to be a teacher then?
- EJ:** Not really. She just taught two years.
- JL:** She went to Ellendale and you did too then, to get one year of college?
- EJ:** Yes. In those days, you didn't have school buses. Like, I stayed two miles away from the school and you drove with horse and buggy and the school house was cold. You had these old hard coal heaters. So, it was a job.
- JL:** Yes. Where did you teach?
- EJ:** North of Lehr.
- JL:** In a country school, then?
- EJ:** Yes, in a country school.
- JL:** Were you responsible for getting the fire going in the morning?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. But I was fortunate that I had a family that lived closer to the school and one of the boys would go over and start the fire by the time we would get there.
- JL:** A one room school house?
- EJ:** Yes. We'd sometimes would bring in potatoes and lay them into the ash pot and have baked potatoes. The pot bellied stove in the middle of the room.
- JL:** And lunch buckets not too far away, or else they would freeze?
- EJ:** Or else they'd freeze.
- JL:** And the outhouse?
- EJ:** Oh yes, and the ice on the toilet seats.
- JL:** Such memories! So, what were some of the things that you had to do when you were a child? I suppose the family kept you very busy?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. We had to see to it to clean the chicken house, fed the chickens, had to milk the cow.
- JL:** Only one cow?

- EJ:** Maybe, we had two cows.
- JL:** But you were farmers, right?
- EJ:** No. When my dad moved into town, he went into a garage business.
- JL:** But you were still able to have a cow, then?
- EJ:** We were able to have cows, geese, ducks, whatever you wanted, right in town.
- JL:** So, he had a garage business?
- EJ:** Yes. See after these deaths in the family, then he just decided to quit farming and we moved into town and he went into business.
- JL:** Was that better for him?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** When you say you had deaths in the family, what do you mean?
- EJ:** When Ted and Magdalena [her older brother and sister] died, my dad was on the jury in Napoleon and he didn't even make it home. Because they died of the Black Diphtheria. Well, most of them died of that. And then, the next year or two years after that, two of my sisters and myself, we were all in one bed and had the Black Diphtheria. My sisters died and I pulled through.
- JL:** Is that right? What year was that when they died?
- EJ:** Oh, that could have been back then..., in 1920 or 1921.
- JL:** Was that going around?
- EJ:** Yah.
- JL:** And two sisters died of it? And they just stayed at home?
- EJ:** All three of them in one bed, and they died and I pulled through.
- JL:** How old were you?
- EJ:** I must have been four. And then after that, my dad moved into town.
- JL:** And your brothers died of that too?
- EJ:** One brother died, earlier. Then Magdalena died earlier, of that too.
- JL:** So, four of the ten kids died of that?
- EJ:** Yes, died of that.
- JL:** Do you remember the flu of 1918 or 1919?
- EJ:** Well, it could have been with the flu too, and not just diphtheria.
- JL:** Why do you call it Black Diphtheria?

- EJ:** That's just what they called it then. I don't know why they called it that. It took a lot of people at that time.
- JL:** Any other relatives?
- EJ:** Not any that I recall.
- JL:** Was there a doctor in the area?
- EJ:** There was one in Wishek, but he just didn't get there all the time. They had to use their own remedies.
- JL:** What are some of the remedies that you remember?
- EJ:** When my mother cooked up wormwood and horseradish and I had to inhale that.
- JL:** When she cooked that up, did she use the leaves then to cook?
- EJ:** She added water. That had to be hot and I had to inhale that stuff.
- JL:** Was that used for colds?
- EJ:** I must have had tonsillitis, because it broke and I haven't had tonsil trouble since.
- JL:** How about if you were cut? Just think of all the injuries there could be on a farm. What did you use?
- EJ:** All right. I'll tell you another deal. When we were on the farm, my sister made lunch and I was suppose to carry lunch down to where they were heddering at that time. I was stubborn and I didn't do it. I ran down to where they were working without the lunch. Then, when I saw my sister come over the hill with the lunch, I got scared and I hid on the hedder. My dad was just pulling out the hedder knife and he cut my finger.
- JL:** Oh, my.
- EJ:** My mother never went to a doctor. She took her white petticoat and tied that finger down and I got a good licking and went home.
- JL:** No stitches? It was certainly deep enough for that.
- EJ:** Oh, sure. You see it here. It almost cut the whole finger off.
- JL:** Did you ever put anything else on it then?
- EJ:** I don't remember, but I ran home then. I was scared and I hid in the toilet and went to sleep. When they couldn't find me, they thought I had run away, you know. But the finger isn't even crooked. Never went to the doctor.
- JL:** Just kept it wrapped up with a clean cloth?
- EJ:** Yes.
- JL:** You had to make do, right? How about poultices? Do you remember those being used, and for what?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. They were used to draw. If you had any infection, to draw that infection to a point.
- JL:** What were they made out of?

- EJ:** Made a paste made of cream and flour.
- JL:** What do you do? Put that on the sore?
- EJ:** And then she put it on the cloth and then put that cloth onto the sore and then draw it to a point.
- JL:** So, you remember the cream and flour one?
- EJ:** There was another with onion. Or heat salt and put it on something. Or onion plaster too. I even did it for my kids, when they had colds or something, and put it on their chest. They used to scream their heads off for the smell of the onion.
- JL:** So, you cook the onion first?
- EJ:** Yah. Kind of stew the onion a little and then put it on their chest while it's real warm. It's for colds and that.
- JL:** Maybe that was used instead of Vicks? How about the salt? Did you ever use that?
- EJ:** Well, our son had a lot of trouble with earaches. We tried everything. We blowed smoke into his ear, poured milk in his ear, and the best thing that would work was, I would take salt and heat it. Put it in a bag and then lay his ear on a salt bag. I said, "I'm surprised he isn't deaf today for all the junk that we put in his ear." It seemed like every time there was something going on, he would end up with an earache.
- JL:** Now days, he would probably have had the tubes and all that. What about midwives?
- EJ:** My aunt was a midwife. Most of us were. That was the doctor. She was the midwife. In our family, there was only one of us that had the doctor. That was my brother, that is living today.
- JL:** Was he the youngest or something?
- EJ:** He was born in Lehr, in town. And then mother had a doctor for him.
- JL:** But all the other ones were with a midwife?
- EJ:** Yes.
- JL:** That was your aunt, you say?
- EJ:** Yes, and they never had any children. She was my dad's sister and was the midwife.
- JL:** Did she do other kinds of healing?
- EJ:** Not that I know of. Her specialty was delivering.
- JL:** Have you ever heard of these women that did Brauche?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** Tell me about that. I'm interested in that. Do you know of anyone who did that?
- EJ:** Well, we still have one gal that lives around Ashley. I don't know what her name is. But she still does that.

- JL:** Really?
- EJ:** But, I think it's your belief that helps. You have to believe that it's going to help you.
- JL:** A positive attitude and faith? So, what do you think she does? What is Brauche to you?
- EJ:** She just kind of goes along with her fingers on whatever hurts you.
- JL:** Does she say something then?
- EJ:** She says something, not out loud.
- JL:** Is it like a prayer?
- EJ:** A prayer like thing, yes.
- JL:** Was that used in those days? Do you remember?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** So, if there was a certain kind of sickness? Like what? When would you think about calling in a Brauche?
- EJ:** Gosh, I wouldn't even know what. I suppose with... for something that didn't heal. You know, if they tried everything that they could and it wouldn't heal, they could call in a Brauche.
- JL:** Do you remember your family using one?
- EJ:** I don't remember much of that.
- JL:** Where they looked on as being a little different?
- EJ:** Odd. They were looked on as being odd.
- JL:** I wonder why? [The way] they went about their daily life?
- EJ:** I don't know. I know the last time I was home, we drove by that place and they say she still does that. I said, "well, she must be making money, because she sure built on to her home since we lived down there.
- JL:** Do you think they did take money for their services?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** They did? So, there still is one. She must be an elderly lady.
- EJ:** I just can't think of her name right now.
- JL:** Do you remember any other folk medicine in your family?
- EJ:** Green drops. That was a great deal.
- JL:** What did they do for you?
- EJ:** They were used for upset stomach or anything like that. Or, another thing that my mother used on me for sore throat was to swab your mouth out with kerosene.

- JL:** Oh, my! Do you think that worked?
- EJ:** I had kind of an eczema on me and my mother used goose lard and blue vetrol, which is a kind of poison. I don't know what it is.
- JL:** How would you spell that? Vetrol?
- EJ:** Something like that. She used that on me and I had to stand by the register so that the heat would come up. And my sister happened to be home, she lived in Rugby. And I just laid in bed, with my feet up in the air. My sister took me downstairs at five o'clock in the morning and said, 'ma, if you don't give Edna a bath, I will! She'll DIE this way!' But, it cured it.
- JL:** Is that right? Do you remember peddlers coming around and selling stuff, sometimes?
- EJ:** No, that I don't remember. I do remember the Watkins and Jewel Tea. They used to have groceries and go from house to house. Then they would have these dishes that they would, you know, if you bought so much, you would get a dish from them.
- JL:** What is something you could say [that] you learned most from your mother?
- EJ:** The ability to work and cooking.
- JL:** Did you always like to cook?
- EJ:** Yes. At first, we never used to make kuchen and stuff like that, and she would say, 'You better learn how. I'm not going to be here all the time.'
- JL:** So, she taught you how?
- EJ:** She taught us how. I never thought that I would ever bake 250 kuchen for one occasion.
- JL:** Do you use her recipe? Do you have some of her old recipes?
- EJ:** Oh, just not measure anything. Just pour it.
- JL:** Oh, you mean you're that kind of a cook?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. That kind.
- JL:** A hand full of flour and a little shake of the salt shaker?
- EJ:** When I go to my daughter'in'law's house, I wash more measuring cups and spoons, which I think is not necessary.
- JL:** Well, we younger people don't understand that. We don't have that knack! Tell me some of the other things that you made? That your mother made, beside kuchen.
- EJ:** Okay, like the Einlaufsuppe [egg drop soup] or the Eisuppe, that some of them say. Like Knepfla. And there was one recipe my sister and I are still upset that we never got, is schlitzküchla. There are recipes now that are soft, but her's was dry. That was our Good Friday meal all the time. [The meal] was noodles, prunes, and schlitzküchla.
- JL:** No meat?

- EJ:** No meat on Good Friday. I still have a hard time eating meat on Good Friday.
- JL:** Not other Fridays, right?
- EJ:** Not other Fridays, just on Good Friday. That was always noodles, prunes, and schlitzküchla. And in the evening, we would have waffles.
- JL:** Did she have a waffle iron at home?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. At their twenty-fifth anniversary, the church gave them a round waffle iron, which my son has now.
- JL:** Now those schlitzküchla, do you make them yet?
- EJ:** I make them, but it's not that dry. Mine are more like the doughnut dough and they're soft. But hers were dry. But neither my sister nor I have that recipe. See, mother didn't use recipes. Her recipe book was about like this [thin].
- JL:** Real thin?
- EJ:** Yes, and they were in German. My mother had just the script. She wrote the script, not the modern way of writing. She had the real German way of writing. None of us learned how.
- JL:** That's too bad. What about those recipes? Does anyone have a copy of them?
- EJ:** Oh, I have them. But I don't know where they are at right now. I'll have to look for them and show them to you, sometime.
- JL:** That is something to hang on to. So what other things did you learn to make from our mother? Did you make fleischküchla at home?
- EJ:** No. See, that wasn't our [German/Russian cooking] trait. Where I learned how to make Fleischküchla was in the cafe, when we had the cafe. I had some guys from New Salem [there] and they were doing electrical work at the churches, and they wanted fleischküchla. I never made those. They said, 'well, that's German.' So, then one weekend, when he went home, he brought the recipe down and that's how I got started making fleischküchla. But I wasn't too crazy about their recipe, because it had cream in it and when you deep fried it, it was just kind of soft in the inside, the dough part. So, I made up my own recipe, in which I just use eggs and flour.
- JL:** What did you use for the moisture part of it?
- EJ:** Water. Just eggs, flour and water. And they were more flaky and more of the fluffy kind.
- JL:** And you seasoned your hamburger with what?
- EJ:** I season it with salt, pepper, garlic, and liquid smoke.
- JL:** When did you start your cafe in Lehr?
- EJ:** In 1944, I think.
- JL:** And you had it for how many years?

- EJ:** Thirty four years.
- JL:** What were your most famous dishes that people would request?
- EJ:** Chicken and dumplings. The dumplings that are made out of the raised dough. Schuphnoodla.
- JL:** Is that what you called them? How do you spell that?
- EJ:** No. I haven't seen it in print.
- JL:** I've heard of it. My mother used to make those, but I didn't know they were [called] schuphnoodla.
- EJ:** I can't find the recipie right now.
- JL:** What other sweet things did you make, beside kuchen?
- EJ:** An apple pie or chocolate pie or something like that.
- JL:** But nothing more German in that line?
- EJ:** No.
- JL:** How about cookies? Did you make honey cookies?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. They are German and [also] ammonia cookies.
- JL:** Ammonia cookies? Is that German?
- EJ:** Yes. And Schlitzküchla. You roll those Schlitzküchla and they used sour cream in that [recipie] and I just didn't like that dough. It got harder to work with.
- JL:** Could you tell me your recipe for fleishküchla?
- EJ:** It's just eggs and flour and shortening.
- JL:** What kind of shortening?
- EJ:** I use Crisco and water.
- JL:** How many eggs for one batch of fleischküchla?
- EJ:** Okay. You could maybe use about six cups of flour and about four eggs and maybe about three-fourths cup of shortening and salt.
- JL:** And enough water to make it soft?
- EJ:** And just enough water so you can roll it out.
- JL:** Do you roll it out right away or do you leave it set awhile?
- EJ:** I like to leave it set for awhile. We also had a lot of plachenta, out of pumpkin. Borscht and plachenta.
- JL:** How did you make your borscht soup? With beets?
- EJ:** No, my family didn't like beets. So, I just made mine with potatoes, a little rice, tomatoes, and now I put celery in. But in those days, you didn't use celery and stuff like that. And onions too.

- JL:** Anything green from the garden?
- EJ:** Gruena borscht? Oh, yes. In the spring, when the peas and beans and carrots and green onions come up.
- JL:** Yes. All the fine green things. How about beet leaves?
- EJ:** Oh yes, that I like. Finely cut beet leaves and cabbage leaves from the garden.
- JL:** Oh!
- EJ:** Just take the cabbage leaves, and dill too.
- JL:** Did you make a chicken stock?
- EJ:** No stock at all. Just cook that, and then you would mix an egg and cream and then put that broth into that.
- JL:** Oh, I didn't know about that. Would that thicken it?
- EJ:** Oh, that kind of made it a lighter color.
- JL:** It doesn't have a nice color, does it?
- EJ:** No. But it made it a lighter color, but you couldn't boil it after that. You could just heat it up, otherwise, it would curdle.
- JL:** So, that's a German thing? What would you serve that with? Homemade bread?
- EJ:** Yah, mostly homemade bread.
- JL:** What did you use for yeast in those days?
- EJ:** Ewiger Saatz [Everlasting Yeast]. Somebody would start their yeast and then when you cook potatoes and water, you would put this quart of yeast into this and leave it set overnight then. Then in the morning, you would take a quart of yeast off again and just keep that. That's what you would call Ewiger Saatz.
- JL:** I have heard of that, but I have no idea how to spell it. Maybe we could find it in some of your cookbooks, but I doubt that.
- EJ:** I doubt that too.
- JL:** You just keep that yeast going? You had to have some initial yeast to get it started?
- EJ:** See, you used to be able to get the square yeast, the dry, square yeast and that's how they would start it. Or, if your's would go bad, you could always go the neighbor and get her to save you a quart, when she made the yeast.
- JL:** A whole quart? How much would it take for a batch of bread, then?
- EJ:** Yes. a whole quart. Well, like in the cafe, I used to make from twelve to thirteen loaves at one time.
- JL:** With one quart of yeast?

- EJ:** Well, when you cook up your potato water, you would maybe cook up a quart and a half, and then add this quart of yeast to it. Then you would have that quart and a half or whatever you needed to make your bread dough.
- JL:** It made good bread, I bet?
- EJ:** Made good bread.
- JL:** Did you ever make bread with mashed potatoes?
- EJ:** No, just potato water.
- JL:** What about the German meats?
- EJ:** Well, we had the homemade sausage, and the chicken. Dad used to have sheep. We used to have a lot of lamb meat. Then, you had your goose and duck and turkey. And that was all home grown.
- JL:** How about sauerbraten?
- EJ:** See, that's not ours [German-Russian cooking]. That's the Germans again. Our's is the German-Russian food. There is a difference. Now, my sister-in-law, her dad was from Germany, and they made wienerschnitzel, sauerbraten and stuff like that. Lentil soup, too. They made that kind of stuff. And then they made their borscht with beets and where we didn't. We used the beet leaves for the gruena borscht in our family.
- JL:** I thought that maybe, with all your cooking, you made sauerbraten.
- EJ:** I have a recipe for it that someone gave me but I never made it. I have made the wienerschnitzel. There you have to have the veal. You take and you pound your veal and dip it into egg, into flour, and back into egg. Then, just fry it a little bit and put it in the oven. It's very, very good.
- JL:** Then you make a crust for it?
- EJ:** That's just like a crust [coating] for it.
- JL:** Oh, that is the crust?
- EJ:** Yah, that is the crust. And then you put it into the oven to finish up the baking of the meat. But don't lay it on top of each other, because then it gets soggy like. It should be crispy. It should be separate on the pan.
- JL:** Is there anything else you would to say about cooking? Other things you have made?
- EJ:** Well, in those days, you didn't have the opportunity to buy your greens and stuff like that. So, a lot of stuff from the garden was canned, your carrots, beans, peas. And in those days, everything was canned.
- JL:** But, then in the wintertime, you wouldn't make gruena borscht, would you? That had to be fresh.
- EJ:** No, you wouldn't. Like the sauerkraut, that wasn't put into jars, or your pickles. That was put into a wooden barrel, and then you take the pickles off the top. You would have this ugly foam on top, but that didn't hurt.
- JL:** That kept them? They were good and salty then, too?

- EJ:** Good and salty, and the sauerkraut too.
- JL:** How about the pickled watermelon?
- EJ:** Yes, we made those.
- JL:** How did you do that? With the whole watermelon?
- EJ:** Well, to make pickled watermelon, you put enough salt in [the brine], so that when you put an egg in, it stays [floats] on top.
- JL:** Is that right? Then you knew you had enough salt?
- EJ:** Then you knew you had enough salt in there.
- JL:** Oh, that's interesting.
- EJ:** My mother made a lot of pfeffernüsse and cookies like that, you know.
- JL:** What about this watermelon now? Did you do it whole, the rind and everything?
- EJ:** Yah. We did it when they were whole. You usually had these little watermelons. That had to stay, usually until Christmas, until it was ready to eat.
- JL:** Did you eat the whole thing?
- EJ:** You peel the watermelon. Just eat the inside of it, not the rind. It was pickled then in the brine.
- JL:** That was an easy way of doing it then. Just throw the whole watermelon in there then?
- EJ:** Yah. When my mother used to make a little wine and we would have to go and pick the chokecherries to make the wine out of. You know what we had to stomp with? We had to wash our feet and stomp on the chokecherries in a tub, to get the juice out of it.
- JL:** Is that right? So, just wash all the kid's feet and put them in the tub?
- EJ:** Put them into the tub and start stomping.
- JL:** It made good wine though, right? Did she make dandelion wine too?
- EJ:** No, just made the chokecherry.
- JL:** How about jellies?
- EJ:** Oh, lots of jellies. They had chokecherries, gooseberries, juneberrys.
- JL:** What other wild berries were used? I can only think of chokecherries and juneberrys.
- EJ:** Yes, those and gooseberries.
- JL:** How about wild plums?
- EJ:** Yah. Lots of plums and lots of apples.
- JL:** How about the bulberries? Those trees always get so full of red berries in the fall?

- EJ:** No. That we never had either. Bulberries are real tart. I remember people talking about those kind of berries that were real tart.
- JL:** How about the wild game?
- EJ:** Well, my folks didn't. Dad was not a hunter. My husband was a hunter so we had a lot of wild game. Ducks, geese, pheasants and so on. No deer hunting.
- JL:** Well, it's been interesting about the food. I was wondering about newspapers? Did you have a German newspaper in your home?
- EJ:** Oh yes, The Zimboda. [SP ?]
- JL:** Where did that come from?
- EJ:** That came out of Bismarck, I think. Then there was a Bismarck newspaper, something with stadt. [Der Staatsanzeiger]. It came once a week.
- JL:** Those two newspapers?
- EJ:** Well, The Zimboda, I think that came once a month. But I think that came through the church. Yes, The Zimboda came through the church. But the paper that was published in Bismarck, it had something to do with stadt [Der Staatsanzeiger].
- JL:** Did you read it too?
- EJ:** No, just my parents.
- JL:** How about a Lehr newspaper?
- EJ:** No, they didn't have a paper.
- JL:** It was too small?
- EJ:** Yah, too small. But Wishek, in the later years, had a newspaper. They still have a paper now.
- JL:** Was that an important event, to get the newspaper?
- EJ:** Oh, yah. It was to see who ate here and who ate there and so on. I used to get it after we moved up here, but it got to the point that, when you are gone for so long, like seventeen years, you don't remember the younger kids. They remember you, but you don't remember them. If they look like their parents, then you can place them.
- JL:** Did your mother do any crafts?
- EJ:** She knitted and crocheted. She had thirteen grandchildren and she crocheted sheets and pillow cases with the scalloped edges for all of them.
- JL:** Oh, that's nice. Do you remember any other kinds of German crafts like that? Like bobbin lace, weaving, or scherenschnitte?
- EJ:** No, no. Nothing like that.
- JL:** Did she sew? I suppose she sewed the clothes?

- EJ:** Oh, yes. She sewed all of our clothes, patched all of them. You don't see any patching now days, any more.
- JL:** How about quilting?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. She did a lot of quilting.
- JL:** Did she belong to a group at church or somewhere?
- EJ:** At church, yes. They did a lot of quilting. They did it in the homes, they'd have quilting parties.
- JL:** Do you remember that well?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. I even did some of that.
- JL:** Did she want her girls to learn to do some of that too?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. My sister in Arizona has made over three hundred quilts.
- JL:** Is that right? Does she sell them?
- EJ:** She gives most of them away. She belongs to a girls ranch and so she donates a lot of them there. But she doesn't quilt them, she ties them. Otherwise, it would take too much time.
- JL:** What was it like to have a quilting party at your house?
- EJ:** There was a big feast after that.
- JL:** What did you have? Did the men come then, too?
- EJ:** Yah, the men came too. Sometimes, it ended up being at suppertime. Wherever they were quilting, the woman there would make supper and everybody would come and eat supper.
- JL:** I suppose that was done more in the wintertime?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. Because in the summertime, there was the garden stuff to get out and get that canned. Too busy to do a lot of quilting.
- JL:** It became a party then? Did the little kids come too?
- EJ:** Oh, yes.
- JL:** What did you do as kids? When you got together with your cousins or other little kids? Did you have games that you played?
- EJ:** We made Rook cards out of Kotex boxes.
- JL:** What was that?
- EJ:** In those days, the inside of Kotex boxes were white and we couldn't afford to buy cards, so we cut these and colored them and then we made Rook cards out of them.

END OF SIDE ONE -----Missing Words----- BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

- JL:** Do you remember anything special about holidays, like Christmas?
- EJ:** Well, we always had [to say] our piece in church and we had to be dressed up for church. Mother would have these pfeffernüsse, apples, and nuts, walnuts, nigger-toes and peanuts. She would put them out on the table so we could eat them at any time. That was the Christmas deal and we would always look forward to getting our Christmas bag in church. That had Cracker Jack in it and an apple and an orange. That was our biggest gift. One Christmas, I got a doll and I was so happy with that doll and that was my gift. We didn't get a lot of Christmas gifts. It wasn't commercialized then like it is now.
- JL:** No. And the gifts were often homemade, weren't they?
- EJ:** Right, the gifts were homemade a lot. Mother would made the pfeffernüsse and put them into a five gallon cream can and kept them in there.
- JL:** Do you still make those?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. I still like them.
- JL:** Do you have the old recipe?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. I have the old recipe.
- JL:** Are they the soft ones?
- EJ:** Yah. I still have that recipe.
- JL:** Did you have a Christmas tree in the house?
- EJ:** Not very often. We would have a little one, but I don't ever remember having a big Christmas tree.
- JL:** That little tree, was it something that you picked from, maybe the creek?
- EJ:** Yah, from out of the creek. And one year here, I had a tree out of a thistle. I sprayed it and everybody had such a fit about it. It was just a perfect thistle. It was high and round and I had it over by the window there. And I decorated and it really got nice.
- JL:** You must have found a perfect thistle?
- EJ:** Yah. It was rolling through the yard and I ran out and got it.
- JL:** But did you have lights on that little tree at home?
- EJ:** Oh, yah. We had lights on the tree. There was some. We didn't light up the outside though.
- JL:** How about in church? Did you have a Christmas tree in church?
- EJ:** Yes, we did. I remember at first, we used to have candles on our Christmas tree and later on then, we got the lights on the tree. When I was just a little girl, there used to be candles on the tree and then we had the big star up on top.
- JL:** How about Santa Claus?
- EJ:** No, we had no Santa Claus. Because in those days, Santa Claus didn't go with the Christmas tradition.

- JL:** It was more of the religious idea?
- EJ:** More of the religious holiday.
- JL:** Are you familiar with Belzenickel?
- EJ:** Belzenickel, yah. They often said, [German verse]. Meaning if you aren't good, the Belzenickel will come and get you.
- JL:** Who was the Belznickle?
- EJ:** Some scary person, I suppose. I never saw the Belzenickel, but we were scared of the Belzenickel. So, we would behave!
- JL:** It was not a kind, Santa Claus type figure?
- EJ:** No, it was a scary thing. If we were naughty or something like that, the Belzenickel would come and get you.
- JL:** Hmm. Did you ever see pictures of one?
- EJ:** No.
- JL:** Did people go and wish each other a Happy New Year?
- EJ:** Yah, right.
- JL:** How did that go?
- EJ:** They would have church at midnight. They would have church, to go from the old year to the new year. So, that was their gathering place. That was our gathering place, at the church, on New Year's Night.
- JL:** So, there were no well'wishers at home?
- EJ:** Well, in the morning, we would go to the neighbors and say, Ich bin a klaanner König, Giewure rn'r nit so vering, (rest of the verse ?) meaning: I am a little king, give me not so little.
- JL:** What were you looking for?
- EJ:** For candy. We were looking for candy, because candy was precious at that time.
- JL:** You just didn't get much of that. So, that was a New Year's tradition?
- EJ:** Yah, yah.
- JL:** So, you went from house to house and you said that rhyme. Say that again, would you?
- EJ:** [German verse].
- JL:** What does that mean?
- EJ:** I am a little king.
- JL:** Oh, king, not child. Give me enough?

- EJ:** Yah, give me enough.
- JL:** Do you know any other little rhymes like that?
- EJ:** Well, this is off track here. But in those days, the people would butcher their meat, especially before Christmas. They would get their butchering done, so they had the meat for the winter. Well, one time they sent me over to the neighbors to get a schwartenmagen spuse [? nagel]. So, I went over to the neighbor and said, 'my vater a schwartenmagen spuse [? nagel]." So, he gave me a nail.
- JL:** A nail?
- EJ:** A nail. That was the schwartenmagen spuse [? nagel]. See, that's the tricks that they would play on you. See, they would use this nail to close the schwartenmagen [stomach]. It came out of the belly of the pig. Well, it was bigger than the intestine. It must have been the bladder or something that they cleaned up and put the schwartenmagen in that.
- JL:** Now, what is the schwartenmagen again?
- EJ:** That's the headcheese.
- JL:** Oh, yah.
- EJ:** See, they put that into this bag, and then they would close this bag with a nail, because this had to be boiled, the headcheese, the schwartenmagen. That's the stuff they did before the holidays, because that was the treat to get the homemade sausage, the liver sausage, the headcheese and all that.
- JL:** Did you like the headcheese?
- EJ:** Oh, I still love it. But it's not as good anymore. You can't get the real....
- JL:** Yah, that's what they say. Now, what went into that? When you helped butcher, what made the headcheese?
- EJ:** The head cheese was the head, the meat off the head. Some of the hamburger, some of the liver, some of the beef, that went in there too. Then they would season it with garlic, salt and pepper and it would just kind of gel. It was cooked so long, it would just kind of gel, you know.
- JL:** This was a pig's head now, right? Never a cow head?
- EJ:** A pig head, yah. They would use the intestines for the sausage, to make the sausage. You never went to buy sausage links and that. That was all..., they all had to be washed out then....
- JL:** I remember having to wash the boughten ones. By that time, when I was growing up, we had the boughten ones, but we had to wash them too. But it was a whole lot better than using the real ones.
- EJ:** The original ones. And I'm sure it was the kidney pocket or something [the stomach] that they used for the head cheese.
- JL:** So, why did you have to go to the neighbor for...
- EJ:** That was the joke. Because I didn't know what a schwartenmagen speef [? nagel] was. So, he sent me back with a nail.

- JL:** Now getting back to the headcheese, you never had the ears cut up in there?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. The ears were cut up in there and the tongue, too.
- JL:** Oh, the tongue too?
- EJ:** Oh yes, the tongue too.
- JL:** So, you cook that for a long time, and somehow it would gel too?
- EJ:** And you're liver sausage too. You had to cook that for a long time too.
- JL:** You made the liver sausage in the casings too?
- EJ:** Oh yes, plus in the jar [canned].
- JL:** How about blood sausage?
- EJ:** That we never made. That's Norwegian.
- JL:** That's Scandinavian, isn't it?
- EJ:** That I still have trouble with. I might eat it and didn't know what I'm eating.
- JL:** Did that headcheese keep a long time?
- EJ:** Oh yes, it was boiled and cured.
- JL:** Did you have hams, too?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. They were always cured.
- JL:** Did you have a smoke house?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. A smokehouse for the sausage too. You can't get sausage like that, now days anymore. And you know, in those days, the people would butcher the pig, make the sausage, and then sit and eat it at supper time.
- JL:** Um, hum.
- EJ:** Now days, that's a no no.
- JL:** You'd have to let it cure awhile?
- EJ:** But see, in those days, you didn't use all these chemicals on your animals. I think that's why you can't do those things today, anymore.
- JL:** Did your folks get along real well with each other?
- EJ:** Very well, very well.
- JL:** They were pretty compatible then, huh?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. Although our mother didn't do much grocery shopping. Dad did most of it.
- JL:** Is that right?

- EJ:** 'Cause he would buy in big..., like a 100 pounds of sugar, buy the coffee, buy the flour, buy the prunes and the raisins in a box. So, you know, there wasn't much to buy in the wintertime. Cornflakes was the main breakfast food. That and oatmeal.
- JL:** You mean, you did have cornflakes when you were a little girl?
- EJ:** Oh, yes. Cornflakes and oatmeal. You didn't have all these different kinds.
- JL:** Did you ever cook your own wheat?
- EJ:** Oh yes, mother did. I even have some regular ground wheat now for flour, that I use to make into bread. It gives it an altogether different flavor. It doesn't make the breads rise anymore. Your breads don't rise anymore like they used to. You know, you used to be able to bake bread and it would almost be like an angel food cake texture. But, you can't anymore.
- JL:** I wonder why?
- EJ:** I think it's the mixture of the grain that they do. They mix the hard with the soft wheat, and I think that's why.
- JL:** And before, it used to be just the hard wheat?
- EJ:** Well, you used to take your wheat to a mill, and have it ground and come home with your flour. We used to go to Kulm and they had a flourmill. Take the wheat over there and come back with the flour.
- JL:** You ate much healthier then? You ate the wheat that was grown in your field?
- EJ:** And it wasn't sprayed.
- JL:** It's different.
- EJ:** I still think that people in those days were healthier than they are today.
- JL:** So, your mom and dad, your mother didn't do much grocery shopping. So, she didn't get to town as much as your dad did?
- EJ:** Dad was always downtown. So, whenever she needed something, why she would call him and he would bring it home.
- JL:** That's when you lived in town already?
- EJ:** Yah. And then on the farm, he always went and got it. 'Cause in those days, the wife didn't get to town much. That was very seldom.
- JL:** Do you think it was hard for the wife on the farm?
- EJ:** Well, with my mother, she was so happy to have a home. Because they were raised in with relatives, and had to work real hard. At thirteen, she used to tell us how hard she would have to work, out in the barn. So, she got married when she was only seventeen. Dad came with the bicycle to see her.
- JL:** Did he court her that way?
- EJ:** Yah. He courted her with the bicycle. And then afterward, he got a horse and buggy.

- JL:** So, they always got along well?
- EJ:** Very well. I don't think I ever heard my parents fight.
- JL:** That's great.
- EJ:** I don't think I ever did. If they did, it was in silence. It wasn't calling each other names and all that.
- JL:** They respected each other? He wasn't, oh, the real ruler of the house? That sometimes happened in German Russian families, I think.
- EJ:** We often said to dad, 'why don't you give ma some money?' He said, 'what does she need money for?' But yet, when we went out of town to do clothes shopping, he was right with us. Whatever we wanted to buy, we could buy. But he wanted to be there, so he could see what we bought. But he was always ready to pay for whatever we bought.
- JL:** Uh, huh. So, money in the family was handled only by him?
- EJ:** Most of the time. Well, she would get money for church and all that. Not that she couldn't have it, but she just never had no use for it.
- JL:** Uh, hum.
- EJ:** Well, if she needed it, like to buy material and that, well, we could charge it at the store and then dad would go and pay for it.
- JL:** Do you think she was real content?
- EJ:** She was. Real content.
- JL:** What about some other traditions? Are you familiar with the German Russian funeral? What was that like?
- EJ:** Well, like the funerals, they used to carry the bodies. They used to have the bodies in the home. I remember when the pallbearers used to have to carry the bodies from the home to the church.
- JL:** Not in the casket?
- EJ:** In the casket, yes. They used to carry them to the church.
- JL:** Why were they in the home first, then? I suppose no funeral homes?
- EJ:** There was no funeral homes. They were all in the homes.
- JL:** Who usually fixed up the person, embalmed them?
- EJ:** That I often wondered. You know, when they had them in the home, did they have them embalmed?
- JL:** You don't know?
- EJ:** I don't know. Like when my niece died of spinal meningitis, she was in the home, but she was embalmed. By that time, there were undertakers. But being that she had spinal meningitis, she was under a glass. That we couldn't touch her.

- JL:** Was the funeral in your church any different than other religions?
- EJ:** Well, see the Baptists didn't have all these rituals, like the spraying of the casket and all that. Well, the Catholics don't do that now, no more either. They used to do that. They used to have offering plates on their caskets.
- JL:** Hum, why?
- EJ:** To pay the priests. This is what they did. Or whatever it went for, the pope or whatever. See, my sister married into a Catholic family in Rugby, and that's how [it was] the first time I attended a funeral, was my brother-in-law's sister that had died. Then, they had the spraying of the caskets and had this offering plate on the casket and people all walked around to put their offering in. Which they don't do anymore.
- JL:** Then there was a cemetery right beside the church?
- EJ:** Uh, hum. Not in town, but out in the country.
- JL:** Are you familiar with those wrought-iron crosses made out of iron?
- EJ:** No. The stones we had were mostly..., a stone with a little lamb on top. But there was no [iron crosses], but I don't know....
- JL:** The German wrought iron crosses, you know.
- EJ:** There were some out in that cemetery. See, we have some buried out in the country in a cemetery, and it seems to me I saw some of those wrought iron crosses out there.
- JL:** You didn't know anyone who made those?
- EJ:** No, no.
- JL:** Well Edna, it has been a real pleasure talking to you today. We have all kinds of information and...
- EJ:** Well, it's been a pleasure having you here.
- JL:** Thank you for the wonderful kuchen. I had to have two pieces.
- EJ:** You're welcome. I'll send the rest of it home with you.
- JL:** I guess we'll close now and I just thank you so much for contributing to the Germans from Russia Library. I will give you a copy of what we've said here today.
- EJ:** Ok. Thank you.
- JL:** This is October 28, 1994.