

Interview with Andrew Johs (AJ)

Conducted by Michael M. Miller

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Napoleon, North Dakota

Transcription by Lena Paris

- MM:** This is Michael M. Miller, Bibliographer at North Dakota State University in Fargo. It's June 11, 1993 and I'm in Napoleon, North Dakota and I am going to visit with today Andrew Johs. Andrew has been a long time resident born in Logan County North Dakota and I am going to let Mr. Johs introduce himself and tell us when he was born and so forth.
- AJ:** I am Andrew Johs. I was born December 10, 1909. I was born on the farm and our farm was in Shell Butte Township. When I was 4 years old, my folks moved over here in Weigel township, in Logan County.
- MM:** How many were in your family, Mr. Johs?
- AJ:** In all, you mean?
- MM:** Yes, your brothers and sisters.
- AJ:** Brothers and sisters, we were thirteen.
- MM:** Thirteen in the family? And how many are still living?
- AJ:** I think seven are still living.
- MM:** Now, you were born in what year?
- AJ:** In 1909. I'm the fourth from the older brother and two older sisters.
- MM:** And the name of your father?
- AJ:** John Johs. Johann Johs, they called him that time.
- MM:** You know what year he was born?
- AJ:** In 1879.
- MM:** And he was born where?
- AJ:** In Kleinliebental, Russia.
- MM:** And he came to America in what year?
- AJ:** In 1900. In October 2nd, he went on the ship and in October the 11th he came over here to New York. Then he came to Aberdeen, South Dakota. [He] stayed with a friend, Mr. and Mrs. Tom and Karen Kesslers for a while. Then he came up to Logan County.
- MM:** And your mother's name?
- AJ:** She was the daughter of Michael and Barbara Schwartzenberger. Her name is Johanna Johs.
- MM:** And what year was she born?

- AJ:** She was born in 1884.
- MM:** And she lived in what village?
- AJ:** In Elsass, Russia.
- MM:** And of course, that was another Catholic colony. How old was she when she came with her parents?
- AJ:** Well, she was born in 1884 and they came over here in 1892.
- MM:** So, she was eight years old?
- AJ:** Yah.
- MM:** And so your parents, of course came over and did your father or mother talk much about their life?
- AJ:** Not too much. My mother, when we got older. I was only fifteen when my dad died, and my mother talked about it and we asked questions. If it would have been now, we could have asked more. At that time, we weren't interested in that stuff.
- MM:** Right. And you spoke only German in the home?
- AJ:** Only German, everyone is German.
- MM:** Today you speak more German than English?
- AJ:** Yes, more German. Always speak German.
- MM:** Now your children. How many children are in your family?
- AJ:** Nine. Seven boys and two girls.
- MM:** And can they speak German?
- AJ:** All of them can speak German.
- MM:** So when you have a family gathering, is more German spoken than English?
- AJ:** Yah. Well, when the family gathering, then is more English, especially [when] there are some that don't understand German.
- MM:** But when you are here in the Napoleon community and you go down to play cards or get together at the Senior Citizen Center, mostly German spoken?
- AJ:** Mostly German, yah.
- MM:** Do you know, is there a different dialect or do they all speak the same German?
- AJ:** They all speak the same German around here.
- MM:** Can you still read and write German?
- AJ:** Oh yes, yes.
- MM:** And the old German script too?
- AJ:** Yah.
- MM:** So, you can read the Bible in German?
- AJ:** Yes. I got a German book I read in church.

- MM:** What about your memories, Mr. Johs, when you were growing up? You know, with such a large family on the farm, was it pretty tough for you?
- AJ:** Not too tough. At that time we had to work hard, especially in the 20's there. My dad died in 1925 and in 1929, we had a big crop. That time we had no binder yet, all by header and header box. We had 100 acres of rye and I had pitch a box and that was hard work that time.
- MM:** Did you have your certain chores? Everybody had their duties?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. Yah, everybody had their duties. In the spring, we had, used 2 gang plows and one sulky. You know what a sulky is? And a drill.
- MM:** And of course, when you grew up, you used horses, right?
- AJ:** I used horses, yes.
- MM:** Horses were very important?
- AJ:** Yah.
- MM:** And so, where did they buy the horses? Where did they get these good horses from?
- AJ:** Yah, I don't know. Every morning, we had to hitch up twenty horses to go out in the field and milk about twenty-five cows before we went out. And by 6:30, we were out in the field. We had to get up at 5:00 o'clock in the morning.
- MM:** What age were you when you did all this farm work? When did you start working?
- AJ:** I was about seventeen, eighteen, around there.
- MM:** That's when you really started working in the field?
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** And before that, you had your chores more in the farmyard?
- AJ:** Yah. Yah, feed the pigs and get the cows.
- MM:** So your father died at a rather young age, in the early forties's?
- AJ:** In the 20's, 1925 he died. He was 46, yah.
- MM:** Did your mother raise the family alone?
- AJ:** Mother raised the family and I was one of the oldest ones, had to take care of most of it. My oldest brother, he got married in 1928 and then he left. Then I had to take care of it.
- MM:** You stayed home how long on the farm?
- AJ:** I stayed until 1936, that would be ten years. Then in 1932, I got married and we stayed with my mother four years and I worked for her. Worked on the thresh machine and that time, in the 30's, there were poor years. I had to work and I didn't get nothing for that because, well, I know my mother had nothing either. So in 1936, I moved to a farm. Bought a farm and moved up here to the Julia Kelitz place.
- MM:** Now, where did you find the money to buy this farm?
- AJ:** Well, I bought it in payments so much. At that time, it was cheap. I bought two quarters and That was \$400.... No, 366 acres, I bought that for \$5100. That was getting out on bids, but the administrator was

over her. He helped me and told me what the highest bid was and I should put in \$100 higher and then I got it.

MM: And your ma stayed on the farm until what year?

AJ: Ma stayed on the farm until 1948.

MM: And then she moved to Napoleon?

AJ: She and my youngest brother Adam, they moved to Napoleon in 1948.

MM: And what happened to the farm then?

AJ: One of my brothers, John Johs had the farm. Yah.

MM: And it's still in the family?

AJ: No. Well, they moved [lived] eighteen years in Bismarck. The farm is empty now.

MM: It's being rented out?

AJ: Being rented out, yah.

MM: What do you remember Andrew about growing up? I know you were fifteen when your father died. That was a big loss, but do you remember like the first days you had to go to school?

AJ: Oh yah, I remember that.

MM: How far did you have to go to school?

AJ: A mile and a half.

MM: What was it like going to school?

AJ: Oh, that was a lot of fun, that time when I would go to school. Yah, my first teacher was Vincent Wolfe, he was from Zeeland. That must have been... I don't know, 1917 or so.

MM: The teacher could speak German?

AJ: Yah, he could speak German.

MM: Did you always have a teacher that could speak German?

AJ: Oh, no. Uh uh.

MM: So, there were times where the teacher would speak English?

AJ: Yah, we all had to speak English in school.

MM: And then it was quite interesting.

AJ: But we went outside and when we played, we all talked German.

MM: You went to school there and then how many months did you go to school?

AJ: I think it's seven months at that time.

MM: Seven months at that time. And you went up to the 8th grade?

AJ: Yah. In 1926, the last year I went to school and B.W. Maier was my teacher that year. Maybe you remember him. All I learned that year was playing pinochle and learned how to smoke. ha ha

- MM:** But what about when you go out on the playground? What kind of games did you play?
- AJ:** Yah, run around and play. Sometimes we play snowballs.
- MM:** When you were a teenager of course, you come to town once in a while. Did you get to town very often?
- AJ:** Not very often, about once a month.
- MM:** About once a month. What did you do in town? Did you go to any dances?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. I go to the dances. I remember I was at the dance when Lawrence Welk played at Napoleon in 1923.
- MM:** In 1923. That's interesting. You remember that? He came over from Strasburg?
- AJ:** From Strasburg, yah. He had a guy named Blasius. They all had nicknames that time. One was Davis and Buke and maybe you remember them too.
- MM:** Well, I remember hearing of them. Now, did you remember because you know were interested in Lawrence Welk and he became famous and so forth? Did he play pretty good at that time?
- AJ:** Oh, he played pretty good, yah. At least, we thought it was good. And Tom Gutenberg played here in Napoleon too.
- MM:** Where did he live before?
- AJ:** Yah, I think he lived at Strasburg too.
- MM:** He's another Strasburger?
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** So, you did get to the dances and then of course, you met people there and so forth.
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** So, that must have been a special [time] when you could get into town once a month?
- AJ:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** How did you get to town? With the horses?
- AJ:** Yah. I don't know, I don't think so. Well, I know one time we went up to Kintyre. They had wedding up there and we went by horseback up there, about six of us boys. That's a long time [way].
- MM:** You remember the days of Prohibition in North Dakota when they couldn't have liquor. Well, when [they had] those wedding dances and so forth, did they have a little liquor there too?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. They always had some.
- MM:** They would have a little bit of selling liquor on the side?
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** Were you ever involved with selling a little liquor?
- AJ:** No, never was involved.

- MM:** What about making some? Did you make any wedding shnapps?
- AJ:** Yah, our folks made shnapps, They had a burner too.
- MM:** And you made some yourself too?
- AJ:** No, not me. Never made it.
- MM:** Did you learn how on the farm to make like sausage and so forth?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. I was one of the head to make sausage.
- MM:** Tell us a little bit about how you make sausage.
- AJ:** Yah. Well, I don't know what to say. We bought that stuff that makes the sausage red. I don't know what they call it and put in so much salt, but we didn't measure, just by hand. You made sausage and made liver sausage and head cheese and blutwurst [blood sausage]. You know what that was?
- MM:** Do you still make some of that today?
- AJ:** No, we never butcher now anymore.
- MM:** What about your ma with such a big family? She had to do a lot of cooking?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. Yah.
- MM:** A lot of cooking?
- AJ:** And when they butchered, early in the morning. Well, the farmers, they all went together. We butchered about seven pigs, big ones, about 500-600 pounders. Until when the sun comes up, we had them all hanging already. By evening, we were done making the soup and everything.
- MM:** And then, how did they store this meat?
- AJ:** That meat? They put it in a barrel and salt in it. Make a brine and had it out in the barn.
- MM:** You didn't have a root cellar?
- AJ:** No, we didn't have no root cellar. What we did, in the windmill down there, what they call it...? When the hole went on the windmill.
- MM:** Oh, they would store it down there?
- AJ:** Down there, yah.
- MM:** Do you remember going out and doing a lot of farming? We talked about that a little bit. When you left the farm and so forth, you were still using horses. You remember the first times, I am sure, when you started using machinery?
- AJ:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** I bet that was a new experience. What was like... the first piece of machinery that you bought on the farm?
- AJ:** You mean a tractor or so? My first tractor was a 1941 model A. Then we bought a 10W McCormick, that was Leo's tractor. He had to go out and plow with that. He was about eight years old when he plowed with that already.

- MM:** So, they started pretty young?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. They started pretty young, yes.
- MM:** What about when you were growing up with such a big family and so forth. What was it like on some of these special holidays? Do you remember a little bit about how did you celebrate Christmas?
- AJ:** Christmas? Oh, we went together. My uncle Tom Schwartzenger, they lived just a mile north of us. They came down on Christmas and we were together, we was just small kids. Then the Santa Claus came and Christkindl and the Eesele. That time, we were scared. I knew who it was and still was so scared. First, we had to stand in line and say Our Father and Hail Mary and couldn't hardly say it, but we all were so scared. Then the Santa Claus asked if we were good and my dad said we were mean. One time, the Santa Claus took a chain around me and took me out to the snow pile.
- MM:** Oh, my! And you were scared!
- AJ:** Yah, and knew who it was.
- MM:** So, Christmas wasn't like it is today, of course. There is a lot of difference, but you had a beautiful Christmas family.
- AJ:** Oh, yah. We got a small package and a few peanuts in there and a few candies, that's all. But now, what do they get now? And then Easter, it was the same thing. Everybody, us kids made a nest outside of the house. That morning, we got up early and went down and found two dyed eggs in there and we were happy. We helped to dye them eggs the evening before.
- MM:** Oh, my.
- AJ:** And they said the Easter bunny just left and we seen him. They make us believe that we seen him.
- MM:** What about...? I know that when I was growing up, when I was a young boy in Strasburg, they'd celebrate these names days. [That] was a real big thing and I am sure you did that.
- AJ:** Oh, yah. A lot of times.
- MM:** Like St. Andrew, St. Joseph and all of these names days and they had to bake lots of food. Did you grow up having pigs feet?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. We had that lots of times. Leo always wants [that] when he come home. [He asks,] "no pigs feet today?"
- MM:** So, you still make pigs feet?
- AJ:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** What do they call that in German again?
- AJ:** Koladetz.
- MM:** What about wedding? How were they celebrated?
- AJ:** Oh yah, there were big weddings. When my oldest sister got married in 1927, then I and my brother Sebastian, we drove over and hired John Schwab. He came over here and had a two day wedding. Well, it was pretty near three days. The first evening, they called Polterabend [shivaree]. You remember that maybe? And he played a little that evening. The next day, they had a big dance and after the wedding,

then [a name ?], he showed us how old man Becker danced and old man Joe Bitz [did]. I suppose Joe Bitz, you knew yet, and they had a lot of fun.

MM: Tell me again, the first night, you said that German word. What was that German word again? What does that relate to in our English? What did they do there? Any special games or any special dances?

AJ: Well, no. They call it Handstreich. I don't know. And when a musician is there, then they call it a Polterabend.

MM: Oh, maybe it's like bachelor party? [a shivaree]

AJ: Yah, yah.

MM: I see. That's interesting. And then they had a full day of wedding? And how did the wedding day begin?

AJ: Well, in the morning, first is church. And when they came home, then they played everybody in and then we had a dinner. And after dinner, they start playing and dancing and those that were there, they have to give the musician something and then he played another dance. That's the way it works all the time.

MM: And the dances went on real late?

AJ: Oh, about 12 o'clock midnight and sometimes at 1 o'clock.

MM: What about...? What kind of liquor did they serve?

AJ: Home made liquor.

MM: What was that called?

AJ: Yah, shnapps, I think. I don't know. The gebrenner shnapps, they said.

MM: Did you ever make some of that?

AJ: I didn't, but my ma made it.

MM: Do you know how to make that? If you had to make it tomorrow, how would you make it?

AJ: Well, first they made a brine. Put in a big barrel, like barley or something like that and put some yeast in and they got to stir it quite a bit. Then they had a distiller and they run it through the distiller and that just drops out and it was clear liquor, alcohol.

MM: How long did that take to make this?

AJ: That takes a long time, yah.

MM: And they make of this enough for a wedding? Maybe some extra too?

AJ: Oh, yah. They usually make about six, seven quarts.

MM: What kind of food did they usually serve at a wedding?

AJ: I think they had mostly... was chicken, potatoes, pork sausage.

MM: What do you remember most about your mother? She, of course raised the family alone. Did ma talk much about her heritage?

- AJ:** Not too much. They didn't talk much, [just] what we asked. But [at] that time, we didn't care much. Now, we'd know better.
- MM:** Right. Your mother died in what year?
- AJ:** In 1965.
- MM:** How old was your mother?
- AJ:** She was 81 when she died.
- MM:** Did your mother learn the English language?
- AJ:** Yah, she could talk a little. She never went to school though. Could read a little bit. She always liked to play cards.
- MM:** What kind of cards did she play?
- AJ:** They always play pinochle or whist. That's what them old guys played.
- MM:** And ma, was she a pretty good cook?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. She was a good cook.
- MM:** What was some of her favorites?
- AJ:** Well, mostly what we get was kraut, grumbarra, and fleisch. You know what that means?
- MM:** Meat and potatoes.
- AJ:** Yah, potatoes and sour kraut and pork.
- MM:** And what kind of noodles did she make?
- AJ:** All kinds of different noodles.
- MM:** Of course Fridays, you always had noodles.
- AJ:** Yah, yah. Friday we had noodles, yes.
- MM:** Of course, here in the Napoleon area and throughout south central North Dakota, the church was very important in their life?
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** And the Christian faith, be it Lutheran or Catholic or whatever. I have a feeling that in the Johs family, church was very important.
- AJ:** Yes, yes.
- MM:** Do you remember going to the summer or Bible school?
- AJ:** Yes. Yes, I remember that. My grandparents, Schwartzenberger's, they lived there. We had a house, a separate house. When my folks moved over here in 1914, they built a house for the grandparents. They went to church pretty near every day with the buggy. And I and my sister Helen, one had to go along every day. And when they start driving, they prayed the Rosary. That's where I learned to pray the Rosary. Going down and going back and that was 5 miles one way to St. Anthony down there.
- MM:** Oh, five miles?

- AJ:** Five miles. They went pretty near every day with the two horses.
- MM:** And what parish did you go to?
- AJ:** St. Anthony, at that time.
- MM:** Does it still exist today?
- AJ:** No, no. That's closed, but the cemetery is there.
- MM:** And then of course, how many weeks did they go to Catechism school?
- AJ:** Well, when I was young, they had no... what you call a Schulemeister. Then I had to go down, I stayed down there, I think. It's two weeks we had religion. The priest from Edgeley came over here. That was in 1917 or 16 when I first made my First Holy Communion.
- MM:** How old were you on your First Holy Communion?
- AJ:** About eight years [old]. I remember that. There were four boys and five girls that went. And I think that only two boys are living yet. Leo's sister is still living, she was one. She's the one from Salem, Oregon.
- MM:** Now the service of course, was all your Catechism in German?
- AJ:** All in German at that time, yah.
- MM:** What about your Confirmation?
- AJ:** That was German too.
- MM:** That was German too?
- AJ:** At that time, we had a Schulemeister.
- MM:** When did you find...? Throughout your school years of course, in the classroom you had to speak English and sometimes that was difficult for the children. Did you find some that, like when you learned English, did you find some that didn't know much English?
- AJ:** Well, I didn't know much either.
- MM:** I see.
- AJ:** I didn't know not much from English language. I couldn't go confession in English. That's all German yet.
- MM:** All German?
- AJ:** It's going to be tough when they get a new priest here now in Napoleon. I don't know if he's a German or not.
- MM:** I see. That's interesting. You left the farm and got married in what year?
- AJ:** In 1932.
- MM:** And who did you marry?
- AJ:** Marion Schmitz. John Schmitz's daughter.
- MM:** She is how old today?
- AJ:** She is 78 years old. Last fall, on October the 25th, we celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary.

- MM:** So, you have been married 60 years now?
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** And you've lived in Napoleon how long?
- AJ:** In Napoleon? Well, I moved in..., it's about 17 months I live in Napoleon now. I always lived on the farm. Lived out there 55 years.
- MM:** Oh, you just moved? Who's on the farm today?
- AJ:** Nobody, that's empty.
- MM:** The farm is empty?
- AJ:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** Do you have...? When you moved to Napoleon and so forth and living on the farm, what about the celebrations like...? Do they still kind of have these Christmas like it used to be or how do you think is it different now?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. It's a lot of difference, yes. Yes. Now Christmas, so much money is spent now days. I know, I spend close to \$300 for my kids every Christmas.
- MM:** How many grandchildren do you have?
- AJ:** Twenty four grandchildren.
- MM:** Do you have any great grandchildren?
- AJ:** Fifteen great grandchildren.
- MM:** Oh, my. So you have a big family.
- AJ:** Yah, we had sixty two offsprings.
- MM:** The Germans from Russia have rich roots to this area and I know that you have been very active in keeping those roots going, especially in music, so that our music continues. Have you been involved with some singing in the Napoleon area?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. Yes, like we go to the Golden Age up here. Once a month, we have sing along. Leo plays and we all sing in there.
- MM:** Leo who?
- AJ:** Leo Gross.
- MM:** Did you do a lot of singing in church too?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. I was in the church choir for about 20 years.
- MM:** Do you remember any special song that you will always remember? One of the most important ones?
- AJ:** Yah. Like when the children went to Holy Communion, we always sang that, "Lasst die Kinder zu mir kommen." Did you hear that already?
- MM:** Can you sing a little bit?

- AJ:** Lasst die Kinder zu mir kommen, Ihnen ist das Himmel reich; Wer den Himmel willerwerben, Werde diesen Kleinen gleicht. Diese Worte, diese Liebe, Lass sie heut'er neuert sein; Süsser Jesu, komm und segue Alle diese Kinder dein.
- MM:** Beautiful. Yes, you've got a real good voice. Now, of course at weddings, they had lots of songs at weddings. Going back of course to your time, you maybe decided, but a lot of times these weddings were arranged when the parents would check it out. Do you remember when you decided to get married, did you have some encouragement from your family members [who to marry] or did you find your wife?
- AJ:** I found my wife. We were raised together, we went to the same school together. She went to school when she was 5 years old. She's about 5 years younger than I am. But she was baptized in St. Boniface and she got married in St. Boniface and we celebrated our 40th anniversary in St. Boniface and our 50th and our 60th.
- MM:** The 40th, 50th and 60th [wedding anniversaries].
- AJ:** And Father John was present at the 40th and at the 50th and at the 60th. My son said, "but I don't think he was present at your baptism."
- MM:** No. What about when you had weddings, they must have had lots of singing there?
- AJ:** Oh yah, we had lots of singing there.
- MM:** What kind of songs would they sing at weddings, some special ones?
- AJ:** Let's see, "Hader wald ish gree" un "Friedenheit isht my vergnegent"
- MM:** Can you sing one of those? Do you remember the words?
- AJ:** Yah, I think. "Zu frieden heit ist meine vergnegent, dast uns der liebe Gott zushegen als dan vertrau ich meinem Gott ho ho Gott als dan vertrau ich meinen Gott, wen ale dunder verbransen und alle un (301) drum liebet nur zu frieden ha ha ha heit, liebet nur zu frieden heit."
- MM:** Very good. They had lot of singing at those weddings?
- AJ:** Oh yah, we had lots of singing. We had Pius Kuhn, he was always the leader then when we sang.
- MM:** Who was in your group singing besides Pius and you?
- AJ:** Leo Gross and Alice Gross. We had good singers always there. Very good singing.
- MM:** What about going to a sadder time. You know, a funeral was always a sad time in our life today and then, but funerals were quite different then than they are today?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. We always sang that Das Schicksal.
- MM:** What was the service like, the service compared to today? At that time when they had a funeral, was it a little different than today?
- AJ:** Well, its about the same, I think. But at that time, always the Das Schicksal was sung.
- MM:** How does that go? Can you sing that?
- AJ:** Didn't Leo sing it?
- MM:** We didn't have time for that.

AJ: Das schicksal wird keinen verschonen.

MM: Let's speak a little bit about farming and the horses, 'cause the horse is very important. What you did, what the normal chores were, when you start to seed and to harvest and all that. Tell me a little about your farming experience.

AJ: Oh, we had two gang plows. And the gang plows, we had five horses and they were hitched together. There was a strap in the middle so they were together in two lines. And on the furrow side was a three horse evener and the other side, the two horse evener. On the other side, we had when we break in colts, we had them on a drag. One drag on and the horse had a big rope around it's neck and he had to go along and that's the way we break 'em in. And I used one plow and my sister Barbara had one plow and Carl had the sulky and Sebastian, he was the driller. He drilled with four horses. I think we farmed around 600 acres with them. But when I moved alone up here, I had only four horses and [farmed] all with the horses. The first year, it was tough. Well, I didn't get done because you could make so many rounds and you had to stop and feed the horses, it's noon then. My folks came up and helped me to finish it up. I had two quarters up here. Then the harvest the first year, it was tough. First year, I and my neighbor Tony Piatz, we hedged together. I had a hired man, he always used one box and we had two boxes and first we finished his, what was ripe and then went down and finished our's. That worked pretty good. Mrs. Piatz, she was stacking the stack. That was pretty good that time.

MM: Then after harvest, where would you haul the grain?

AJ: Well, hauled it to the granary with the wagons.

MM: Here in Napoleon?

AJ: Here in Napoleon, yah. Well, mostly at home. We all had granaries to put it in that time, yah.

MM: What kind of prices would you get for that?

AJ: In the 30's, it was bad. I know the first year I started farming was in 1934. I was still with my mother down there. I rented the Schmidt quarter there. I and my brother went out with two teams and farmed it. And then in '34, the rust came and nothing grew. So, when we harvested it, we had to give up the bushel. I got 29 bushels the first year. See, I got rich that year. Ha, ha.

MM: So, how was it? How did you survive during those 30's?

AJ: Well, we worked WPA.

MM: You worked in the WPA?

AJ: Oh, yes. Yes.

MM: So you had to go off the farm and work?

AJ: Yah, when I move up here. I drove over to St. Boniface, that 6 miles, and we build a road over there. That 6 miles, that was built by the WPA, all with the shovels.

MM: And there was a large crew over there?

AJ: That's a large crew. It's about 30-35 [workers].

MM: Did you go anywhere else and work on WPA projects?

- AJ:** Yah. I worked down on the Park Wilke Dam. I worked for two months, I think. Yah. And I worked in the school too. They had picked up four of 'em, me and Sebastian Mitzel, old man Sebastian Mitzel and Joe Aberly, the old man and there is another young guy. I think it was Joe Schmidt. We had to work in the school, paint the school inside and clean up everything. So, it wasn't too bad, it was inside.
- MM:** Right. So that WPA, then you had some income?
- AJ:** Yah, but how much you think?
- MM:** How much did you earn at that time?
- AJ:** Yah, I think \$16 a week with the team. That's not much income. Well, that time it was much. Yah, \$16 a week we got.
- MM:** And then during those years, you didn't put in a crop?
- AJ:** Yah, we put in a crop, but didn't get no crop. In '34 was no crop and in '36 was no crop.
- MM:** Now I am going to look at these pictures. This is real interesting. This is a new book that's just published in 1993.
- AJ:** Yah, this our kids put that together.
- MM:** The family history of Johann and Johanna Schwartzenberger Johs. There are some wonderful pictures here and let's see....
- AJ:** This is where my dad got a [tritz ?].
- MM:** Yes, I see that. But what I am interested in is.... These photos are taken of course, in Russia. Do you remember, did your folk's talk much about coming over?
- AJ:** No, they did not talk much.
- MM:** About coming over on the ship?
- AJ:** Well, everything gets in [the book] here. What kind of ship she came over [on].
- MM:** Ah huh.
- AJ:** What is it here?
- MM:** It's listed there, yes.
- AJ:** On the ship Kaiser Maria Theresa.
- MM:** Yes. By the way, can you still read German?
- AJ:** Yah.
- MM:** And you can write it too, yet?
- AJ:** I can write it too, yet.
- MM:** Oh, wonderful. So, you still read. Now, as far as you know, did everyone in your Johs family, did they all come to America? Did any relatives...?
- AJ:** No, not in the Johs family. My dad came all alone from over there.
- MM:** Ah huh. So there were still some that decided to stay?

- AJ:** Sure, like them here. Where is he now? There is the grandparents, the great grandparents and started from here. And here is my Andrew Johs, that would be my grandparent and Helen Malsum. Leo is still looking for this Helen Malsum. But first thought he had it and I told him no, that isn't the right one because she was born in 1807 and I said that's a older one.
- MM:** Did you ever have any correspondence with anyone over in Russia?
- AJ:** No, never. Leo wrote over once and [to] get some information but [and] send a check along and they send it back. Didn't get it.
- MM:** Now this family history of course, is very important for the next generation?
- AJ:** That's for sure, yah.
- MM:** But I am so glad that, you know, the children are taking an interest. But what do you see? Looking back to your life and on the Germans from Russia you know, and now there is more effort to publish you know, and so forth. What would you suggest [are] some of the fondest memories that you have? Let's say when you were fifteen up through to your retirement. What are some of the highlights of your life that you'd have to say that you'd always want others to remember?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. I am very interested in that heritage. I and Leo, we always work together and when we find something and so. Like last time he was home, he said he wrote to this Dickenson from California about the Kleinliebental [village]. They had a article in that he was over there in Kleinliebental and somebody wants [to] find out from relatives, just write them. He said he didn't had no answer yet.
- MM:** Right. More and more people of course, are going over now to visit their homeland. But unfortunately, they won't find [much]. There are no more Germans in those villages any more over in Russia. But we're trying to uncover records you know, that exist.
- AJ:** Yah. Yah, maybe.
- MM:** You know, family records, land records and so forth. But the...
- AJ:** And cemeteries. I think they got cemeteries where they could find some.
- MM:** Right. The Germans from Russia have a rich heritage in Folklore also and of course, music is part of it. Music was an important part of it. Can you think of anything else that you remember, other than music, that you used to have that was unique? Did you play any special kind of activities?
- AJ:** Well, I was in the band in 1923. Martin Brown was our band leader down at St. Anthony and I got a picture of that and I got the knee pants on that time. They are not like the one they used to have now. They got the rubber around here and Leo Gross asked me once how come I had the knee pants on. I said, "that was the style that time."
- MM:** Oh, what instrument did you play?
- AJ:** The trumpet.
- MM:** Trumpet.
- AJ:** There were about some twenty in that band, in that picture. And there are only 4 of them left, the others all died. Joe Gross, maybe you know Joe Gross and George Gross. They are on there, and I and Sebastian Sperle.

- MM:** And that band was a pretty good band, I'll bet.
- AJ:** Pretty good band, yah.
- MM:** Did they play for concerts?
- AJ:** Oh, yah. Not concerts, but here in Napoleon they celebrate 4th of July. Like where this house stands now, they had a big hall. Like Louie Olig, he built our skating rink here and in that hall, I was in the band at that time. We were hauled with the hayrack, had the tractor on there.
- MM:** Did you play in other towns too?
- AJ:** Well, Napoleon I think. And Wishek, we played once and down in Zeeland, in McIntosh County there.
- MM:** What about in the church? You know, the church not only out there at St. Boniface, but then here in Napoleon and so forth. What were some special times in the church? Did they have church fairs? They used to have these church dinners?
- AJ:** Yah. They used to have, but not now anymore.
- MM:** But you remember those big days when they celebrated a certain feast day?
- AJ:** Yah, St. Boniface Day.
- MM:** And what did they do on St. Boniface Day? Do you remember how it was celebrated?
- AJ:** Yah. There was about four or five priests here and everybody got company at that time. We had company from Aberdeen that time, when they had St. Boniface. Everybody went to church when this feast day was, and in the evening there was a big dance.
- MM:** Oh, they had a dance as part of it?.
- AJ:** Not at St. Boniface, but someplace else. They had one St. Boniface [dance] up by Joe Schumachers, [a] barn dance.
- MM:** Oh, a barn dance. And what was a barn dance like?
- AJ:** Huh?
- MM:** How did they have a barn dance? That's interesting. Remember going to barn dances?
- AJ:** Oh, yes!
- MM:** What were those like?
- AJ:** Well, up where the hayloft is, they had it emptied and then they had the barn dance up there. When they built a new barn, they had a few barn dances before they put something in there. Yah, we did a lot of barn dances here.
- MM:** And what kind of music and dances did they have?
- AJ:** Mostly waltzes and polka and stuff. Old time dances.
- MM:** Like you said, John Schwab would come over and play?
- AJ:** Well, John Schwab didn't play here often. At [that] time, was Wangler and then Weigel. They had a band here and now they got different ones.

- MM:** And so, I think that entertainment was.... They had good entertainment [at] that time. And there was a lot of family gatherings and so forth, and you must remember too. You know, you were still on the farm, but you must remember watching the Lawrence Welk show, don't you?
- AJ:** Oh, yes. Yes, I watch him now always.
- MM:** But did you watch some of those early shows when he just started?
- AJ:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** In the 1950's? What was it like when they would watch? Was that pretty important in their life to watch the Lawrence Welk show?
- AJ:** Yah, yah. That was important.
- MM:** And usually you got all your chores done so you could watch the Lawrence Welk show?
- AJ:** Yah. Yah, I always enjoy it.
- MM:** Are there quite a few people here in Napoleon still watching the Lawrence Welk show?
- AJ:** Not too many. Not them young guys, they don't care for that.
- MM:** It's the older crowd? Have you been over to see the Welk homestead?
- AJ:** Yah. When Leo was home last time, we were over. Didn't Leo say something?
- MM:** Yes. And did you enjoy it?
- AJ:** Oh, I enjoyed it. Yes.
- MM:** When you went there and looked this over, did it provide some memories for you?
- AJ:** Yah. In the grainery there where they got all different kinds of tools, they asked me. I had to tell them what this is and what that is.
- MM:** The blacksmith shop?
- AJ:** Blacksmith shop, yah.
- MM:** Of course, blacksmithing was quite important, you know.
- AJ:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** And they had to do a lot of things with that which they don't do today anymore.
- AJ:** And about them iron crosses. Who made them? Wasn't it a Schneider that made them iron crosses?
- MM:** Yes, a Louie Schneider made many of them.
- AJ:** Louie Schneider. And that was our hired man.
- MM:** Oh.
- AJ:** That was our hired man. It must have been in 1910 or 1911, around there. We had 2 hired men, Vincent Mitzel and [name ?], they called him always.
- MM:** I'm not sure it was the same Louie Schneider, but it could have been.
- AJ:** It could have been, yah.

- MM:** That was very important to our German-Russian people, especially the Catholic Black Sea Germans. The iron crosses are very important to the heritage of our German-Russian people. Where in this area are there some of these iron crosses? In what cemeteries?
- AJ:** St. Anthony's I think, got the most. They got lot of them down there. St. Boniface got a few of them too.
- MM:** And St. Anthony's is located where?
- AJ:** Straight south [of] Napoleon, about 12 miles south and a mile west, yah. It's a little better than a mile, maybe 2 miles.
- MM:** The heritage of the Germans from Russia hopefully will last many years well into the future, but it's very important that together we preserve it by telling our children and our grandchildren. How are you finding the next generation? Like when you talk about this, are you finding interest within your children?
- AJ:** Well, the children are interested, but not the grandchildren anymore. I don't know. Like Joe Blott down here, he said his kids don't want to know nothing about that. But he bought 5 books of them [the history]. He said each one got to get a book because that's the most important. Yah.
- MM:** Yes, its very important to him and all documented. The heritage of the Germans from Russia also is very important for family research and so we have to document this and publish this. And so it's wonderful that they published this in 1993 for the next generation, so they can study it with photographs, with diagrams, with family history, with names and so forth. You have again, how many children do you have?
- AJ:** Nine children. Seven boys and two girls.
- MM:** And they are all still living?
- AJ:** Oh yah, all living.
- MM:** And how many grandchildren?
- AJ:** Twenty three. One died, we had twenty four. And fifteen great grandchildren.
- MM:** You have a large relationship.
- AJ:** Yah. Sixty two offsprings, they said. But my sister Helen, they got 141 in here, grandchildren and great grandchildren.
- MM:** And how old is Helen?
- AJ:** She will be 85 in July the 15th. She is a year and a half older than I am.
- MM:** And she's in good health?
- AJ:** Not too good. She always got headache, but she comes around. She's all alone out there.
- MM:** When you moved here to Napoleon from the farm just recently, was it quite an adjustment for you to move to town?
- AJ:** Well, not too bad. We moved in October the 5th and that day, Adam Johs from Linton, that's my second cousin, they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. And we moved I think, 3 loads in. Then we had dinner and we had it unloaded. Went down to the bar or the cafe and had dinner. And after that, my

brother-in-law Anton, Tony, he's got a big van, he picked us all up and we went over and the other boys that are home, they moved. When we came home, they had everything in here already.

- MM:** Oh, wonderful. So, you had a lot of help. Like in the spirit of the Germans from Russia, everybody helps out.
- AJ:** Everybody helps. When I came over here, they asked me. I told them we moved to town, they didn't want to believe it. I said sure, "I can talk a little English already."
- MM:** Are you finding today here in Napoleon you speak more German than English?
- AJ:** When our neighbors are together, we always speak German. But when we go to Golden Age, we speak English. Yah.
- MM:** The German-Russians of course, have done a lot of publishing of books and so forth as you know. Of course, your son has shared with you this material and they have conventions and they have different activities and so forth. But what do you see? To you? We mentioned this earlier, I think to you, your rich roots has helped, for example, [keep] the music alive that has been important to you. To keep that going and singing today yet. Do you still get together once in a while and still do some singing?
- AJ:** Well, not much.
- MM:** Not too much anymore?
- AJ:** But when they had the German Convention in Bismarck, were you there too, then?
- MM:** Ah huh.
- AJ:** We sang up there, I and Leo and Alice Gross and Andy Weigel.
- MM:** Before we close, I am going to have you sing one of your favorites. You can sing whatever you want to sing. You have such a good voice, we have got to have this down and recorded.
- AJ:** Yah, my voice don't last very long.
- MM:** Well, we'll just have a short one. What kind of a favorite lied that you have that you like to sing once in a while when you're with Leo?
- AJ:** With Leo? I don't know. Let's see. What my favorite was when we sing that, "Schmalen Weg".
- MM:** Oh, let's hear that one. That one I heard before. Let's hear you sing that one, that's a good one.
- AJ:** It don't sound good when one sings alone.
- MM:** That's all right.
- AJ:** Ich ge den schmalen lebens weg... I don't remember.
- MM:** Ah, yes. A person forgets the words. You are sometimes used to having the notes or the book?
- AJ:** Yah, we got a book where we have that in there.
- MM:** Anything else you would like to say before we close? We've had a wonderful discussion here and we are going to of course, place this in our Germans from Russia heritage collection so that researchers can come some day and listen. And your family can come and listen about your heritage and so forth. But

any other comments that you'd like to make Mr. Johs before we close? As kind of a memory for people some day when they are listening to this tape?

AJ: I wouldn't know now. I do a lot of reading about that Germans from Russia. Leo always brings them books home and I read them all through.

MM: So, you keep up on your heritage?

AJ: Oh, yah. Yah. I read the Lawrence Welk book, and Professor Height's book I read, and Stummp book I read already.

MM: Oh, wonderful! Did you ever have a chance to meet Professor Height or Dr. Stummp?

AJ: Oh, yah. We sang together here, I and Professor Height. I and Professor Height and John Gross. You knew John Gross? We were always together. We sang a lot of them songs.

MM: So, Professor Height was with you here in Napoleon?

AJ: In Napoleon. He was here lot of times by John Gross. And John called out [there] and we came in here and then we sang that evening and we enjoyed it.

MM: Did you enjoy being with Professor Height?

AJ: Oh, yah. Yah, he explains everything. He knows what Johs mean and where the names came [from].

MM: He wrote wonderful books.

AJ: Oh, yah. Yah.

MM: And his collection of course, some day we hope his materials will all come to North Dakota.

AJ: I made a tape once and John Gross had it and he liked it so well. Then he sent one to Professor Height and one to Karl Stummp over there. Professor Height said when he gets so worried about things, he plays the tape. All German songs.

MM: And did you get to meet Dr. Stummp too?

AJ: Uh, uh. Never met him.

MM: Never met him? He died. He's gone too, now.

AJ: I know it, yah.

MM: But the life of those people, it's good because they have written many important books for our heritage and it's good that you read those to learn more about your heritage. And so....

AJ: But couldn't we find out if there are some Johs' over there, like them here [in the book]? This is interesting. One of John Johs' girls made this. It's a family tree. They got all the birthdays in here.

MM: Yes, this will be valuable. So as we close, we are closing the chapter of a wonderful book and a wonderful life and let me just look here at the end.... The Johs family, of course, is featured throughout and here we find, yes we find the family of Andrew and Mariann Schmidt Johs who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in October of 1992. Is that correct?

AJ: October the 25th, yah.

MM: So, you have had a full life with a large family. And I am so glad to see that, for example, your son Leo and others in the family have taken an interest, not only to preserve it for the future but they have also published. So, I want to thank you for taking the time on a June afternoon and sharing with me some memories that you had and sharing it with others. Thank you so much.

AJ: You bet and thank you Mike.