

Autobiographical Interview of Leo Johs (LJ)

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Fargo, North Dakota

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My name is Leo A. Johs of 1454 16th Street South, Fargo, North Dakota. It's October 30, 1991 and I will be giving you a little Johs history dating back to about 1700. After that I will give you some history of myself starting about the time I started school.

I was born was born on November 22, 1933 on a farm about 10 miles southwest of Napoleon, North Dakota in Weigel Township at Grandpa John Johs' farm. My parents are Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Johs of Napoleon, North Dakota and Mary Ann Schmidt also of Napoleon, North Dakota and the Saint Boniface Church, Kintyre, North Dakota was our parish. My grandparents were Johann Johs, was born November 3, 1879 in Klein-Liebental, Russia. His wife was Johanna Schwartzenberger born in Elsass, Russia on February 20, 1884, died April 22, 1965 at Napoleon, North Dakota.

My grandparents on my mother's side were John Schmidt born March 10, 1874 in Kandel, died February 9, 1926 and is buried at Saint Boniface Church in Kintyre, North Dakota. His wife Theresa Dudenhafner was born June 23, 1877 in Kandel, South Russia. She died July 11, 1928 and is also buried at Saint Boniface Church, Kintyre, North Dakota. John Johs' parents were Andrew Johs and Helen Moser from Russia. I have no other information.

Johanna's folks were Michael Schwartzenberger born August 15, 1856 at Elsass, Russia. He died March 19, 1920 and is buried at Saint Anthony's Church at Napoleon, North Dakota. His wife Barbara Flagel was born October 1858. She died in 1931 and is buried at Saint Anthony's Church at Napoleon.

On the Schmitz side, John's father's name was Martin Schmidt born in 1827 in Kandel, Germany and died in 1883. I don't know where he was buried. His wife Theresa Dietz was born in 1829 and died January 15, 1911 and is buried at Saint Boniface Church at Kintyre, North Dakota. Theresa Dudenhafner's parents were Joseph Dudenhafner and his wife was Julia Kurtz. Great-grandfather's parents were Jacob Johs born March 28, 1806 in Kandel, South Russia. And no information on the other.

Michael Schwartzenbergers parents were Tom Schwartzenberger and Katharina Fahler. No other information.

On the Schmitz side, Martin Schmitz' father's name was Nicholas Schmitz born November 15, 1805 and his wife's name was Ursula Dietz. No other information on the Dudenhafners.

Jacob Johs parents were Johann George Johs and his wife Susanna Waltz. No other information given.

On the Schmitz side, Nicholas Schmitz folks were Michael Schmitz born June 28, 1782. His wife was Elizabeth Gruber. No other information given.

On the Dietz side, Jacob Dietz was born May 13, 1787 and his wife Barbara L. Dietz was born November 30, 1765. No other information given. This is it on the great-grandparents, Grandparents' history.

As I can recall, here is some history of the days before school and up to now. When I started school in Starkey Township when I was six years old, I could not speak a word in English and had never heard about it. So I started School and my first teacher was Sebastian Welder and some of my other teachers were: Maggie Gross, Barbara Mitzel, Julia Silbernagel, Betty Griedle, and Esther Magnuson was my 7th and 8th grade teacher. In the summer, we went to a Catholic Catechism School at Saint Boniface Church in Kintyre.

My first Holy Communion partner was Pius Rohich and when I was confirmed by Cardinal Aloysius. My confirmation partner was John Kudd and my sponsor was Peter Schmitt from Edgeley, North Dakota; one of my first cousins. I have been baptismal sponsor three times and they were for: Kevin Leyer, Janet Horner, and Carla Fiest. My baptismal sponsors are: Marion Wiegel and Joe Leyer. I have been best man for sister Viola, married to Christ Leyer, and to Adam Leyer and Eddy Johs. I have been driver for other occasions for Lillian Wiegel, Aloysius Leyer, and I was an usher at Ellen Johs; and I believe I was an usher at other places which I do not remember.

When Leo was 18 years old, he went for his army physical at Fargo, North Dakota and did not pass. He has had a number of illnesses starting with mumps, back surgery in 1969, appendix surgery in 1970, tonsillectomy, hernia, sinus, and I believe the next thing will be right knee surgery.

Leo used to work on the farm and I remember myself and mom working very hard in the summertime shocking and hulling hay and going home milking the cows. Later on we got a Model A tractor and a McCormick 10 on lugs, and I used to plow on the farm. I worked on the farm until 1954 when I started working for Martin Schwartzberger.

I remember the day I helped shingle the Aloysius Gross barn. I was getting a dollar an hour and I thought that was a lot of money, making \$9.00 that day. Later on I helped build the Albert Strosberly barn which is owned now by Albert Shoemaker and worked there a couple of days. Then on November 21, I quit.

The next year I started working for Schwartzberger in May and worked at Hague, North Dakota at the Leo Welk farm building a house. And then we had jobs in Bismarck. I was working with Martin Schwartzberger building houses in Wishek, Napoleon, Hazelton, Zeeland until the fall of 1957 when Martin Schwartzberger moved to Yakima, Washington. Richard Schwartzberger, his brother, took over and I worked with Richard till February 1961 when I was laid off and worked no more. Some of the people that worked with Schwartzberger crew were: Sonny Johs, Leo and Adam Johs, Tony Aberle, Alex Gross, Allen Moser, Bob Mitzel, and Willis Wiegel. It was fun working with those guys. We used to stop at the bar and have beers every night after work.

In May, 1961 I started working with De Vries of Valley City. At Edgeley, North Dakota where we built a house and high school. My foreman was Joe Sherer, also a former Napoleonite. Joe was a very nice man and I think he is a millionaire now and lives in Valley City. From Edgeley I went to Valley City worked there one month.

The hardest thing of my life I helped mix cement for the Valley City Sheyenne Manor, and I put 600 bags cement into the mixer. By the time we were done I had a big bulge above my navel, and I believe that is when I got my hernia. The next day we went to Sykeston, North Dakota and poured the floor at the high school gymnasium. We got to Sykeston at 2:30 in the morning and we worked until 10 pm. That was the hardest day in my life when I shoveled sand for eight hours. After eight hours I was put on rocks and we finished at 10 pm. Then I left for Napoleon, my home town, and on the way home I heard on the radio that my uncle Tony Schmidt had passed away who was land commissioner. I was sore the next day, I could hardly (?) and that was by far the hardest day I had ever worked in my life.

In 1962, Leo started working with Byron Nelson Construction Company of Bismarck. Tony Johs also was working for him and he is the one that got me a job with that company. I started at \$2.00 an hour and was getting \$2.25 at Valley City, but I did not like the moving around as I did in 1961. I worked for Byron Nelson Construction Company until February, 1966 when I started working for Kirschmann Manufacturing in Bismarck. We were making fertilizer attachments and spray coops. It was a large company. I worked there until June, 1969 when I got laid off and had a lot of back troubles. Then I worked from June, 1969 until October helped my brother-in-law, Christ Leyer's house.

Had back surgery October, 1969 at Saint Alexius Hospital in Bismarck and after that I was laid up for six months. After six months, I started a manpower program in January, 1970 and from January, 1970 until April when I had finished. I went to Bismarck Junior College for two months to work in the kitchen to find out if I liked food service. When I finished at Bismarck Junior College, the night before I got sick and then had an appendectomy. I was laid up another month before I started working with Joe Mattern until September. Then I studied at the Chef's Technical School in Moorhead, MN. It was an 11 month course, and I finished in July, 1971. I really enjoyed Chef's school as I never had any high school or college before. I was in the top three in the class of 32. I worked one month at the Ramada Inn, when I decided I did not like the hours all times of the day. On September 8, 1971, I started working at St. Luke's Hospital; I was there for twenty years on September 8, 1991.

[Third person narration:]

Leo loved sports and ever since I was 17 years old, I spent lots of money going to basketball games, softball, and baseball. Leo used to play softball in his early 20's as a shortstop or third baseman. Later on, Leo played in the Napoleon Baseball Team, sitting on the bench mostly but did get to play second base in right field. I remember the time when we played at Braddock and all the weaker hitters were up and I got to play, and I got a hit and we beat Braddock that day. I remember the year when we went to Gackle when I played the entire game on second base and went on to beat Gackle and my cousin, Leo Schmitt, was the pitcher. Gackle went on to win the State Amateur Baseball Tournament.

Leo also liked bowling. In 1959, Napoleon started a bowling alley and we had to set pins by hand; so the first year I played in the league I averaged 152. Played in tournaments and was on the traveling "B" team. Also at Bismarck I was in the Eagles League and was secretary for two years. Leo won various tournaments; one big one was when he won the state championship at Bismarck the WNAX Bowling Tournament. I bowled a 648 scratch a 216 average, one singles with a 711 and got to bowl at Yankton, South Dakota against Jankons from six other states.

When Leo moved to Fargo, he started bowling again and bowled about 6 or 7 years. On his last year, he averaged 172 with a 12 pound ball. He doesn't bowl in league anymore because of his work and also back and knee.

Leo never got into much trouble. When we used to go to dances, Leo usually had to drive as he didn't drink much. Although a couple of times he couldn't drive and he never did any bad things, but at one time at the Napoleon Mitzel Bar he and Freddy Bitz were in the bar all evening visiting. When they left Leo said to Freddy, "Lets grab an empty beer case and set it in front of the basement window," as Paul Welder had bought a case earlier in the night and they set it out by the basement window which they usually did, and somebody stole it. So we set the empty case in front of the window making Ben believe they brought the case back.

The next morning Ben Bauer went across the street to Bauer Body Shop and tells the Bauer boys, Ray and Al, what happened last night. Whether Paul Welder bought a case of beer and set it by the window and somebody

stealing it. On the way back Ben noticed that the case of beer setting in front of the window but empty; so Ben was happy "Oh they were good boys anyway" at least they brought the empty case back and I saved a dollar. It was Leo and Freddy that had set the empty case there, so Ben went up town and told everybody what happened last night.

Ben says he was finger printing the case, so Leo and Freddy were worried then we told Margaret Mitzel to tell Ben Bauer that Leo and Freddy set the empty case there. We had a lot of fun, but we could have gotten into trouble.

Leo joined the Knights of Columbus at Napoleon in 1957 and is still a member, The Eagles Club in Bismarck in 1962 and is still a 28 year member. Joined the Moose Lodge at Fargo in 1974 and is still a member. Also the Germans from Russia in 1978 and a singles club. He was president of the Germans from Russia Society in Fargo, and has been running Pinochle and Whist tournaments since 1989 and likes to play cards and so do most of the Johns'. Leo has belonged to Saint Mary's in Fargo ever since he finished Chef's school 20 years ago.

He also likes moving and only moved 12 times in 20 years since he is in Fargo. His longest is at: 1405 16th St (which was six years ago).

Something unusual happened to Leo in June, 1991. Leo, who never forgets things, did forget! He was driving without a driver's license for five years since 1985. He had to show his drivers license when he bought a \$15 item at Osco Drug Store in Fargo. The clerk told him it was an old one, and Leo said, "That must be my old one because I think I have the new one at home." He could not find the new one so he went to the Drivers Division and checked. They told him 1985 was the last time he paid. Leo had to take the drivers test all over; and it cost \$5 each time you took the test. He had to take it four times and finally he got 22 questions right out of 25. The first few times he got up to 23 and the machine would shut off. So he passed the written test, and then he had to take the driver's road test and he passed it getting a 92. He said to his dad, "It's sure nice to know that I've got a drivers license again."

Leo has six brothers and two sisters, and has always gotten along real well with them. On my 50th birthday, they really surprised me at the Ramada Inn. Everybody came except Glen Leyer and Karen. When I arrived there were about forty people who sang "Happy Birthday" with a cake saying, "Isn't it the shits to be 50?!" with candles and a black turd of frosting: also a clock and a yellow tea shirt.

My brothers and sisters who attended were: Mrs. Christ Leyer, Viola; Mrs. Sally Fiest, Bloomington, MN; Hilbert Johs and his wife Diana and his sons Blaine and Jason; Mr. & Mrs. Perry Johs, and Carol and daughters Stephanie and Jenifer; Mr. & Mrs. Joe Johs, wife Judy Dean, Paula and David; Albert Johs and Mary Johs; Marty Johs from Napoleon; and my youngest brother Myron Johs of Lisbon; my friends Jim Eaton was there, Larry Notsbush, Cheryl Hesner, Eddy Johs, and Mr. & Mrs. Breckenheiser all of Fargo.

I had forgotten to mention earlier that when we were kids we used to get to town on July 4th, Corn Show, and Santa Claus Day. In those days you could buy most of the stuff for a nickel or a dime, and it was a treat to get to Napoleon once a year. I can't remember when I first got to Bismarck, but I believe it was about 1953 when I was hospitalized for about a week.

The first time I came to Fargo, I was 18 years old when I belonged to 4@H Club. The county agent, Charlie Mitzel, took us to Fargo to the Red River Fair. I was on the judging team and I didn't do that well, but I do remember him taking us to Fargo/Moorhead Twins Game where I got to see Roger Maris for the first time.

The next time I went for my Army physical, the other time was when I bought a television, and I drove along with Eddy Moser to pick it up at Rott Keller Supply. Other than that, I never got to Fargo. Later on, I got to Bismarck when I started working. I lived in Bismarck from 1962 to 1969, and I do miss Bismarck. Someday I may move back to Bismarck when I retire.

I have a questionnaire sheet which was given as a guide to go by. So it asks from what country did your ancestors come? My ancestors came from Russia and came in about 1900. Grandma came a little earlier. They come over by boats and got to Aberdeen, South Dakota and from there they went to Eureka, Zeeland and then to the farm 10 miles southeast of Napoleon where they had a homestead. My grandparents were mostly farmers as far as I know.

The questionnaire says what kind of entertainment as a kid? We played all kinds of small games and cards. As an adult, I did bowling, dancing, and playing cards as my entertainments.

I started school Number Two which is about five miles south of Napoleon. There is no school there anymore.

My parents were Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Johs. My grandparents were Mr. and Mrs. John Johs and Mr. and Mrs. John Schmitt.

I did play on softball teams, baseball, and bowling. I was never a good ball player and was there more or less for the fun and drinking of beer. In bowling, I was not that bad and was a state champion and did win a couple of the other tournaments.

Then it asks did you ever raid the neighbor's garden or watermelon patch? Although I didn't do things like that. I didn't see that it was any fun.

Now I shall go to some other items. The worst blizzard I saw was in February, 1966 at Napoleon. It was a four-day blizzard. I can't remember how many people died, but that was one of the worst blizzards. We couldn't milk from Friday until Saturday night. My dad and my three youngest brothers were going to the barn. It stormed so bad they had to turn back. As the two youngest ones weren't at the barn when Dad and Marty were there, so they turned around and went back to the house. They were in the house already.

They had a party for me on my 50th birthday.

Muddy roads? We had lots of them in the spring in the early 50's. I remember we used to take the tractor and drive to Number Three school on the highway.

I have had many pastors. My present pastor is Father Al Bitz.