

Interview with Pauline Munsch Nelson (PN)

Conducted by Betty (BM) & Chris Maier (CM)

March 27, 1997

Mesa, Arizona

Transcription by Joy H. Stefan

Edited by Mary Lynn Axtman

- BM:** Today is March 27, 1997, and I am Betty Maier. I'm a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University Libraries in Fargo, and Chris Maier is also here as a volunteer interviewer. It's a pleasure to visit with Pauline Munsch Nelson, Munsch being her maiden name, in Mesa, AZ. We are at her apartment or room at the New West Senior Housing Center. Five words is too long for me! We're here, and Pauline is going to answer some of the questions that we have on our interview form, but we're going to have a lot of other interesting things going on too. So, let me ask you, what is your name, and your birth date, and where you were born.
- PN:** My name is Pauline Munsch Nelson. I was born on 3 September 1911 in Zeeland, North Dakota. Two miles south of Zeeland. [she was speaking German here]
- BM:** Okay, now will you say that in English?
- PN:** Say it in English? Oh, my name is Pauline Munsch Nelson. I was born September the 3rd, 1911 at Zeeland, North Dakota, 2 miles south of the little town, McIntosh County. And we lived in a farm that was divided between North and South Dakota. So we had one well with a windmill in North Dakota, and then had a pipe running from there to South Dakota, because we had the cattle pastured in that section, and that's where they got their water from out of the trough.
- BM:** How did you know which was North Dakota and which was South Dakota?
- PN:** Well, I think we knew it all our lives, because Grandpa Munsch used to live on that farm, and he had most of the buildings in South Dakota at that time. But that was made out of sod houses. So, when they built their new home, they built it in North Dakota. So there was just a road that divided the two. They had a statue in the corner of our garden where the two roads met. One was in North Dakota and one was South Dakota. It said it right on that granite.
- CM:** Those were state boundary markers.
- PN:** That's right. They took it out when they built a road through there, a county road, instead of just a little two by four. So I don't know where it went to.
- BM:** There are some markers still along that border. I know we saw it when we went down to the Missouri River, so there are probably some left, but not very many. My next question is going to be, "what was the name of your father, and do you know what village he was born in?"
- PN:** Now, do you want this in English or German?

- BM:** We want everything in English, and the reason for that is a lot of people don't understand German, that are going to be using this.
- PN:** My dad's father was Andrew Munsch. And what was the next question?
- BM:** Do you know what village he came from?
- PN:** Oh, yes. He came from Worms, South Russia. W-O-R-M-S. And my dad was from Johannestal. [see note below.]
- BM:** Now was that your grandfather we were talking about, Andrew?
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** That was Andrew, and now your dad was Christian?
- PN:** Right, Christian Munsch.
- BM:** Do you know where he was born, then? Your father was born in Johannestal. [She has used both Johannesburg and Johannesfelt, but in Stumpp's book, I only find Johannestal listed.] And your grandfather, your father's father, was born in Worms. Okay, we've got that straight, then. Where did your father die?
- PN:** At Napoleon, when we lived there, but he was buried in Artis, South Dakota. And his dad, Andrew Munsch, is also buried there. He's about the fifth or eighth one in the first row. They went down the rows. They didn't have the plots at that time. So whoever died next would be the next one.
- BM:** Next in line. What was the name of your mother?
- PN:** Her maiden name was Gruszie.
- BM:** How do you spell that?
- PN:** G-R-U-S-Z-I-E.
- BM:** Okay, and where was she born?
- PN:** In Kassel, South Russia.
- BM:** Did she come over with her family, then?
- PN:** With her mother. Her dad had died in Russia.
- BM:** Where did your mother die?
- PN:** Mother died in Wishek hospital. But we took her down there for burial.
- BM:** At Artis. How many brothers and sisters did you have in your family?
- PN:** No brothers; two sisters. And they were older than me.
- BM:** Can you name the oldest one?
- PN:** Minnie, and she died in '91. And Emma died at Napoleon and is buried at Napoleon. She died in 1990.

- BM:** Do you have any recollections of what your mother told you about the old country?
- PN:** She used to tell me a lot of stories, but at that time I did not write them down. And I'm very, very sorry I didn't, because they were very, very interesting, because of being over there. She was only 15 years old when she came over, and she had even worked out in the steppes, you say?
- BM:** Yes, the prairie?
- PN:** Yes, and they didn't have harvesting machines at that time. So they would put it in stacks, and then when there was a good wind, they would try to get the grain off of the straw. So she'd have to be out there and put it in the wind in order to get the grain to settle on the ground, which they could fill up in containers and use or sell.
- BM:** That's interesting. Any other stories?
- PN:** I don't remember many stories, but I know she would tell me just to amuse me sometimes. But I didn't write them down.
- BM:** Isn't that too bad that we don't do that.
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** Was there anything that your father told you about the old country?
- PN:** Dad was three years old when he came over. Sometimes when they were visiting with people, he would start telling them about Russia, and Mother would interrupt and say, "You don't know anything about Russia at three years old!"
- BM:** He had probably heard some stories, though.
- PN:** Yes, sure. He would remember those stories and tell them when they'd visit.
- BM:** Are there any other stories about villages, specifically, that you might have learned from your grandparents?
- PN:** Yes, Grandmother used to tell me too. I lived with them quite a bit because my mother was sick. She would tell me about...in fact she taught me to count up to ten, but I don't remember all of it, in Russian. [122 - she is counting in Russian.] And then the other two I don't remember.
- BM:** That's wonderful! Did your relatives ever wish they were back in the old country? Were they homesick?
- PN:** I think my grandmother was. But not my mother. My mother was always fearful that someday somebody was going to come and send her back to Russia, because she had no documents. And Dad would get these Census reports from the County and show her that she was stable, but she wouldn't believe. She would worry about them coming and taking her and putting her back to Russia.
- BM:** When they came over, how did they come? Do you have any details?
- PN:** Yes. On the ship De Grosse - The Great. It took about three weeks to get over.
- BM:** Do you know where they landed?
- PN:** Yes, in New York, on that island.

- BM:** Ellis Island?
- PN:** Yes. Mother told me they had lots of rats and lots of mice on there. It was filthy on the ship. But, of course, they had to eat, and Grandma.... I still have the container - I hope they didn't throw it away. But anyway, she had that salt that they use for a laxative.
- BM:** Epsom Salts.
- PN:** Epsom Salts, and she would take that every two days or so. She never was without it as long as I knew her. That's what was in there, and that's what she brought over in that container.
- BM:** What year are we talking about that they came over. Do you remember?
- PN:** I would say 18... No, they came over in 1900. And Mother was born in 1885. So she was 15 years old. She remembered a lot of those things, if I had just written them down. But she came over with her mother, as well as her brother, who was about four years younger than she. He's gone now. But, she had to take care of him quite often. Grandmother was a widow, because my mother's father died over there, and they don't even know where he is buried. That's what she used to tell me. Grandmother had an awful hard time.
- BM:** There should be some good records in Ellis Island.
- CM:** Yes, that late, 1900, there should be good records.
- PN:** And the De Grosse, that ship, Mother told me, sunk one time.
- BM:** After they came over.
- PN:** Yes, not right away, but a few more trips and it sunk.
- BM:** Did your family get any news from the old country after they came over here, on either side?
- PN:** Not my mother or dad, but my grandmother did. She used to get letters from over there. And the best place that she got information was the Staatsanzeiger - that newspaper. She would look for it. Boy, that was just like getting a letter. And she'd look to see what [? 178] they came from, and then she'd read the whole paper. It told of how much the sugar was, and how much the flour was. At that time they didn't have bought bread.
- BM:** They always made their own.
- PN:** Why sure. In fact, when I first got married, I used to make homemade bread.
- BM:** I think most people had to. There were no bakeries.
- PN:** We didn't have to, but that was in '44. But I liked the bread so much better than what you could buy at the store.
- BM:** And you lived in North Dakota where they have the good hard wheat.
- PN:** Yes, but by that time I already lived in Bismarck.
- BM:** Oh, I see. What languages did you speak as a child?

- PN:** Everything in German. I couldn't even tell you what an English word was at the time.
- BM:** Have you continued to speak German, when there was somebody to talk to? Did you continue to speak German in your family as you grew up, then?
- PN:** Yes. Mother never learned the English language. Now, she could speak it if she had to, and she could decipher it, or understand, but when one of us was around she would not do it, because she was afraid she was going to say the wrong thing.
- BM:** Now we know what dialect that is.... that's the Swabish dialect.
- PN:** That's right, Swabish.
- BM:** My husband just added, "This Norwegian says Swaw-bish, but it's Sway-bish."
- PN:** I have to write that down in my notes, here, because I never remember. Swabish.
- BM:** What were some of your childhood chores that you really enjoyed doing?
- PN:** None of them. [laughter] I was a cripple since I was seven.
- BM:** You have to explain that. You can't just say you were a cripple. There had to be something physically wrong.
- PN:** At seven, I was a perfect child, until seven. Then I got this tuberculosis of the bone.
- BM:** So there's a reason.
- PN:** Yes, and from then on, I was sick until I was about 27. Because I had 20 surgeries on this leg.
- BM:** Oh my.
- PN:** And of course, now, I still go on crutches. The first crutches I had, my dad made out of broom sticks. And I walked on them for awhile, because he just added a little piece for the palm of my hand and put a bar on the top, until I got the next pair. Then I went out gopher hunting.
- BM:** What did you do there? Did you snare them or drown them out?
- PN:** No, I trapped them. Because I was getting a penny or two for each tail that we took over to Ashley, the McIntosh County seat. And I wanted that money. But it was lost in the bank - when the bank went down, went broke in the Depression years. I lost about \$75.
- CM:** That was a lot of money in those days.
- BM:** That was a lot of gophers, wasn't it!
- PN:** It wasn't all gophers because people would give me money sometimes, when they would come to see us. Five or ten cents... that was a lot of money. And I'll have to tell you a story about the gophers, because I was always using one end of the crutch to put in the trap, and one day it broke on me. So, Mother came to my rescue because I was trying to get home on one crutch, and I knew that my daddy was a little bit... would be a little bit harsh on me for doing that, so I didn't want to tell him. Well, in the evening when he came home, I tried to go on those crutches, and of course there wasn't enough glue or whatever she used, and the one, of course, collapsed. So that's my gopher story.

- CM:** What was the punishment then?
- PN:** He didn't punish me for that. But he punished me a lot of times. He wouldn't use this side to slap me with, he'd use the other side... to paddle my canoe.
- BM:** Do you remember some of the things you were disciplined for?
- PN:** For being... hesitant to talk to visitors. He was quite a man for talking, visiting. My mother wasn't. But I got so that I didn't want to talk either. And he didn't want that. He wanted me to speak up when I was talked to. But I was only heard when I was asked. Otherwise, no. You were seen but not heard.
- BM:** Were your sisters disciplined too, then, in that respect?
- PN:** No, my sisters were four and five years older, and they had to do all the chores. They said they used to hear my crying out in the barn when they were milking the cows. I had a very good voice, and I still have it, for crying so much. Going back, as far as my chores were concerned, I had to wash the dishes. That was my job. And I hated it. So I would cry most of the time, and I think I washed more dishes with tears than I did with the boiling water from the tea kettle. Then my little mother would come and she would have mercy on me and she'd wash the rest of them.
- BM:** Mothers are special, aren't they?
- PN:** They sure are.
- BM:** Did you go to school?
- PN:** Oh yes, I went to school. But, because of my disease working during the wintertime... every winter we had that trouble. It would swell up with this congestion and inflammation, and then I had to go to the hospital and have it operated on. They would scrape the bone at times, and take all that puss out of there. Well, of course I couldn't go to school during those days, and we didn't have a tutor, so I...
- BM:** As a result, you missed quite a bit of school then.
- PN:** Very much so. Very much so. And then I jumped a few classes, but I came out with Salutatorian of my eighth grade graduation. Then I was a little bit too old. I was 16, and Dad says, "Well now, you make your choice. Do you want to go to high school, or do you want to go to Business College?" Well, high school would have been to Ashley, and Business College was to go to Bismarck. So I chose Bismarck, and went to two years of Business College over there. Then when I went to Los Angeles after I was married, I went to four years of Bible College. Never was tardy, never was late, and came out as Valedictorian of my class.
- BM:** So, what kind of a degree did you get from...
- PN:** Theology.
- BM:** What college, to be specific?
- PN:** Life Bible College in Los Angeles.
- BM:** That's an accomplishment.

- PN:** Well, at the time I didn't realize it, but now I do. Because I had to go a few blocks to catch the trolley. The red trolley that we used to have in California, and that would take me into Los Angeles, and I got right off where the college was. But even if it flooded the intersections, I still went.
- BM:** You did. Did you use your education after you graduated?
- PN:** Well, to a certain degree. I was a Sunday School teacher for about 20 years. And then I did little sermonettes once in awhile for little groups.
- BM:** I need to go back to your schooling in North Dakota. Were there other nationalities of children in the school with you?
- PN:** No.
- BM:** All German.
- PN:** All German.
- BM:** Did you speak German in school?
- PN:** We were not allowed to, because of the First World War.
- BM:** Okay.
- PN:** Can I tell you about what happened?
- BM:** You sure may.
- PN:** Okay. In South Dakota they were not allowed to preach German. North Dakota did not have that law. So, we had a double porch on our farm house. So Dad invited the church to come up to our place and the preacher would stand right in the middle of that porch and preach his sermon.
- BM:** In German.
- PN:** In German. The English didn't come in until about '25 to '30, in there, is where they probably had a special number in English.
- BM:** So this was an Evangelical minister who came up from South Dakota.
- PN:** From Eureka.
- BM:** Was there a difference between... did you go to a farm school, or did you go to a town school?
- PN:** No, the town school... the farm school had already been abandoned, and we were sent to Zeeland to school. That's where I started. But my two sisters, I don't know how many years they had there... one or two... in the farm school.
- BM:** In a one room school.
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** We started talking about religion. Was the religion in church important in your upbringing in Zeeland?

- PN:** Oh, my, yes. Because they were always praying for me to be healed. Sometimes my family was beside themselves, because my dad would stay up one night with me and Mother the next night. And they'd have to rub this leg in order to have me sleep. There were no aspirins at that time... nothing.
- BM:** Was there a doctor available?
- PN:** There was a family doctor, but he sent us to Rochester, Minnesota. That's where I started my surgeries.
- BM:** That was a long way to go in those days, wasn't it.
- PN:** Yes, we went by train and they took me off the passenger coach because my leg was draining and Dad had a lot of things wrapped around it. Even newspapers. But it got through that and dripped on the floor. Well, that was uncalled for, so what did they do? They put me in where they have the cream. In the baggage compartment. But every time the train stopped at a station, that place got so awfully, awfully cold, because it was in November. And Dad was afraid I might get blood poisoning on it. So, anyway, he got me through there, and I'm the last one of the family here now.
- BM:** The other ones have passed away?
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** You mentioned that your church services and prayers were all in German. You said that they must have switched to English about 1925 to 1930. Were your mother and father accepting of this change?
- PN:** My dad did. But not Mother. Mother never did, because she never knew the English. I mean she didn't want to really, fluently use it.
- BM:** She maybe didn't have the opportunity to.
- PN:** No, because every place she went in Zeeland or Artis, they were all German. The grocery stores were German. She could talk to the grocery man.
- BM:** Were you baptized and confirmed, then, in the church?
- PN:** I was baptized as an infant in the Reformed Church. At that time they were still going to the Reformed. Then they changed over to the Evangelical Church at Artis. This other one was at Zeeland. And then I was confirmed in Eureka in the German language.
- BM:** Oh you were? So you had to respond to their questions in German.
- PN:** Yes. And we had to sing a German song. See, our parents wanted us to be confirmed in the German language. In fact, my catechism is laying over there.
- BM:** Okay, were there other special activities that were related to your confirmation? Do you remember anything?
- PN:** We didn't have our picture taken, which always makes me feel bad. But we didn't. But we didn't have anything special except the family might have had a dinner or something, with the rest of the family. This came to me last year... yes, take that off.
- BM:** Pauline has her confirmation book here that has her name in it, a couple of times, in the front of it.

- PN:** Yes, because Minnie, my sister, was the first one to have it.
- BM:** And it's all in German, and it looks just like a confirmation book. And it's well worn.
- PN:** I read it over every once in awhile.
- BM:** That's nice. Not too many people have kept that, because, let's see... you were born in 1911...
- PN:** And that was in 1927.
- BM:** This was in 1927, so I don't know if there is a Copyright date in this... yes there is. 1907. Well, let's move on, and my next question, I guess, is were your parents and grandparents involved in founding and joining any other church?
- PN:** Yes, because Dad had the experience of a born again experience. Which is conversion... we called it a conversion. And he had it in the barn when he was tending to his horses. He was so excited about the born again experience that he and Mother packed up on a buggy, and they went all over the neighborhood to announce it.
- BM:** My goodness.
- PN:** Then they went from the Reformed Church, not that they didn't believe in it, but they didn't have any evangelistic meetings or revival meetings, so they went to the Evangelical Church in Artis, and my grandmother only lived a block from there.
- BM:** So geographically, the Artis church was closer to your farm at the time?
- PN:** No, that was five miles.
- BM:** Oh, so they had to travel, then.
- PN:** Yes, with the buggy and horses.
- BM:** How did your family deal with death? Did they grieve? If so, how?
- PN:** No, there was crying and moaning, and what goes with a funeral, but I don't recall them grieving too much.
- BM:** Did they wear black?
- PN:** Yes. Everybody wore black for a funeral.
- BM:** Were there any special songs?
- PN:** Yes, yes. I have one written down here. [?495 - she sings in German] That's all I know.
- BM:** That's wonderful. Wonderful. I think your memory is fantastic.
- PN:** Thank you. I need that.
- BM:** I hope I'm that with it when I get to this age. Do you remember what the cemeteries looked like at Artis? Did they have any iron crosses there?

- PN:** Not too many, because we didn't have Catholics around there. Now, in Zeeland they did. Because Zeeland was more or less of a Catholic town. And I remember the crosses in the cemeteries, but we only had them as the marble or the granite would show. Nothing spectacular.
- BM:** So the shapes really had no special meaning to it. Or special design.
- PN:** No.
- BM:** Did your family ever have any heirlooms or objects of sentimental value that they brought from South Russia or that they handed down on either side?
- PN:** Yes. My grandmother had a woolen shawl that she brought over from Russia. She never had a coat. She would wear that to go to church or anywhere she went. Now, my mother got it as an heirloom from her mother. Then I got it, and I gave it to my niece who is in Detroit Lakes. She is willing to give it to this organization.
- BM:** Oh, wonderful. What is your niece's name?
- PN:** Delores Hanson.
- BM:** Another Norwegian?
- PN:** Yes, we all married Norwegians.
- BM:** I won't say anything. [laughter]
- PN:** They are stubborn as the Germans are. Let's face it.
- BM:** Well, are there any stories connected with that shawl that you remember?
- PN:** Not to my knowledge. But I know that Grandma brought it over in 1900, and she never had a coat for years and years. I don't know if she even had a coat when she passed away. But that was her shawl.
- BM:** I wonder, did she make it, or was it woven for her?
- PN:** I don't know. She might have made the tassels on it, because it had long tassels... beautiful. And she was able to do that on scarves. When she made a scarf, she put the tassels on it.
- BM:** So it was a skill she had learned over there.
- PN:** Right.
- BM:** When Christmas was celebrated in your family... let me back up. Were there any other treasures or heirlooms that you can remember? A family Bible, or...
- PN:** There was a family Bible, but we can't trace it.
- BM:** Sometimes those things are lost.
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** When Christmas was celebrated in your family, do you remember anything about those celebrations?

- PN:** Well, we used to make popcorn, and then string it. And that was our... on the tree. Or wherever. It might have been the kitchen, because we didn't always have a tree.
- BM:** Yes, there weren't that many trees out there in the prairies of North Dakota. Do you remember some of the Christmases during the Depression years?
- PN:** No, because you could have popcorn anytime.
- BM:** Okay. I'm going to have Chris ask you the next question. I'm not going to be ashamed of how I pronounce these words.
- CM:** Do you remember anything about the Belzenickel?
- PN:** Yes. They used to say the Christkindel, and then the Belzenickel, yes we used to have that. But they were, both of them, myths.
- CM:** On Christmas Eve, when you got your gifts, Belzenickel and Christkindel, what did they used to bring you?
- PN:** Now wait a minute. Christkindel is Jesus Christ. That's not a myth. I was wrong. But Belzenickel is. It was usually a manilla sack with a few candies in it, a few dates, a few figs, maybe an orange or an apple, and I used to love Cracker Jacks, so I'd get a Cracker Jack in mine. And that's about it. And nuts, of course. All kinds of nuts that they could buy at the store.
- BM:** What were some of the Easter activities?
- PN:** Well, we always colored eggs. The kids all did. We colored them in coffee cups. Then, of course we had those for Easter morning. And then the kids, we always made a little nest.
- BM:** Indoors or outdoors?
- PN:** Indoors, of course. It was cold yet there. But they'd put candy and things like that in there.
- BM:** And then you'd go out hunting for it?
- PN:** No, we didn't have to hunt because we put up our own. And all three of us did that. That was our Easter. Then, of course we had to go to church. We went to church on Good Friday, and Sunday.
- CM:** How long were your services on Good Friday?
- PN:** Sometimes a long time, because whatever the preacher wanted to do, he was able to do it. If he wanted to preach two hours, that's fine. It wasn't clockwise the way it is nowadays where you have to be through at 12 o'clock.
- BM:** Okay, we're going to skip on now to marriage ceremonies. Do you remember any of those?
- PN:** Oh yes, they would come in. There was no celebration because those churches at that time did not have basements, so there was no fellowship hall. No place to have food or anything else. So the bridal party... the two of them, just the groom and the bride would come in just as the service would begin and the service would be held regularly. And then after the service, they would say, "here's a couple that wants to get married," and they had two chairs in the aisle in front. They'd get up and have their marriage

vows. Then the minister would preach a marriage sermon to them. At that time there was no such a thing as rings. So that's what they were. They were married and they went home.

BM: Was there a reception held in the home?

PN: No, except at the farm house. Where they came from.

BM: At the parents'.

PN: Yes.

BM: Was there any music there?

PN: Not really, unless they had a piano or an old, old organ. Then they probably would.

BM: Did they do dancing?

PN: No.

BM: No dancing.

PN: No, our church did not believe in dancing.

BM: Was there any wedding special food?

PN: Well they had plenty of food, because they were all on the farm, more or less. So they had all the meat they wanted, whether it was beef or pork or whatever, and then of course they made a salad once in awhile. But it wasn't a green salad. I would have been a rice salad.

BM: So the bride and the groom didn't have any special clothing either. They just wore Sunday clothing?

PN: No, they had a special dress. My sisters did. And he might have had on a suit, I don't know. But that's about as far as it went.

BM: How about your own wedding?

PN: Well, we had a bigger wedding, because that was in Bismarck. But I had my regular veil and white dress and he came back from the service. He was in World War Two, and he had to wear his uniform, regardless, so that's what we were married in.

BM: And you were married in Bismarck. Which church were you married in?

PN: Evangelical.

BM: Evangelical Church in Bismarck.

PN: Evangelical in Bismarck on Seventh Street. But it's now gone. They've taken it off for a parking lot or something.

BM: But I'll bet the church records are around someplace.

PN: Oh, I imagine.

BM: Registered in that.

PN: And Reverend Reuben R. Strits married us. He was very well known in North Dakota and South Dakota. And then they went to Montana to preach over there.

BM: How did you meet your husband?

PN: Well, that was funny. He was a guitar player and also plays the musical saw. So he [tape ran out here]

.....**begin side 2 of tape 1**.....

PN: And they wanted to have a foursome go out and listen to his guitar. So I went along, and that's where it started.

BM: That's where you met him.

PN: Yes. And he was from Bismarck, and of course I was working at the capital. Thirteen years.

BM: How long did you know him, then, before you got married?

PN: Oh, off and on. [laughter]

BM: Just off and on.

PN: Off and on. That was during the Depression times. Oh, that was awful.

BM: What were you doing, then, at the state capital?

PN: I was working for the state engineer department. Then I went to the highway department. Then I went to the... Berta Baker was the head of it... receivables and payables. And I had the accounts receivable.

BM: So what kind of work did the women do?

PN: Mostly typing. Lots of typing, because we had to do everything that way. And, with figures. I loved figures, so that's what we did most of the time. Then, of course, I was secretary at that time. I would take shorthand and then transcribe the letters.

BM: What did your husband do?

PN: He was a painter. Inside and outside. And he also worked at the capital when the capital was built - that big one. After the fire. And we were up there when the fire was burning. That morning.

BM: What a historical moment.

PN: Yes. We didn't realize it at the time, but now it is.

BM: Are there any other details about that, and the new one?

PN: Well, the fire in the old building was started in the same department that I went to. But I didn't go into it until after the fire. We had to get some records going, and that's how I was used. But you had to be able to change politics. [laughter]

BM: That went on in those days too, huh?

PN: Right. And that's why I was in such different departments. The state engineer department was put into the state highway department, and I went along with it. One time I had a boss that was connected with

the water conservation in Washington, DC. I could have stayed on if I would have had the Civil Service test, but I didn't have that so I had to leave.

CM: Who were some of the governors who were in power when you were working at the capital?

PN: Oh, that was Langor. I remember him the best. He used to come to the capital, and we'd see him walk around and talk with people. He was quite a leader. He had the leading power. You can't take that away from him. Then there was a Schaffer... that's who is in there now. I knew this one's dad quite well. Harold Schaffer.

BM: Yes, he started Gold Seal products.

PN: He doesn't have that anymore.

BM: He sold that quite some time ago.

PN: Yes.

BM: But his son is a good governor too.

PN: Is he? I don't know his son at all, but I know he is very proud of him. I wish I could talk to Harold once. I knew him before he was married.

BM: Did you! He goes to Medora quite frequently.

PN: Oh yes. We stopped at Medora one time on the way home but we couldn't stay to see that play, because we wanted to make Bismarck.

BM: Did you play any musical instruments? Your husband played some.

PN: The piano. When Sig and I used to be asked for special numbers to play in churches, one time we played at a prison, at the penitentiary. Our minister had the privilege of going out there and speaking. So he asked us to go along. I played the piano and he played the musical saw.

BM: Did you sing then too?

PN: A little bit. I sang in the choir... a few special numbers, but I wasn't a singer.

BM: Did you sing as a child in school?

PN: Oh yes. My dad was the Sunday School superintendent for many, many years, and of course he'd have to have us sing. In order... I didn't have very many piano lessons - maybe five or six - so he'd give me a quarter for each song that I could play for the church.

BM: That was your incentive.

PN: That's right. Incentive is right.

BM: There's one question I forgot to ask you, and that was about the games you played. Do you remember playing games? Even though you are handicapped, do you remember some of the games that were played when you were growing up?

- PN:** Dominoes. But that was a very small thing. Then, Hide and Go Seek. I don't remember too many of them because I couldn't run.
- BM:** I thought maybe your sisters would have played.
- PN:** No, they were busy working all the time. They had to milk the cows and feed the chickens and the hogs, and what have you.
- BM:** So they did do outside work, then.
- PN:** Oh, yes. Of course I never milked a cow because of my disability.
- CM:** What kind of toys did you have when you were growing up as a very youngster?
- PN:** I only had one good doll, and that was given to me when I was seven years old. I still have it, but it doesn't look very nice. Its petticoat is still the original one. But it's in storage now. And I used to have a lot of toys. People would give them to me because of my handicap. I saved all the Cracker Jack toys that were in there. Now, I could really make money on them, but I don't have one left.
- CM:** Did you have any homemade toys? Did your dad make any wagons or anything like that to play with?
- PN:** I always had a little red wagon, but that was bought. It wasn't made. No, I don't know what all we played with, but we got through somehow.
- BM:** Probably sticks and stones and boxes.
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** Things like that. Did you make mud pies?
- PN:** Oh, yes. I remember canning things, like out of the garden. I'd can them. Set them aside. Couldn't eat them.
- BM:** But you know, it's a good way to develop imagination. I'm going to go back to my questions again. My question is, "were your parents and grandparents superstitious about anything in life?"
- PN:** I don't think so. I never had them refer to "don't go under a ladder" or a black cat or anything like that.
- BM:** How about the boogy man?
- PN:** I don't even think they talked about the boogy man.
- BM:** He wasn't in their vocabulary. Were there any special healing techniques?
- PN:** Yes, that [? 124 - Brauche?] was very much in line at that time. And they took me to everyplace that they thought maybe it would help me. Yes.
- CM:** What were some of the other diseases or ailments that they would Brauche for?
- PN:** Like a pink eye. For worms, yes.
- BM:** Boils?

- PN:** Boils... anything. [? 133] Now how would you say that in English? Dehydration? You know, that was very much a part of me. I didn't want to eat, and you know you just get weaker and weaker. They had to do something, so sometimes that Alpen Kreuter that I showed you... that would help in the stomach. But they'd have to give me something for an appetizer.
- BM:** That was that cure-all medicine?
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** And that you spelled A-L-P-E-N K-R-E-U-T-E-R. And that's two words, with a capital A and a capital K.
- PN:** And you could send for it. But it would last quite awhile. In fact my...
- BM:** Was it a salve or a liquid?
- PN:** It was a liquid. Then we had what they called Rosebud Salve, and that was very good for a lot of things. Or, let's see... they had some black stuff in a can that they used for boils.
- BM:** Was it tar based?
- CM:** I don't know, but it looked like black axle grease, but it was a medicated type of a real heavy salve.
- PN:** You're right.
- BM:** Do you think the sicknesses have differed today from then?
- PN:** If I had been born at this time, I would not be a cripple, because they have so many of these antibiotics that they could have given me. But at that time there was absolutely nothing... not even an aspirin. So what would you do? Rochester is the first one that operated on my leg.
- BM:** Is that the Mayo Clinic?
- PN:** Yes. And they didn't even give me an anesthetic because I was too low.
- BM:** Did you have pain?
- PN:** Oh, terrible pain. You can imagine my leg being about this big, and full of pus. You can imagine a splinter in your finger. And it will keep you awake all night. Okay, that's why I screamed like I did. I'd scream and my mother and dad would have to stay awake all night long to wait on me. The only relief I'd get was when they would rub my leg. It was awful. And that first operation. I can tell you about it right now. Even if it's been 80, no, 78 years ago. They carried me into the operating room because I was only seven. They laid me on that table, then they went and got gloves from a tea kettle that was boiling them. I don't know what kind of gloves they were. But they put them on and then they had a long sort of like a syringe, and that was full of something to deaden it. That just dripped a drop at a time, and being that my leg was so swollen, and then that would drop on there, finally it burst and they put those little trays under me and they'd be full of pus. That's why they wouldn't allow me in that passenger train.
- BM:** They didn't know what kind of bacteria or infection might be in it.
- CM:** It's a wonder you didn't die from it.

- PN:** Well, I was close to it several times. In fact, Dad got Dr. somebody from Linton. Had him come down in that old train that used to come down to Roscoe. And he went and got him, and he worked on my leg until he got it open. He'd squeeze and squeeze it until all that stuff, as much as they could possibly take out. Layner... no, not Layner.
- CM:** Dr. [? 199]
- PN:** No, he was a minister, but he was partly a... he was a minister of our church up there.
- BM:** Christian Layner was a minister.
- PN:** Yes. Layner. Oh, I can't think of it right now. I might later on.
- BM:** Do you remember any of the rules of midwives?
- PN:** Well, I was born through a midwife. But I never...
- BM:** You didn't know any of them?
- PN:** I knew one of them... Mrs. Skipky in Zeeland was a mid-wife. That's the one they always got. Gipky.
- BM:** How is that spelled?
- PN:** K-I-P-P. Gipky. K-I-E. Something like that.
- BM:** Okay. Did your parents have any expressions, like in Russian or French or Platt Deutsche? Any expressions that were of foreign extraction?
- PN:** Not to my knowledge.
- CM:** Your dad didn't use any swear words or any profanity.
- PN:** No.
- BM:** Do you remember the names of any German newspapers that you might have received in your home?
- PN:** Der Staatsanzeiger is the first, and then the Freie Press. That was about it.
- BM:** Did you get it in the mail?
- PN:** Yes. Grandma got it.
- BM:** You told me that your Grandma used it for obituaries and news and the price of things. Were there any funnies or comics in the paper?
- PN:** No.
- BM:** Not in those days. Do you remember when your family got its first modern conveniences?
- PN:** Yes. You know our outhouses - they get pretty cold in the wintertime, and of course I couldn't go out there because of my leg. So Mother would have to use that kettle commode, and of course take it outside. Then we got an inside toilet, but it didn't have any flowing water.
- BM:** No plumbing to it.

- PN:** No plumbing. Just the can. And we only could put it in the pantry. That was not very sanitary.
- BM:** But that's the only place it could go.
- PN:** Yes. So that was put in the corner, and I was about the only one that she would let use it. Because the others could go outside. Then they'd have to empty that about once a week. That was a horrible way of having to do it.
- BM:** That was more convenient than going outside in the snow.
- PN:** I just couldn't.
- BM:** Do you remember when you got your electricity?
- PN:** We never got electricity.
- BM:** Not until you had moved away, I supposed.
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** Do you remember the first car?
- PN:** Yes. I think it was a Dodge. I'm not positive on that. But Mother was going to use it... she was going to learn how to drive. So she drove one day. I didn't see it, but I've been told this. She came home and we had a cellar that went down on the outside with a cover on it, a door.
- BM:** Where you stored foods and stuff?
- PN:** Like a cellar. And so she was going to park there and she didn't know how to brake it, so she went over this, and that was the last time she touched the car.
- BM:** She didn't try to drive again.
- PN:** No.
- BM:** Did you drive a car?
- PN:** Well, when I went to school in Zeeland, we had an old, old Buick that was quite lengthy in front, and that had everything you know... a clutch and brake and the feeder. And I couldn't use this leg, so I had to do everything with this one leg, with my left leg. So I had to be very careful in driving because I had to use it as a brake and a clutch and everything. But I got through it alright. That old Buick.
- BM:** Do you remember when you got your washing machine?
- PN:** When, I don't remember, but I remember Mother always washed on a Monday if at all possible. And first of all, I remember when she did it on a washboard. Then she'd put it in a big tub on the stove to make it white. You remember those days?
- BM:** She would heat the water and boil it.
- PN:** Oh yes. Boil it and put the soap that she made out of grease and lye. That's what she used. Then later on we got one that did something...
- CM:** Agitated by hand?

- PN:** No, by motor. Motor first. But we didn't have electricity.
- BM:** One of those individual motors that you'd start, and then later on, electricity.
- PN:** You'd have it run out the window and it would chuck along. But she made her own soap.
- BM:** So you didn't have a telephone then either.
- PN:** Oh, yes. We did. You know what? I was looking through a magazine the other day here, and I found exactly what we had.
- BM:** Oh really! The old party line, huh?
- PN:** Right. I remember Mother going to that phone and ringing one or two or three, and then everybody would get on that line. Then you knew all the news in the neighborhood. What they were going to have for lunch or dinner, strudels or knepfla, or whatever... borscht. And that was a good phone. I had never seen that before.
- BM:** You said you had a windmill. That must have been at the very beginning then.
- PN:** Yes, it was. As far as I can remember, we always had a windmill. Because we had to have that water go from North Dakota to South Dakota. That was not quite a block, I'd say.
- BM:** You know, we didn't talk about food until you just mentioned it now. Were there any other special foods that your family made?
- PN:** Oh, yes. Some I didn't eat. Like Schwartenmagen.
- BM:** And what is that?
- PN:** That's made out of the stomach of a pig and filled with ground up meat. Then they made... oh, that sausage... liver sausage. And I never liked that.
- BM:** Was there any that you liked?
- PN:** Oh, yes. The Fleischwurst. I liked that very much.
- BM:** And that was made out of... do you remember?
- PN:** Well, first of all they'd always make it with pork, but then they got so they used beef with it, and that made it much better. It wasn't so fatty. You probably remember that. But everybody had their own recipe, and my dad's was very good. They put a lot of garlic in it. They made that garlic the night before and I don't know how they all made it, but I think they put water in it and cut it up fine. Then that's what they put into the sausage and that was very good.
- CM:** In your meat preservation, did you have a smokehouse?
- PN:** Yes.
- CM:** Where you smoked your meat.
- PN:** One time when dad... he would butcher all day long, and it's such hard work, and everything was a mess when they got through in the house. They had made it, and we had that road going by us from Zeeland

to Artis, and somebody must have noticed it, because the next morning... Dad had all this meat in the smokehouse, you know, and low and behold, they had stolen everything. You could tell where the wagon went up to the granary, and the smokehouse was right across. Everything was gone. Oh, he felt so bad. Mother too, because they worked hard.

BM: Did they butcher at a certain time of the year?

PN: Oh yes. As soon as it got real cold. It had to be cold, because we didn't have any refrigerators. So it was smoked in order to keep it, and they'd put a lot of things like cream and milk in the well. They had ropes and it was tied to the rope and put down as far as they could get next to the water so it would stay fresh.

BM: Do you remember what they stored in the cellar that was outside?

PN: Oh yes. The cellar was underneath the house, but the door that led into it was outside. There was one inside in the pantry, too, so you could go down from there as well as outside. But all the canned foods... and you had to can in order to have food in the wintertime. Like your carrots, even potatoes, they'd can some of those. And meat was canned. Chicken was canned. That was the best to eat. Oh, that tasted so good with that little gelatin on it.

BM: How about eggs? Did they keep eggs?

PN: Eggs, yes. Mother would get these crates from the store and she would somehow put them in... I think it was sand... I'm not sure now. But anyway, in order to keep them as long as possible, she'd fill these crates and then put them down in the cellar. But she made everything like pickles, and... I don't see how those people got everything done.

CM: They worked 16-hour days.

PN: Yes. And then when they were through, they went to bed. There was no entertainment.

BM: That's going to be my next question. Do you remember when you got your first radio and television?

PN: We never had a television. No, my folks never had a television.

BM: Did you have a radio?

PN: Yes, we did.

BM: Do you remember hearing any programs on radio?

PN: Stan's Quartet. That was on.

BM: That's a new one to me.

PN: Yes. That was a religious program.

BM: When did you start watching Lawrence Welk?

PN: Well, my brother-in-law, Emma's husband.

BM: Your second sister.

- PN:** Yes, her husband was an accordion player and they used to play for these barn dances together. Now, Lawrence might not have remembered him because there are so many of them at these barn dances. That's when I started paying attention to his program. But it wasn't until he was through at that place down in South Dakota where he started.
- CM:** Yankton.
- PN:** Yankton, yes. That's when I started listening to him.
- BM:** Was that George Ketterling, then, your brother-in-law?
- PN:** No, George was his father. He was Ed Ketterling, Edward Ketterling. Yes.
- BM:** So which one played with Lawrence Welk?
- PN:** Edward Ketterling, the husband of my sister.
- BM:** Let's see. Which family member do you remember the best? Do you have somebody that stood out in your mind?
- PN:** Well, my dad was my image. He's up there. That's the picture of them. He taught me a lot of things. Then, of course after he died in '44, Mother didn't die until '78... so after that I got next to my mother more. Because she was the only one left. She was a wonderful mother to me. And so was my dad.
- CM:** Did you bond with your father more because he was stronger and because you are handicapped and he could handle you and take care of you easier, is that why?
- PN:** That's it. Yes. He took me to Rochester that first time. He stayed a whole month. And Mother and the two girls were home and had to do all the chores and everything. That was just around Thanksgiving time. Because they put me in a frame to send me home. We still had some pictures of that.
- BM:** How many times did you go to Rochester?
- PN:** Just once.
- BM:** Just once?
- PN:** That was enough. [laughter]. Dad was supposed to take me down again, but he never did. He was disgusted with them because what they did... I had pulled my knee up from the time it started hurting, and that was about a month before. So I couldn't straighten it out. What they did, they should have massaged it, and got it down easy. Instead of that, they cut my tendon in the back of my knee. That's why I can't... and then they went and put sandbags on both sides and a weight in the bottom, and that twisted my whole structure. My sister... Emma was along, and one time I had begged her to put that pail off because it was so painful. And she did it and the nurse came in and that was it. Then they fixed it so she couldn't do it again. That was awful.
- BM:** Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?
- PN:** I think I've told you most of it. I've got this all marked.
- BM:** Then I'm going to ask you some things that are strictly "woman" questions. Was there anybody in your family that did sewing?

- PN:** Yes. My mother did all my dresses. In fact, the whole family... I mean my other two sisters too. I didn't have a new bought dress until I graduated from eighth grade.
- BM:** Did you girls learn how to sew then too?
- PN:** Yes. Minnie did. Minnie was pretty good. Emma didn't do so well. But Minnie did a lot of sewing.
- BM:** And how about you?
- PN:** No. I didn't [? 489] either.
- BM:** Was there any basket weaving in your house?
- PN:** No.
- BM:** Any kind of weaving?
- PN:** Quilting.
- BM:** Was there any bobbin lace?
- PN:** No, Mother never got to that. But she did teach me how to embroider. That was one thing I used to do. Or she'd take a spool and put nails in it and then have me do little things on that. Or beads... I would string beads a certain way.
- BM:** When they did quilting, did they use new material or did you use old clothing, or what did they use?
- PN:** No, it was mostly... they would send into a place to get a sheep wool. Then they would spread that out between two layers, and then start quilting on it.
- BM:** So they had the wool...
- PN:** They had the wool back. In fact, I still had one left in California, but that's gone. She wouldn't have anybody come in to help her on that one. She says, "I want every stitch of my own." And she did. But I used it for about 15 or 20 years. It was made out of rayon, so it kind started fraying.
- BM:** Rayon wasn't a durable fabric back in those days. Do you have any memories of women's activities and recipes... do you remember reading the Dakota Farmer?
- PN:** Yes, but I was never interested in the recipes. In fact you can give me a recipe now and I'd have problems to put it together. I have to see what they are doing. I used to watch my mother make everything. I learned from watching her. Not by making it. She could make those strudels with her hands like this, and never drop it. The same thing with noodles, and then she'd cut them. She held her hand like this. You'd think she was going to cut her fingers off. But she never did.
- BM:** Did you ever make them, then, after you were married?
- PN:** Yes, I think I made them once or twice, but they didn't come out like Mother's.
- BM:** Another disadvantage you had is that you were married to somebody of a different culture.
- PN:** Oh, he loved the German dishes.
- BM:** Oh, he did?

- PN:** We always had strudels or dumplings or knepfla, or all of that stuff when we went home together.
- BM:** Is there anything else I've missed?
- PN:** I don't think so.
- BM:** We've talked about an awful lot of things today. Thank you so much, Pauline. We really appreciate it.
- PN:** Well, did you fill this?
- BM:** Yes.
- PN:** Is it done?
- BM:** Just about.
- PN:** Well, here's something. Do you think there are different sicknesses today as compared to the past? Do you recall any home remedies or cures? Now, we always had Watkin's Liniment. The white and the pink. The white was used on the outside of your skin and the pink was used to take internally. And then, heated flax. My mother would also heat the flax or grain for growing pains. She wanted to draw that pus to the surface, but this disease was between the little skin over the bone and of course the bone. So they always had to go in and dig that out. That's why there are so many surgeries compared to this.
- BM:** So the flax didn't really work in your case, then.
- PN:** Well, sometimes it did and sometimes it didn't. But I was taken to Ashley and Herriod, and all these people that had little doctors. And the Herriod one, one time. He got mad at my dad because he didn't get far enough in there and the pus didn't come out. I still have the scar to show it. And the doctor got mad at my dad. So he went and took it out on me. He had stitches between the two sides, and he just... I remember that. He went and put his finger underneath it and just snapped the whole thing. Boy, dad took me home, but I almost died that night. That's when we got that minister from Linton. Several times they'd say in town that I was gone, but here I am, at 85-1/2.
- BM:** And a wonder fantastic memory. Well, we're going to close this interview today, and we thank you very much, Pauline.
- PN:** You are so welcome... anytime.
- BM:** This is an addition onto the interview. We just thought of something else. What was it, Pauline?
- PN:** It was a devotional book, Day By Day. And it goes clear back to 1700-something. I think 1712. It was my grandpa's book at that time. I'd be glad to include that in the artifacts or whatever you call it.
- BM:** Now that would have been Andrew Munsch?
- PN:** Yes.
- BM:** That's your father's father.
- PN:** I have read it cover to cover, and my dad used it for our family altar. Every single morning, you either get tardy for your school, because we're not going to miss family altar.
- BM:** Was that a daily devotional?

- PN:** Yes, in the morning after breakfast we always had that.
- CM:** Was this in a separate room in the house?
- PN:** No, right around the table.
- CM:** Right around the table.
- PN:** Yes, they would kneel, and have their family prayer.
- BM:** What was a typical day? What time of the day did you get up?
- PN:** I'd get up, maybe 7:00 or 7:30 in order to get ready for school and then we had to drive two miles.
- BM:** So then you'd have devotions before breakfast.
- PN:** No, after breakfast.
- CM:** How long would the duration of this be?
- PN:** Well, as long as Dad would pray. [laughter] Sometimes he made it long. I'd look over to see how long the chapter was. If it was short, it would be short. If it was long...
- CM:** Were you reading scriptures out of the Bible? Was that it?
- PN:** Yes, right out of the Bible. In fact, I think I have the Bible here yet. The Testament is what they called it. They didn't use the whole Bible.
- CM:** That's very interesting.
- PN:** Yes, even when we had our threshers, you know the threshers are from all over the community... he wouldn't forget that family worship.
- BM:** Did you say table grace every meal, then?
- PN:** Oh yes. We had [? 671 - she is speaking German here] And when I was real small, it was just [? 675 - ditto]
- CM:** Did you have any religious performances after dinner, or after supper, before you went to bed?
- PN:** Once in awhile. When we had company and they were of the religious faith, then they would pray for me. Because I would be... oh, I suffered terribly. And they would get around the bed and pray. Dad was very strong that God would help us. Do you know that the last surgery I had in Bismarck, North Dakota, which was about 1936 or '38, he went into the bedroom and said, "I'm not coming out of here until I get an assurance that she'll never have another surgery on that leg." Now the leg is still crippled, but I haven't had another surgery. And I was bit on that leg about a year ago or so, and it swelled up, and I got to thinking, oh, what about that prayer? I reminded God of it. And do you know that it disappeared? So there's a lot...
- CM:** Did your dad acquire this religious belief from his father, or how religious and devoted was your grandfather?

PN: I can't tell you because Grandfather died before I came along. So I don't know. But my dad had his conversion, or his born again experience in the barn as he tended those horses. So he must have had something to push him on. Then they got into a buggy and went all over the neighborhood, telling them about what had happened. That's when he changed from the Reformed Church to the Evangelical Church.