

Interview with Eva (Gross) Schatz (ES)

Conducted by Michael M. Miller

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MM: This is Michael M. Miller, the Germans from Russia Bibliographer at North Dakota State University in Fargo. It is the 8th of November, 1993, and I am in Bismarck, North Dakota with Eva (Gross) Schatz who was born on October 3rd, 1905. Eva, where were you born?

ES: South of Napoleon. At the home, my parents' home.

MM: What was the name of your father?

ES: Matthias Gross.

MM: Magnus Gross?

ES: Yes, Matthias and Barbara Gross. Barbara Schweitzer, Matthias Gross.

MM: Matthias Gross. And you know when he was born?

ES: I don't know.

MM: And your mother's name was?

ES: Barbara.

MM: Barbara Schweitzer?

ES: Jah, Barbara Schweitzer.

MM: Now, were they born in the old country?

ES: They were born in Russia. Yah, in the old country.

MM: Do you know the name of the village by chance?

ES: I think my mother was in the Straßburg area.

MM: And your father was in Mannheim, I think.

ES: Mannheim, yes. Jah.

MM: How old were they when they came over to America?

ES: My mother was 17 years old when she came with her parents, with John and Christine Schweitzer. And she always, she said when she was here that she got so homesick, if she could walk back, she sure would

walk back. That is the way, she always was homesick at the beginning when she was here. She was 17 years old. And my father was a soldier in Russia. When his parents....

John and Benedicta Gross was his parents. When they wanted to come to the United States of America, then he had two years still to go [in the army] and they wanted to wait until he was done. Then he said, "He would advise [that] they should go. If they would wait for two more years, then his next brother Clements had to go in the army." So they went. And then he stayed for two more years. And then he came and he brought his cousin, Raphael Gross along. Raphael Gross and Agathe, they had no parents anymore, so he took Raphael along. And later on, had Agathe, Raphael had dene rüberkomme g'lasst, [they came over].

MM: What year was this about?

ES: I really cannot say.

MM: Say the exact year?

ES: Exactly the year? Yah. And the way I had understand, my father was about 26 years old when he got married. He was 25 when he came from Russia.

MM: Did he come alone or with his parents, your father?

ES: Two years after his parents came.

MM: I see. So, your grandparents....

ES: Ja, my grandparents....

MM: Came first?

ES: Came first, yah.

MM: And were they invited to come over or how did they get to North Dakota?

ES: Well, this I would have to look at the history. I can't remember this.

MM: Now, the parents of your father and mother both came to America? Your grandparents on both your father and mother side, they both came to America?

ES: Yes, they both came. They both came. They both were in good health when they came, yah.

MM: Did they come with families? How many children did each have? About how many?

ES: Well, my father had two sisters and four brothers. Yah. And my mother had more. My mother had about twelve in all, brothers and sisters. Yah.

MM: They all came to America?

ES: They all came to America, yah.

MM: At different times they came?

- ES:** Yah, yah. But I think my parents, the Schweitzer's parents, my mother's parents were here before. They landed up in the Hague area, south..., north from Hague. North from Hague. What we used to call the "Crik" there. They had a farm first there.
- MM:** Now, did your folk's talk much about the "old country"? What it was like back there in Russia?
- ES:** Well, in my time they didn't talk too much anymore. I think not much in my time [but before], see. My oldest brother was John. He was six years older than I because two little boys died older than I. Jah. Then I am first. Jah.
- MM:** So they didn't talk too much about the "old country" and you didn't ask too much about it?
- ES:** No, no. No, not too much anymore. Jah.
- MM:** Did your folks learn to speak English?
- ES:** No, no. They even... You know, we had Father Stephen Stenger there in church. That was St. Anthony's Church, south of Napoleon where we used to live, yah. And we had Father Stephen Stenger there. I was baptized with him and went to my First Holy Communion [also]. And when that came out, from the English language to the United States of America, he was awfully against that race. "You should keep your mother's language!" "Don't listen to them!" That's the way it went at that time. Yah. And I was the oldest of the girls. And my mother was always sick with rheumatism and stuff, then I didn't get too much in the English school. For German, they teach me German but nothing else at that time. What the little bit that I know talking, I learned by myself. Not in school.
- MM:** How many children were in your family? Brothers and sisters?
- ES:** In my family? What I had?
- MM:** No, no. Brothers and sisters?
- ES:** Oh, in my family! Just John and two other boys would be older than I, but those other boys died before me. And I and we was 6 girls, we six sisters. One is not living anymore. John does not live anymore and one of the sisters, now Christine died. They both died from cancer.
- MM:** So your folks grew up in Logan County?
- ES:** Logan County, yes.
- MM:** Settled in Logan County?
- ES:** They used to live 15 miles.... Thirteen miles south of Napoleon and two miles west. It was 15 miles [altogether] where we used to live from Napoleon. And there was three quarters of a mile, was to St. Anthony's Church there.
- MM:** So, the church was...? Church and religion was very important in your family?
- ES:** Jah, jah. Religion, that was important, yah.
- MM:** Did they...? Did you have all your prayers in German?

- ES:** Yes. Everything in German, yah. I went to First Holy Communion in German and came to [religion] school `til I can read good German. At that time, they taught German is important. Yah.
- MM:** Can you still read German today?
- ES:** Yes. Oh yah, I still can read German.
- MM:** Oh, wonderful!
- MM:** Now, when you went to the country school...?
- ES:** Not quite a full year to the English school. Not a full year. In the fall, I had to stay home `til everything is..., the work is done, and then in the spring, before seeding time, I had to stay home, again. Not quite a full year of the English school.
- MM:** So, schooling for you...? Much of it, you had to learn on your own at home?
- ES:** I had to learn on my own. When we were married already, the most I learned is [from] the TV. And two of my boys [also learned] when they were married too and grown up. Matt and Leo, they had to go, Matt in the army, and Leo in the navy. And Matt had to stay in Korea, he was for two years in Korea. It was after that, after that war, after the Korean War. He always said, "He can read. If I write it, he can read it." He understands. And then my oldest daughter brought me a dictionary and by myself then, I wrote the English letters.
- MM:** Wonderful. So, still today you can read and write?
- ES:** Read and write. And write German and write English, I can.
- MM:** Now you remember, of course, going back to the farm when you were growing up and so forth, and you had a lot of chores to do?
- ES:** Yes, yes.
- MM:** What were your main chores?
- ES:** Well, we milked some cows with the hand at that time. That was not easy, the hand milking. Because there was only one brother, he was much older. And when he got married, he went to a different farm. And then we, our dad and me, had to do, did the farm work. Making the hay, and everything. I did everything, I helped outside.
- MM:** Did they have some real good horses on the farm?
- ES:** Good horses. We had good horses on the farm. We worked with the horses at that time, yes.
- MM:** There were no vehicles at that time? Everything was with the horses?
- ES:** Yah. And we worked with three, two plows and one drill. I always had to work with one plow and the other one, my brother, and my dad works with a drilling. Then after my brother got married, I had to do the drilling and two of my sisters, younger sisters did the plow. Field work, jah.
- MM:** What about in the home? Did your mother do a lot of cooking?
- ES:** Well, she did the cooking, yah. She does the cooking. Jah.

- MM:** Did you have to...? Did you learn a lot from her on making meals and cooking?
- ES:** I learned everything early because I didn't get to the English school. I had to stay at home and I always had.... I say my mother had rheumatism so she cannot step the sewing machine. At that time was no electricity, we had to do with the feet. Yah, she cannot peddle that.
- MM:** Right.
- ES:** Jah. And I was twelve years old, I made the dresses already for me and for my sisters. I had to start out and I could do it.
- MM:** Wonderful! And still today you can make them?
- ES:** Yes, yes.
- MM:** Because I see here in your home, you have your sewing machine with you.
- ES:** That's why I took it along.
- MM:** Wonderful! So at 88, you are still making dresses?
- ES:** Yah. And if I bought me a pair of slacks and there were no pockets in, I go to the sewing machine and put some pockets in.
- MM:** Wonderful.
- ES:** That's why I use the machine.
- MM:** What did your mother used to make? What kind of special meals did she make?
- ES:** Oh, special meals was Plachenta.
- MM:** Oh, how did you make Plachenta?
- ES:** With the pumpkins.
- MM:** Yah.
- ES:** With the pumpkins, yah. We scrubbed the pumpkins out and we scraped the middle out. And we put some sugar, sugar and a little bit pepper, little bit salt in, mixed it up. And onion, a little bit of onion and mix it up. And make a dough almost like pie dough but not quite as fat than the pie dough. Not as fat. That's the way to make Plachenta.
- MM:** So that means you had to raise some pumpkins?
- ES:** Yah. And then we made potato soup. Plachenta or they made.... They butchered always their own meat, their own pigs. There was always this and sauerkraut, the potatoes and meat. Different, different foods. But they don't, I think only twice a year they came to the grocery store. That's all at that time, with the horses. Jah.
- MM:** Is that right?
- ES:** About twice a year, jah. They raised all their own food at that time.

- MM:** So there were big gardens?
- ES:** Big garden, yes. We had a big garden. We raised our own onions and string beans.
- MM:** Potatoes?
- ES:** Potatoes.
- MM:** Corn?
- ES:** Corn, everything.
- MM:** How did they keep all of this through the whole winter?
- ES:** The meat? They were out in the granary, in a big 'rut' barrel. In a Stand sagt mer in Deitsch. They salt it and they kept. Was good.
- MM:** What about the canning? There was a lot of canning I bet going on?
- ES:** Canning?
- MM:** Jah.
- ES:** On that... In the earlier time, not too much.
- MM:** Not too much canning yet?
- ES:** No. In the fall, they always bought a few boxes apples. Big boxes apples and took along home. And they took 100 pounds sugar, or 200 pounds sugar and....
- MM:** So on the farm, all these people, these immigrants that came from Russia, they had to have big gardens?
- ES:** Oh, yah. They had to make their own gardens, yah.
- MM:** Where did they get all the seed for the garden?
- ES:** Well, if they raised watermelons, they saved the seeds. Everything what they raised, they saved the seeds for next year. To put it in the garden, [to] put it out.
- MM:** And then they get to town not too often, huh?
- ES:** My folks came about twice a year or three times a year with a wagon in the first years. Yah, to town. We lived 50 miles from a town with a wagon. Jah.
- MM:** That's far away.
- ES:** Ja. And always in the fall, when they hauled the wheat in with the wagons, they brought us stuff. Boxes [of] prunes they buy and a few boxes apples.
- MM:** Cherries?
- ES:** I think cherries was not even at that time. We didn't get the cherries at that time. No, no cherries.
- MM:** So, then you had to.... Later on then, they started doing canning and so forth? Where did they store all the canned goods?

- ES:** The cellar. They had a root cellar.
- MM:** They had a root cellar that was outside, of course?
- ES:** We had a big root cellar outside. And [in] that root cellar, we put potatoes on a pile. And there were one barrel with pickled watermelons and one barrel with pickled cucumbers. Those cucumbers at that time, they were..., in the springtime still good. Still better than those canned nowadays.
- MM:** Really?
- ES:** I don't know if it was in the water, the chemicals what is now in or what. They kept so good. I know some neighbors came with gallon pails in the springtime to get some cucumbers from us. This I can remember, yah.
- MM:** Of course, that food that was in the root cellar and the meat that was stored, that would hold you for the whole winter?
- ES:** For the whole winter, yes.
- MM:** Now, what kind of house was built? What kind of house was it?
- ES:** We had a sod house.
- MM:** You grew up in a sod house?
- ES:** I grew up in a sod house, yes.
- MM:** How was that sod house built? You remember that?
- ES:** Yes. I know good. There was two big rooms and [in] each room was two beds and the middle was the kitchen. Yah. And they had a little room [in] the front, a little entrance on the front where the cream seperator is usually. And for heat? For heating at that time, we didn't have coal. Coal? We couldn't get coals. Coal. They made their own with manure they made. And in the entrance for the wintertime, set the pile [of manure fuel] to ;keep] dry. Stacked in there.
- MM:** Cow chips?
- ES:** Cow chips, yah. Yah, yah.
- MM:** And so, do you remember going out and getting those cow chips?
- ES:** I even had to help pick up some when I was young, yah. Yes. Oh, yah. One thing happened to me on [in] that sod house. My mother was ironing in the kitchen and at that time, they had to heat the cook stove for to make the iron hot. There was no electricity. And she ironed and finally I think, she took some of the ironing what she had done and it was hot in there because we had to heat the stove. And she had to have the door all the way open to get air in because it got so hot. And I was about a year and a half old about. I was standing there and watched and finally she took some clothes and went into that..., on her own bed. I was standing there and then a bunch of the neighbor's sheep, about 12 or 14 sheeps came running in through the door. They came to our yard and our dogs chased them a little and they just came into the kitchen and run around the table. I went back to the wall and I watched them and I was

scared. And then they went out again. This I still can remember. I think I was not quite two years old at that time. Yah.

MM: So the cow chips that was dried was used for the warmth?

ES: You know, they put all the manure from the farm, from the horses and the cows during the winter in one pile. In the springtime, they had the horses run around and making tight [packed] about a foot and a half deep. And then when it was dry, then with the shovels they make pieces. Yah. And then set them apart to dry. And then when it was all dry, then they put them in a big pile. And in the fall, they put some in that entrance so they didn't have to go out and get some when it was so cold. That's the way they had to heat those sod houses. Jah. And I think in 1912, they had a big crop. Nice big crop. My parents had to hire two hired men for with a header box and then they bought their first car at that time. And about in 1916, they built a big house, a big, wooden house. Jah. So that house is still down at that farm. My daughter's.... Then my youngest, when they all married, my youngest daughter stayed on the farm. She was married to Dick Brendel. Still one of her boys is on that farm, with that place.

MM: Is the sod house still standing?

ES: No. They teared up the sod house. After this was done [building the wooden house], they teared up the sod-house. Hauled them away.

MM: Now was there a summer kitchen?

ES: Yes, we had a summer kitchen. Not in the first years, but I still can remember when they built the summer kitchen, yes. Just for cooking or so. It was too hot always in the summer to cook.

MM: Let's talk a little bit Eva, now about the holidays. About holidays. Like now, soon we'll be approaching Christmas. What do remember as a child about Christmas? Did your mother do a lot of baking preparing for Christmas?

ES: Well, they have.... They gave us always a little box full of candies and peanuts and that stuff and we really appreciated it. We really waited for that Christmas.

MM: Was there a Santa Claus?

ES: Yes. There came a Santa Claus around always.

MM: Now, how did he come?

ES: Some of the neighbors got dressed like a Santa Claus. A Christkindl. They had the Christkindl at that time.

MM: How did he arrive in the farm yard?

ES: I think they came outside with the sled but we didn't look out when we were young. Later on, when I grew up, we went around with that. With that Antone Welder, was the neighbor. Mrs. Antone Welder, she always fixed that stuff for Christkindl and for Santa Claus. And then the bunch of us with the sled with the horses [went] to some neighbors who had little children. Yah. And played Santa Claus and played Christkindl. Christkindl was.... At that time, was [what] the children appreciate.

MM: Was there a Belzenickel?

- ES:** Belzenickel? That's Santa Claus! That makes the Belzenickel.
- MM:** Yah.
- ES:** Belzenickel und Christkindl. Sometimes we didn't take the Belzenickel along. We didn't want to scare out the children. Just the Christkindl.
- MM:** And angels, too?
- ES:** No, no. No, just the Christkindl. See, they made the Christkindl with.... I want to say a big hat and lot of ribbons hanging down at that hat and had like a lace cloth or a white lace cloth over. That way was that Christkindl made.
- MM:** And of course, the children got scared then?
- ES:** Jah, there was some [that] got scared. The Christkindl had in one hand a little 'Rut'[a switch] and when they [the children] want to pick up the stuff [candies], make 'em with the 'Rut' a little scared. That's all.
- MM:** Yes. Was there a lot of singing at Christmas time?
- ES:** Yes, yes. All German singings at that time. We all sang German songs.
- MM:** You don't remember any of those songs?
- ES:** The German songs?
- MM:** Yes.
- ES:** Yes. *Maria zu lieben* is one. I have a copy someplace with German songs. Jah.
- MM:** And then of course, on Christmas were you able to go to church then? Were you able to go to Midnight Mass?
- ES:** Yes, yes. We went to Midnight Mass, yes. And the Mass was with candlelight in the church. Candlelights. The Christmas tree was with all candles. There were no electric bulbs at that time. All little colored candles on there.
- MM:** They were all lit for Christmas?
- ES:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** Did you have a Christmas tree in your house?
- ES:** In the first years, not. But later on, we had one. Yah.
- MM:** You had it with the candles too?
- ES:** Yah, with the candles. A little one with the candles, jah. Just for Christmas Eve, that's all. For Christmas Eve we used it with the candles. We cannot use them too long or we had to change the candles.
- MM:** When was the Christmas tree put up?
- ES:** Just before Christmas Day.
- MM:** On the 24th of December?

- ES:** On the 24th, yes. Was the Christmas tree put up and in the churches and all over, always on the 24th. Yes. And they kept it in `til the Three Kings [feast day]. That was January 6th. January 6th was Three Kings and 'til after that was always Christmas in church.
- MM:** Right. After Christmas Eve Mass, you would go home and would they have a nice meal?
- ES:** In the evening before we went to church, we had to eat.
- MM:** Before you went to church?
- ES:** Yes. And then when we came home at night, we didn't eat anymore. We went to bed.
- MM:** What do you remember...? If you look on the table for Christmas Eve, what kind of food would be standing there?
- ES:** Oh, special? Little bit special food. I really cannot remember everything what we had.
- MM:** A lot of goodies?
- ES:** A lot of goodies and stuff, yah.
- MM:** What kind of kuchen did they make?
- ES:** Deutskekuchen with prunes, yah.
- MM:** Cheese kuchen and so forth?
- ES:** Yah. Cheese Kuchen and Deutskekuchen, jah. That's what they made and apple pies. Apple pies we had, jah. Yes.
- MM:** Did they have some soup, too?
- ES:** Yes. We always on a Sunday or on holiday, we always had chicken noodle soup. Yah.
- MM:** And Borscht once in a while?
- ES:** Yes.
- MM:** Now, the Christmas Day after Christmas Eve and so forth, the children would have their gifts for Christmas Day. What do they usually do for Christmas Day?
- ES:** On Christmas Day? Well, we sang. And on evenings, we with the walnuts, we played on the floor. That was a wooden floor [at] that time. We played. I have on one end, a few sat there and my brother had the other end a few and we played like...? Try to get those that way. The way they play now...? When they throw the balls.
- MM:** Bowling?
- ES:** Like bowling. Almost like that with the nuts. That's what we played in the evenings. This I can remember when we were little kids.
- MM:** What other games did they play, do you remember? When you were growing up, you remember any other games? Of course, you played cards.

- ES:** No, no. We didn't play cards. Not too much of playing cards. Did not play too much at that time.
- MM:** Did your folk's have a lot of entertainment? A lot of people coming in to visit?
- ES:** Well, some. We lived on a farm. Then it's not too close in the wintertime. Not too many. There is some always came. Then later on, my mother's sister Anna, she was married to Nicklaus Aberle and they had to get the mail in our place. The mail was there were besides the church. There were mailboxes and they lived quite a ways south from there and they always stopped in and then they there for dinner. We played then with those kids. We played outside with a little wagon and stuff later on.
- MM:** What about Easter time? What was Easter like? Remember Easter growing up on the farm?
- ES:** Yes.
- MM:** What was special on Easter?
- ES:** We made little Easter nests when we were little kids outside. Outside, in the evenings before. The next morning, there was some Easter eggs in and we thought the Easter rabbit brought those. That's what we had thought. We thought the Easter rabbit brought those. We each got about 4 or 6 eggs, colored eggs in the Easter nest. That's what I know.
- MM:** And then of course, there were a lot of church services during Easter?
- ES:** Oh, yah, oh yah. At that time was more holiday service than now. Yah. A lot more.
- MM:** And then of course, during the time you were growing up, namesdays were celebrated.
- ES:** Always namesdays, yes. At that time, they did not celebrate birthdays. Just namesdays, yah.
- MM:** They would have a big gathering?
- ES:** Yah. People came on the namesday.
- MM:** Was there a lot of singing then, too?
- ES:** Oh, yah.
- MM:** What were some of those German songs they sang?
- ES:** Well, there was *O du lieber Augustin* and *Verschiedene* song. A lot of different songs.
- MM:** Do you remember any of those songs? Did you do a lot of singing?
- ES:** Singing?
- MM:** Jah.
- ES:** I remember but I am not the best when I had to sing alone without music.
- MM:** You have to have somebody with you?
- ES:** Jah, jah.
- MM:** What about the namesdays? A lot of card playing?

- ES:** Well, they played cards and they drank whiskey and they sang.
- MM:** Did they make their own liquor?
- ES:** Yes, they made their own liquor. That was later. In the first years, not. Later on, they burnt their whiskey. They made the whiskey.
- MM:** How did they make the whiskey?
- ES:** They put some wheat in a 50 gallon barrel and put water in. I am not too sure how long they had to set that. They had a little machine and they heat that. And [before], they had put sugar in, a lot of sugar I guess, too. And I am not sure but I know they put wheat in and sugar and water I guess, for a few days. And they put it in a little machine, in the oven they heated and then a little whiskey came out. But in the beginning, my father always bought a quart or two quarts [of] whiskey from town. Took it home and he mixed it the way they needed. They browned sugar, make sugar brine and water. I think two to one they mixed it. With that sugar and whiskey, two water and one whiskey.
- MM:** I suppose some of these different drinks they made were also very important for a wedding?
- ES:** Yah. They used to make wine later on, with grapes. Yah.
- MM:** They buy grapes and make wine, huh?
- ES:** They bought grapes and they put them in a barrel and they made wine with that. I cannot remember this too good how they made the wine.
- MM:** Because your folks remembered back in the "old country", there were a lot of grapes.
- ES:** Yah, that's all what they did. The way I had understand from my folks, they always drank wine at every meal in Russia at that time. They had always wine in every meal. Jah.
- MM:** What about a wedding? What was a wedding like? Do you remember when you were growing up, were the weddings a pretty big event?
- ES:** Yah. On the weddings, they invited the brothers and sisters to the parents and the closest neighbors. The neighbors, yah. They had that sugar Kuchen they passed around and whiskey.
- MM:** Now for weddings you know, when a boy and a girl would get together and meet each other, was that arranged? Or did they just met each other or was there some help?
- ES:** Yah, they met each other at that time. Yah. That time when I was growing up, they met each other.
- MM:** The weddings lasted just one day?
- ES:** One day. Yes. Yes, one day.
- MM:** What about the services? Were they held in the nearby church? The church services?
- ES:** Yes, yes.
- MM:** Was there dancing?

- ES:** At that time, they sang in German. When I got married, they sang in German. One song I can remember. After the Mass when we walked out, they sang *Das Eheband ist gemacht und brechen kann's niemand als göttliche Macht*.
- MM:** Repeat that again. That's interesting.
- ES:** *Das Eheband ist gemacht und brechen kann's niemand als göttliche Macht*.
- MM:** Wonderful.
- ES:** This I can still remember when they sang that song.
- MM:** And then did you have a dance?
- ES:** Yes. Then we had a...[dance] when we went home. It [weddings] usually at that time was Mondays in the mornings. The Mass [was] not [in the] evenings. And then they had dinner. And then in the afternoon, they were dancing. Then supper and in the evening was dancing for a while.
- MM:** Now, the dance was right on the farm?
- ES:** On the farm. Yes.
- MM:** In the barn or where was the dance?
- ES:** No, in our summer kitchen.
- MM:** Oh, you had a big summer kitchen?
- ES:** A big summer kitchen, yes. That was in the summer kitchen.
- MM:** Oh, my! Well, who played for the dance?
- ES:** It was Pete Silbernagel at that time. [He] played for our wedding, yah. With one hand organ.
- MM:** Do you remember Eva, when you were growing up and you were a teenager and so forth, you remember going to dances?
- ES:** Yes, we went to dances but not too much. Not the way they go nowadays.
- MM:** Who were some of the bands that you went to see?
- ES:** Huh?
- MM:** Who were some of the orchestras that you remember?
- ES:** It was usually that Pete Silbernagel. He was a farmer there, almost a neighbor to us. He always played a little. Barn dances and so around there.
- MM:** Did you ever get over to Strasburg or Linton for the dances?
- ES:** No. No, I never get up to Strasburg.
- MM:** So, you never got to see, to hear....

- ES:** We had that big schoolhouse beside St. Anthony's church. And at that schoolhouse were sometimes some dances where I was before.
- MM:** Did Lawrence Welk ever come over and play?
- ES:** No. No, he didn't come there.
- MM:** You never got to hear him play?
- ES:** No, no. But my husband had told me that he came to Zeeland, close there for a barn dance and played. This was before we got married but I was not there.
- MM:** Then you grew up and got married in what year?
- ES:** In 1925 I got married, yah. I was 20 years old.
- MM:** What was the name of your husband?
- ES:** Casper Schatz.
- MM:** He grew up near Zeeland?
- ES:** Near Zeeland on a farm, yah. I met him first when his sister got married to Carl Leier. Carl Leier was a cousin to me and when he got married, I was his bridesmaid and he got married to my husband's sister. So that's when I met my husband the first time. I was 15 years old at that time.
- MM:** You went and lived on the farm near where?
- ES:** When we got married? A mile and a half east and a mile and a half north of Zeeland on a farm.
- MM:** So, your husband bought a farm?
- ES:** Bought that farm there, yah. Yah. His parents..., the first year I lived with his father. His father was a widow man and we lived with him the first year. He was just straight a mile and a half east of Zeeland.
- MM:** How big a family did you raise, Eva?
- ES:** Eight children. Four boys and four girls.
- MM:** And their names?
- ES:** Ida, Angeline, Barbara, Matt, Leo, Joe, Mary Ann, and then Tom. Tom lives in Beulah. Leo lives in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and Matt has a nice store in Pierre, South Dakota. And the oldest of the girls lives in Rapid City, South Dakota. And Angeline, the second one, is in Ellendale. She is still teaching school over there. For many years, she taught school. She's a school teacher.
- MM:** You got married in 1925 and stayed on the farm until what year?
- ES:** We lived 20 years in town, but what year I would have to look it up. When we retired, [we] moved to Zeeland and lived in town twenty years and then my husband passed away. He died. And this a little bit over a year there. And then I came up here. My children didn't want me alone there. Because none of the family was living there and there was no hospital there. They wanted that I come here to this place. I

have one son living here in Mandan and he works at the Capitol. He always brings my groceries. And if I need something, I just call him up and tell him. Or if I have to go see a doctor, he will take me.

MM: When you were married and living on the farm in 1926, by then did you already have some vehicles? In 1926, were you still using horses?

ES: In 1926, yes. We still worked with horses. Oh yah, at that time.

MM: And no electricity?

ES: No electricity, but in a few years.... When we went alone first, we had the small house there. Then a few years later, we built a bigger house. And then with an engine, a tractor something we fixed to pump the water into the house and use it for the wash machine. Yah, until we got the electricity.

End of Side 1 --- Start side 2

MM: When you were living with your husband, you were still using horses?

ES: In the first years, yes. We worked with the horses.

MM: How did they have light in the house?

ES: Kerosene lights. Yah.

MM: And by then, you were no longer using cow chips for heat?

ES: No. At that time, we bought coals, yah. We used coal and wood when we were married.

MM: Do you recall the first time when you bought a vehicle? A car?

ES: Yah. I think my husband's father had a car and my husband always had to drive that car as long as they were together. And later on then, we went alone. Maybe a year or two [later] and then we bought ourselves a car. A Ford.

MM: So, you remember getting to town then with that car? You drove to Zeeland and so forth?

ES: Yah.

MM: Then later on as you were married, did you have much time to go to dances or anything like that? Or just busy on the farm?

ES: Oh, there was a few dances that we would go to in town, usually.

MM: And who would play at those dances?

ES: I still can't remember who played.

MM: At that time, everybody was still speaking German?

ES: Yes, that's all what we know was German at that time. Yah.

MM: So your children grew up only speaking German?

ES: Yah. And you know, I'll tell you I had no chance for going to the English schools and I always thought it was not good for children not going to school. We let our children go all through the high school in

Zeeland and to college too. They all had an education, college too. Yes, and they thought it was not good enough.

MM: You thought it was important even though you didn't have schooling yourself?

ES: Yes. Yes, it was important.

MM: Did some of your children go to country school?

ES: Yes. In the first years, they all went to country school until the eighth grade. Then they went to town to high school. They went about 3/4 of a mile from us to the country school.

MM: And they walked to school?

ES: Yes, they walked to school. Oh, winters when it was too cold, my husband gave them a ride.

MM: How did he get them to school then? With the horses?

ES: Yes, with the horses [and] the sled. The double sled and the horses on. Yah.

MM: And then they would have school nine months?

ES: No, I think it was only seven months at that time. Yah.

MM: So later on then, about when did you start learning the English?

ES: Well, right away. I listened to the radio and that way I picked up a little. I picked up on my own on the radio. And the writing, I had a book with English and German the same, too.

MM: Do you remember like the first times you could listen to the radio? As a child, was there a radio?

ES: No, not when I was growing up. I was about 16 years old, then there was one farmer had a radio. And we went there to listen to that radio. When we heard it, I really couldn't believe it. That somebody could talk from far away. The first time I heard the radio, that was [at] Bob Parkins. That was an English man on a farm with the first radio and neighbors went there to listen to that radio.

MM: A lot of those people that came to the farm to listen to that radio.... Of course, the radio show was in English so they didn't always understand it. But they were still interested?

ES: Oh, we can understand a little because we had in the German school, we had something there. The English was with the same thing [in German].

MM: Translated, huh?

ES: Yah.

MM: So, what were the names of some of those early shows on the radio? Do you remember any of them?

ES: I know it but it just doesn't come to mind. There was two guys, they were funny. But I can't think of it.

MM: Was it Amos and Andy?

ES: Yes! Amos and Andy.

MM: And when you got married, there was more radio shows. Do you remember any of those?

- ES:** Bob Parker, I guess. I really can't remember.
- MM:** And then of course, later on TV came into the scene. When was the first time you had TV? Did you have it on the farm already?
- ES:** Yes, we had it on the farm. As soon as we had electricity on the farm, then we had a television.
- MM:** About what year did you have electricity?
- ES:** Yah, if I have to say the year, I can't remember.
- MM:** It was in the 40's sometime then? Or was it in the 30's?
- ES:** Yah, in the 30's, I guess.
- MM:** You had electricity then? The TV didn't appear until the early fifties. You remember those early years of course, when a person from North Dakota appeared on television, Lawrence Welk. Do you remember watching him?
- ES:** Oh, yes. We watched Lawrence Welk. Yah.
- MM:** And Lawrence Welk, when he would come on Saturday nights, the whole family would be watching?
- ES:** Yes, yes. We always watched.
- MM:** So you remember the time when the first radio show was on? When you went to the farm and listened to the radio for the first time? It must have been quite an experience to listen to that radio?
- ES:** I can't remember what the shows were on at that time.
- MM:** But you remember hearing the radio for the first time? That must have been exciting?
- ES:** It was excitement. I couldn't hardly believe it. I thought it's just a machine that's talking.
- MM:** And now when you look back Eva, to your life. You grew up in a sod house. And by the way, the sod house, did it have hardwood floors?
- ES:** Yah, they had hard wood floor in it and they painted with yellow floor paint always.
- MM:** Were the walls quite thick?
- ES:** Yah, and they had wallpaper inside. The walls was about a foot and a half thick and the window sill inside was real wide.
- MM:** Was it pretty cool in there in the summertime?
- ES:** Cool. Unless you had the oven on for cooking, then you couldn't get the heat out. Otherwise, it was cooler than in our other [wooden] house.
- MM:** How many children again were raised in that sod house?
- ES:** All of us.
- MM:** That was how many?

- ES:** Three boys and six girls.
- MM:** Nine children and the parents? And there were two bedrooms?
- ES:** Yah. On each side were two big rooms and each room had two beds.
- MM:** So, everybody had to make do with the space they had?
- ES:** Yah.
- MM:** The life you had way back when you were growing up. You were born in 1905 and today it is 1993. You are 88 years old and you have such a wonderful memory and good health. But when you look back to those early years and you think about now, with all the conveniences they have now and those pioneer days when you couldn't speak any English, what do you think about sometimes when you are visiting with people?
- ES:** What I think [is] that if the generation now had to live like we did without running water, had to go out in the night in the outhouse, they could not live that way anymore without running water.
- MM:** Would be difficult. Of course, everyone had to heat their own water. When you would take a bath, it was on Saturday night?
- ES:** Yes, yes. We had to haul in the water always from the well into the house. And then we had a big washtub and we sat in there and washed ourselves.
- MM:** Of course today, you live a wonderful Christian life. The church is very important to you as it was for all the early immigrants when they came to America. And so many of our German-Russian people of course, settled in North Dakota and especially in Emmons, McIntosh, and Logan County. And still today, do your children speak German?
- ES:** They all know German but two of them are married to English. Tom, his wife is English and Mary Ann's husband is English. But [the others], they still can talk German. Yah. The rest of them speak German here but with those, I speak English because they cannot understand.
- MM:** Right. That's wonderful that on your own through the radio and reading some books and the schooling you had, you learned English yourself. Was this also true for your husband? Did he speak English, too?
- ES:** Yes. But with him he said he had not enough English school either. They had a big farm there and in the fall, they had so much work to do on the farm and it was almost near Christmas time 'til they were done. Then he could go to school. And then in the spring, it was seeding time and he had to stay home again. But they went to town school. They lived closer to town.
- MM:** So it was important they had to be home to work and so they couldn't always go to school then.
- ES:** Yah.
- MM:** We are going to finish our conversation today on November, 8th, 1993. I am so pleased Eva that you remember so much about those early years. And it was so refreshing to hear about your life and to know about the wonderful years you had. And even though there were tough times and good times, you raised a family of eight children and they are all living today. We are going to share with them our conversation. And so that you know Eva, that our conversation today which was on tape will be

deposited at the university in Fargo with our Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. We'll be sure to get you a copy of the tape.

MM: Thanks so much, for our visit. Have a good day!

[Then a German dialect sample with Eva Schatz.]