

Interview with Sister Ann Schoch (AS)

Conducted by Carol Halverson (CH)

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CH: Today is July 27, 1998. My name is Carol Halverson. I am a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, Fargo. It is a pleasure to visit today with Sister Ann Schoch in Mankato, where this interview is taking place at Good Council, the motherhouse of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. We are, today, using the interview questions for German Russian Nuns. So we are using the ones labeled interview questions part one. We're going to skip the first page because Sister Ann will simply write that information out and that will save time on this interview, and we are going to be going to question number fourteen. Although, I will be asking: What is your given name and then did you have a chosen name after you became a nun?

AS: I was baptized Anna and, when I became a Sister, I became Sister Mary Ronald; because at that time, if anyone had our name already in religious life, there was not to be a duplicate. Now in the early 1970's, I was able to return to my given name and so I became Sister Ann.

CH: Could you give me your date of birth and where you were born?

AS: I was born July 20, 1938, three miles west of Scheffield, North Dakota, in Stark County on our farm home. And at that time, my father was present for my birth and my grandmother, Isabella Berger Schoch, was the midwife. That makes me very special.

CH: I should say. Where are you in birth order in your family?

AS: I'm the fourth oldest of fourteen children.

CH: Where all of the births delivered at home?

AS: The first seven children were born at home; four of us on the first farm that we lived that my parents farmed. And then they moved to the homestead of my father's parents, two miles further west, and three more children were born at home and the last seven were born in the hospital, in Dickinson.

CH: Goodness, fourteen children on the farm. But it was your grandmother who delivered you?

AS: Who delivered me, yes.

CH: Oh, how exciting. So we are going to move to the segment called memories of the homeland here. And out of these four questions here, let's just choose the ones that you are comfortable answering. Of those questions, is there one that you want to choose and talk about?

AS: Well, what I do know is that my grandmother – I knew all four of my grandparents and I also knew my grandmother's, or at least met, my grandmother's mother. So that would have been my great-grandmother. She died when I was in second grade, so I at least remember meeting her. But my four

grandparents all came from Russia, and they did not know one another when they came, but found each other in North Dakota and married. But my father's mother, Isabella Berger Schoch, is the one who did share with us, you know, what it was like to come over on the ship. It was a pretty terrible experience, but I don't think that my grandparents ever regretted that they came to the United States, or ever longed to go back except maybe to go back to meet relatives and friends, but this was virtually impossible to do. I certainly remember hearing my grandmothers say that it was very difficult living in the German speaking part of Russia.

CH: They were young, your grandparents?

AS: My grandmother was eighteen years old when she came to the United States. So that meant that she came in 1902 – or maybe she'd been nineteen then? But yes, if she came in 1902, she would have probably been nineteen years old.

CH: Do you know the name of the village that she left?

AS: She came from Landau.

CH: Did she speak fondly of her home village?

AS: You know, I regret never really talking to my grandparents about what it was like, so I really can't offer any information there.

CH: They never spoke longingly, wishing they were back?

AS: No they didn't.

CH: Was there ever any correspondents?

AS: Not that I know of.

CH: What about as the political tides were turning in Russia, was there ever any discussion about our relatives there?

AS: Not with myself, no. My mother would probably know that, but I don't.

CH: Then moving into the section of your childhood memories, what language did you speak at home?

AS: Okay, I remember speaking German. Particularly, I remember praying the Rosary in German. And I know that when my oldest sister went to grade school, she did not know how to speak English. However, that, I think, forced my parents to speak English. They knew English, of course, but [it forced my parents] to speak English maybe more frequently so that my sister could learn the language.

CH: So did all the members of the family speak or understand German?

AS: No, I would say probably the, maybe, six or seven of us children.

CH: So the older ones learned?

AS: Yah, we spoke a dialect and I'm sorry that I wouldn't know the name of the dialect, no.

CH: So you can't speak it fluently today, but you can understand the words?

- AS:** I can't it speak it fluently. I pretty well understand our dialect. There are definitely things that those of us who are older in our family, we still will sometimes enjoy speaking some German just because – I suppose we are proud that we at least know something. And I know that I must have learned it well enough too, because when I was in Germany for my silver jubilee where our congregation started, we were in (A068). And the people in that area, in the (A069) area, we were at a party and I sat down and I was able to converse with the people there. So they spoke the very same dialect that I did and I was really pleased that I had learned German as a child.
- CH:** Wonderful gift here, your grandparents and parents gave you. Can you repeat a story, a poem, or a prayer in this dialect? Is there anything you remember?
- AS:** Oh my, probably a little bit of the Rosary like – well, certainly (A076, German) is 'holy mother of God, pray for us.' I'm sure that if I sat down with my mother and we started saying the Rosary in German, that I would be able to go along with that.
- CH:** How about the Lord's Prayer or any nursery rhymes?
- AS:** No, no. I would not be able to.
- CH:** Did anybody speak other dialects in your home or was it all that sort of that Landau (A083)?
- AS:** No, we didn't. My mother knew High German and my mother could write in German.
- CH:** So when your parents were born here and they were educated – their Christian education was all German?
- AS:** Yes, because I know that just recently, maybe about a month ago, when I was at home, we picked up some books that my mother had, like one of her Primer books - my sister has it in St. Paul now - and that was all in German. So I do believe that. Now, I do have her History book and that's in English. So, you know, that may have changed, but see my mother is 87 years old. So when she went to school, I think the earlier [books] were in German and then [they] moved into English.
- CH:** As the country became very nationalistic?
- AS:** Right, right.
- CH:** Okay, moving into your childhood memories, do you remember childhood chores that you were responsible for? Some you enjoyed? Some you didn't enjoy?
- AS:** Of course. I grew up on a 2,500 acre farm. At that time, my father did not believe in strip farming. And so, in the summer time when we would binder and shock our grain, my mother and father would take turns alternating turns on the tractor and binder. And their children, we would shock the grain. And we would walk around and around this 200 acre farm, but I have really fond memories of that. As my mother and father would come around, you know, they would stop and we could have some pop, which we rarely had at home. But on days like that, that was our special treat. And, you know, my mother used to bake bread, and because we were such a large family, she would probably bake twenty loaves a week. But on days that we would shock grain, my mother and Dad would buy sweetheart bread and that was a treat. Now today, that is just the reverse. But you know, having lived or grown up and been nourished with homemade bread, the bought bread seemed to be such a treat. And the minced ham, my gosh, you know, that was such a treat. But we would walk round and round this field. I also milked

cows by hand. And, you know, it's like a language; what you learn as a child, you don't forget. Later in my religious life, I went to work in Africa for thirteen years in Kenya, and one day when I was trying to improve my Swahili, which I learned there, I went to spend a week with this family, African family. And, one night, the mother said, "well it's time to go out and milk the cows." And I said, "Well, I could do that." And she looked at me and she said, "An American woman knows how to milk cows by hand?" And I sat down. I figured out, I hadn't milked a cow in 26 years. And I sat down and I milked that cow like I had been doing it every day.

CH: Your prairie farming legacy.

AS: Right. Also, we had a big garden and we hoed the garden. Also, my parents planted trees and, as you know in North Dakota, you have to really nurture trees. So we did a lot with weeding in the trees. We learned how to cook. I'm just most grateful that I grew up on a farm in North Dakota. I just believe, very strongly, that our rootedness had really prepared us for our society. When I went to Kenya, after language school, the very first day when I was 'upcountry,' as we called it, I first worked with African women religious, and we had to go out and plant an eight acre field by hand. And the Sisters that had come earlier, prior to my coming from the states, were not farm girls. So they just would drop the seeds into the ground. But I said to the Sisters, "Oh, I can dig," as we said it there. They had short hoes. And they said to me, "Sister, you are truly a Kenyan." And I just said, "Well, it's because I grew up in North Dakota and I knew what it was like to be a farm girl." So, yes, we had lots of chores. Certainly, I did not always appreciate having to do it, but as a grown woman now, I certainly appreciate the responsibilities that my parents entrusted to us and made us who we are today, you know: responsible, capable women and men.

CH: If you didn't do the work that was expected of you, how were you disciplined?

AS: I don't know. My parents never hit us or that kind of thing. I think they just asked us to do it. Maybe growing up in a German home, we had a great deal of respect for our parents: we listened, we obeyed.

CH: So discipline wasn't a great issue in your family? Everybody just sort of did whatever?

AS: Well – I mean, I'm sure at times we talked back to our parents; and, at least, [to] my mother I think I did. But, you know, I just think we were expected to do it and we did it.

CH: If there was any disciplining, was it different for boys than for girls?

AS: I don't remember. I just think we were told to do something and we did it.

CH: Great. We're moving into the segment called memories about school. Where did you go to school and how many years there?

AS: I went to St. Pius School in Scheffield. I did all grades, one through eight. It was a school run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. We were there a good 50 years. The school closed and it is torn down. And my only memory I have from there is a brick that I picked up a few years ago, yes.

CH: But you went all the way through high school? Right?

AS: No, the high school was closed before I ever got to high school there. So I came to Mankato and I went to our school here, four years of our girls academy, Good Council - Our Lady of Good Council Academy.

- CH:** So you were able to go to school the full term? You didn't have to be staying at home to do chores or anything like that?
- AS:** No. My father, certainly – you know, he only went to third grade, because he had to help his parents. So he really became a self-educated man, a very wise man. My mother went to eight years and they went to the same school that I did.
- CH:** So your parents also went to St. Pius in Scheffield. But, because of the early agricultural situation, your father would be called upon to work in the field?
- AS:** Right, so he only did three years.
- CH:** But that was also a Sister of Notre Dame School, even then?
- AS:** You know, I think so – I'm not real sure on that. That would be a piece of information I could research and put onto information that I would give you.
- CH:** Okay. Were their students of other nationalities at your school or was it completely a German-Russian community?
- AS:** German-Russian...probably some Bohemian, because my mother does have a little Bohemian blood in her.
- CH:** So you were from that Dickinson area were there where a lot of Bohemian-Germans?
- AS:** Yes.
- CH:** So more hyphenated Germans in your community?
- AS:** Right. Scheffield, you know, is 25 miles southwest of Dickinson.
- CH:** Do you have any special memories of your childhood in that school?
- AS:** Well, you know that, when I went to school, we boarded. We were boarders, even though we only lived five miles from school. And so my father would take us to school on Monday morning and pick us up on Friday.
- CH:** Really?
- AS:** Yes. And that was just – everyone in that area boarded even if they were just a few miles.
- CH:** So did you live with family in town?
- AS:** No, we had dormitories right in the school. And what I remember was - my eighth grade teacher is still living and she is here at Good Council. She's 97 years old. And my first and second grade teacher is still living and she's here at Good Council. She lives with Alzheimer's, but what a sweetie she was. And my seventh grade teacher is still living and she is living in St. Paul and does volunteer work. Now what I remember, I had long locks. We all had long hair and my mother would put our locks, our hair, into rag rolls, rag curls. And then during the week, because we had some natural [curl] to our hair – I still have natural curly hair; I never set my hair or anything – the Sisters would comb our hair. In fact, Sister Cerella, who is a cousin to Mark Miller, taught some of my Sisters and she talks about how she would comb our little locks every morning. I had wonderful teachers. Probably the only teacher I feared was

my eighth grade teacher, but she had a great influence. I think, if she had never asked a question, or had us right a composition about what we wanted to be when we grew up, I probably wouldn't be a Sister today. But I wrote about how I wanted to be a Sister. And she called me into her office one night, and I was afraid of her. She was our principle and she was quite stern. And I wondered what I had done and she asked me, "So you know you want to be a Sister? Where will you go to high school?" And I said, "I haven't thought about it," and she invited me to come here to Good Council. I often wonder if I would have been a Sister, because even in high school as I grew – you know, as I became a senior - I wanted to be an airline stewardess. And I really struggled with going to become a Sister and wanting to be a stewardess. And at the end – I must have prayed about it - and at the end, I chose entering the Convent, which I am very grateful for.

CH: These women have all been wonderful mentors for you, even from childhood on?

AS: Yes. And you know I think – you know, when the Sisters would go away for the summer, we would just await their return. And having grown up in a family where prayer was very important, we prayed the Rosary together; we prayed Morning Prayer and Night Prayer together. And we would go to Saturday nights to benediction. Which is – well, it was the Rosary and some of the other prayers. So we always wondered, 'would the Sisters be back now?' So, we really did like them very much. And I had wonderful teachers, you know, who were really affirming, who were great, great teachers, you know...who really taught you the fundamentals, who made sure you learned your material. I think [they] were very affirming, very caring people. And, you know, they cared for us for five days a week all my eight years.

CH: Would it be fair to say that your teachers, there at St. Pius School, did more parenting than your parents did?

AS: Well-

CH: Since you boarded there and it was your home life?

AS: I was home on weekends, and of course, during the summer. I would say – I still want to give credit to my parents, but I would also give a lot of credit to my [teachers], yes.

CH: What about – there is a question here that talks about what type of discipline was used if someone didn't behave. Was there much incidence of that?

AS: You know, I – in my own classrooms, I – you know, those were the days when you kept perfect silence. Like, it was very regimented in sense. So let's say we would go out to get a drink; you never went out on your own. There was a scheduled time when everybody went to the bathroom and everybody got a drink. And I remember standing in line for my – and I can see the little water bubbler – and we would keep perfect silence. And in fact, the Sisters taught us to pray ejaculations, which are short prayers, like, let's say, "Sacred heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in thee." And that's what we did when we were standing in line to get a drink. And so I don't think that – I mean, I hear stories about where the kids were ratty or that kind of thing. I personally don't remember, like, our teachers ever...I remember my eighth grade teacher, Sister Rita Reinbold, who is also a German from Russia and from South Dakota. You know, she was very stern with us and I think she was probably the only one that ever put us down.

CH: You were afraid of her?

- AS:** I was afraid of her, but I was not of any of my other teachers. So I think, you know, I think the Sisters were strict. They were good disciplinarians and so I think we were obedient.
- CH:** Was there a sense of loving?
- AS:** Yes, all of them. I would say all of them. And I have pictures that I took of my teachers after I was a Sister myself. My fifth and sixth grade teacher was probably one of my favorite Sisters - she was Sister (254), then Sister Olivia (254). And she died. I was home from Africa, and I had a chance to visit her yet before she died. And also, my third and fourth grade teacher, Sister (257)...willygolly, she died also. One time, when I was home from Africa, I remember visiting with her.
- CH:** You speak so lovingly of this community of women that nurtured and educated all of you; some were German-Russian, some were not. Do you think those who were not, do you think they had an understanding of the German-Russian community?
- AS:** I'm not sure, you know, how much they understood. But, you know, in those days we were given our assignment of where would go as women religious. So, they didn't have a choice to go there, but I think they loved it. I really do. I don't know if they knew anything about us. You know, also, I think what was difficult was, in those days, like, let's say my teachers didn't have an opportunity to go into our homes and get to know us that way. But my parents were very strong supporters of the Sisters. And you know, we would bring them food stuffs, you know: garden things and meat. So they would have the opportunity to speak to them. Did you know that we probably were very obedient and respectful of the Sisters because of my parent's respect for them. And I'm sure that my father would say, you know, if we children did anything wrong, that the Sisters could discipline us. Now I might just share this story that comes to mind. When I was in eighth grade, we had seventh and eighth grade together and this Sister that taught me in the eighth grade, she was teaching Agriculture. And I was a seventh grader, but she was teaching eighth grade and she said, "You know, the farmers around here have the manure hanging on their cow's shanks." And it made me so angry because I thought, "Now what does she know about our farm?" And I wrote a little note - speaking of discipline, okay - I wrote a little note and I handed it over to my friend, my classmate, and [the Sister] said, "Anna, bring up that note." And whatever I wrote, she said, "I will see you after school." And I remember going up to see her very frightened and she said that if I was so smart, that I could ask Father (291), who was our Pastor, if I could run this school." Well I went home - that was a Friday - and I went home and I told my mother and Dad right away. Now, she never ever said anything to them. I don't remember what my father said to them, but I thought I better tell my parents before she told them. And I know I didn't - I don't remember if I got a scolding or, you know, that kind of thing, but I was just being very defensive for us as farmers.
- CH:** Of course. Could you have an opinion of your own as you were growing up in school? Was critical thinking encouraged?
- AS:** You know, I rather doubt that it was. You know, I think it was learning the material. At that time, we took state exams. And so, I would think that our teachers would have wanted us to really know the material so that we would pass well. I doubt that that was part of it. You know, being an educator myself now and reflecting back on that - and going to Africa - and knowing that I had to do the same thing there where the students wrote government exams. I had to cover a syllabus of material. It was [important] teaching them and making sure they knew it so that they could, you know, pass well in their examinations. I would say probably not, it was probably more input and wrote.

- CH:** So the curriculum was very clearly defined and there wasn't any creative teaching?
- AS:** Not a lot of creative teaching. I would say, though, my teacher in eighth grade is an artist and she still paints today at the age of 97. And, you know, I think there is where the creativity came out and I myself am artistic. Part of it is in my family; I know my Uncle Val, my father's brother, was an artist. But I do feel that that's an area where I think we probably were allowed to be more creative.
- CH:** So there were art classes that you could do?
- AS:** Art classes, right.
- CH:** But your brain was not invited to expand?
- AS:** I don't remember that, and I think I would clearly remember if that was the case.
- CH:** Did you worship in English or in German?
- AS:** All that I remember was in English, except, like I said, at home we prayed the Rosary in German. I take that back; our Liturgies, when I was growing up, our Mass, was in Latin.
- CH:** It was.
- AS:** Right.
- CH:** Do remember Vatican too, and the changeover?
- AS:** Oh, of course I do.
- CH:** Do you remember how the family felt about it?
- AS:** Well – I mean, I was already a religious at that time, you know. And, you know, where would I have been then? Probably in St. Paul, Minnesota. Well, I grew up in a Parish. We had the same priest all of my growing up. He was in our Parish over 50 years.
- CH:** Oh my.
- AS:** He was of the very old school. And as a child, he would talk about the three days of darkness coming and how we would have to be prepared. He really frightened us very much. I can remember, though, coming back as a Sister; coming home on home visits, he would be talking, giving his sermon, his homily. And, you know, having grown in my own spiritual life in my own theology, I often resented, really resented what he was saying to the people. I felt that he was not helping them to grow. And maybe this is not fair for me to put on tape, you know, to say that about him, but it's just where he was at in his own theology. And he never ever moved, I don't think, with Vatican too, you know. And I know that it had a great influence on my mother, you know. She still takes communion on her tongue, because Father (355) said this, you know. But the rest of my family, you know, has moved out from that and receives communion in the hand and that kind of thing. But yes, I think, again, what we learn as children becomes so much a part in parcel of us, that to unlearn it is very difficult. But those of us who had a chance to be educated and, you know, study theology and spirituality: certainly that has helped influence us. But, you know, my mother hasn't had that opportunity. However, my parents were people of great, great faith. And, you know, I would just like to share this story that has always stayed with me and has played a very important part in my life. Like I said, when we were growing up, we prayed the

Rosary, we were faithful church goers. But you know, we grew up on this big farm and, as we all know in North Dakota, hail storms were very common and still are. And I can remember standing at the window with my mother and father and all of us children. The hailstones were coming down the size of golf balls and my father knew that our crop was lost. He said to us, "The Lord has given it to us, and the Lord can take it away." And he didn't complain, he didn't, you know, condemn God, or ask why. But for me, that spoke of my parents' really deep, deep faith of 'the Lord provides for us if we but trust.' And that has always stayed with me. You know, I think about who influenced me in terms of why I am a Sister today, I would have to say a great part of it is I think that I grew up in a home where prayer was very important, where faith was important. And then going to a school, with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who I loved and who taught me everything I knew, along with my own family. I've kind of lost track of the question.

- CH:** What a beautiful story of your parents' great religiosity and their complete surrender to the idea that the higher power was in charge and how that influenced you and your siblings. Are their others of your siblings that entered religious life?
- AS:** Yes, I have a sister who followed me in our family. Her name was Lewine and she now has the name Sister (402). She is a Parish Minister in Bismarck, North Dakota.
- CH:** So it influenced more than you. Of the fourteen siblings, would you say that they have maintained a religious life to one degree or another?
- AS:** Yes. You know, my mother is 87 and has a difficult time walking, but she walks to Mass every day, a block and a half. And I know that she prays for her children and so none of my brothers and sisters are divorced. So twelve would be married out of the fourteen. And all of them are Catholics. Not all married to Catholics, but you know, yes, still are church goers. So I think, obviously, we valued what our parents – how they brought us up and what they valued. I know, when my dad died in 1983, my parents had been going to daily Mass for eighteen years. They were retired and they could do this. What they said to us, I think, by their very life is that God has to be a big part of our life.
- CH:** Religion certainly has sustained your family. Let's talk about your mother and Dad's early marriage, what you remember about that. You said that they were married during the Great Depression.
- AS:** Yes, my parents got married in 1929. And they lived in a wood frame house at the time, which I have a picture of, and I can share that with you. And they, my mother and father, were gone one day and somebody came in and stole my father's suit, his wedding suit. But my mother still has her wedding veil and she has it framed in a big oval frame along with her bouquet of flowers. And my mother and father kept their wedding cake. And so my mother still has her original wedding cake in her curio. And they did not need to use that cake because they had all these sheet cakes and pies. My mother still has the original bill and, right now, I can't remember how much everything cost. It was hardly anything, but it was a big thing at that time. My mom talks about how they drove to Dickinson for their wedding reception and the snow was so high that it was like they were driving through a tunnel from Scheffield to Dickinson. My mother also talked about how, during the depression, what it was like for my dad and her to be on a farm. She said she would stand by the window and cry sometimes because there were no more cow pies for her to pick up to burn for the fuel for her cooking and to keep us warm. When I was two years old, we moved to my grandparents' place where [my grandparents] homesteaded. It was a stone house, which I helped tear down in my childhood then when my father built our home when I was

in second grade. And I do have a picture of that stone home. So we grew up in a home that did not have water or electricity. But I am grateful for that experience. I just feel that's part of who I am today. I think having to learn to live a more simple life is something I value today. And we don't have those opportunities anymore. I think it's what I loved about living in Africa. We lived very simply. And I think it's what people today hunger for. They can't name it, but I think we have gotten – we live in a society today that is – we have too much, we want more, and we are not satisfied. And I think it's what we hunger for. We hunger for a more simpler lifestyle and we don't know how to have it. And it's something that I appreciate, having lived in North Dakota during a time when we had very little. And I think it's something I still value today. And even as a woman religious, it's not easy to live simply. And it's something that we as women religious are trying to get back to.

- CH:** How do you identify with your mother's despair? I mean the idea that this young mother is feeling this despair here: it is the Great Depression, there's no fuel to either cook with or heat the home with, she has small children...What does that do to you?
- AS:** Well, as you can tell from my voice, I think it has touched me knowing that my mother, my parents, struggled that way. But, you know, I think what it says to me is that they were such self-sacrificing people. And I think they worked so hard and they didn't have a lot, but one thing that I think I remember very strongly, very clearly, when I was a child; every Sunday we went to Mass, and then Sunday was our day as a family. We would visit our grandparents and visit our cousins, our aunts and uncles. Maybe I'm losing part of your question. I have a deep gratitude for my parents, having been willing to struggle and to sacrifice for their children. I sometimes think they worked too hard, but I think it was the way of life then. It was a way of surviving. I think – all I can say is that I'm grateful.
- CH:** So you know your parents were devoted to each other, they were devoted to Christ, they were devoted to family and you lived near your grandparents. You knew both sets and a great-grandmother, so there was a deep sense of family.
- AS:** Yes.
- CH:** How did your family respond or react to illness and death?
- AS:** Well maybe I can speak out of my own experience. You know, I remember my great-grandmother dying in the home of my grandparents - that would be on my father's side - and I can remember standing around her coffin. I was only in second grade, so I would not remember if people were crying or anything like that. But when my grandmother, my mother's mother, died, Regina Roller Binstock, I was in eighth grade then. And I loved my grandmother. They were living in Dickinson at the time. I remember crying. I don't remember if my parents cried. My father probably would not have. I think that was part of the German...that they didn't cry. But when my father died in 1983, I know my father wanted to die on his farm. And my mother always wanted to move to Dickinson. And my father would tease and he would say to my mother, "No, we are not moving to Dickinson because even if we had a fence around our home in Dickinson, you would be out in the neighbor's gardens picking out their weeds." But I was in Africa and I was called home and I had eighteen days with my father before he died. It was a profound religious experience for me because, every day, people would come to my home and say goodbye to my father. And my father would thank them for being a wonderful neighbor, a wonderful friend. And each one of us children had a chance to talk to my father and express our appreciation for him and, you know, ask for his forgiveness. And we were all around his bedside when

he died, all fourteen of his children, and all of his grandchildren and the in-laws. And after he died – well, we said a prayer that we always said as a family. We said a prayer which I say every day and I probably can't repeat it now, but it ends with "Jesus Mary Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you, Amen." And that's when my father died. It was with all of his children and his wife praying for him.

CH: Into the loving arms.

AS: Yes, and after he died, and his body was taken from our home, my mother went to my dad's candy drawer and brought out the last candy that my father bought and she put it on one of her silver trays. And we stood around our big kitchen, and we passed it around and we each took a piece. And for me - I talk about the Eucharist – that is an experience of the Eucharist. Sharing in that food that my father...he always gave us candy. So it was such a tribute and I just admire my mother for doing that. We could not bury my father right away. We buried him on his 76th birthday and it was just our family. And we came home and my mother had baked a cake for him. We had cake and ice cream like we always did as a family.

CH: Oh, a wonderful symbolic way of dealing with grief: with such dignity.

AS: And I think who my parents were came out, you know, at the time of death too. So I know that – maybe, you know, we say that Germans are so (B017) and all that, but I think the tenderness and the love that we all hold does come out, you know, at times like this.

CH: Listening to you, the fact that there was a family tradition of prayer and this closeness and need to have the family circle there and then after his death, the symbolism with bringing out the tray of candy that so symbolized the generosity or the tenderness of your father that that is just as important as –

AS: Another kind of prayer?

CH: Another kind of prayer, absolutely.

AS: So, you know, when we talk the Eucharist, we're talking about Communion. And that's really Communion, that's community, it's family community. Yah, it's a profound experience that we had. I remember another thing [about the days] before my father died. It would have been, like, the morning of the day he died, on December 27. I have a picture of my father. You know, when you talk about people used to moonshine, make whiskey? My dad did that too; maybe I shouldn't be saying that.

CH: It was a very common thing.

AS: It was a common thing. But my dad, that morning...I have a picture of him giving – or that afternoon – giving my brother-in-law a little whiskey in a shot glass. And he, my father, looked so ashen and all that and he died that – well, he died three days later. No, this would have been Christmas Day, but he died then on the 27th.

CH: So was it schnapps?

AS: It was schnapps, yes. And my Grandma Schoch, Isabella Berger Schoch; when she was in a nursing home, she always had a little peppermint schnapps in her little drawer, and out would come the bottle. So when my grandmother died, one of the gifts that they carried up during the Mass of her funeral, the Funeral Mass, was a bottle of schnapps and [they] put in the alter. Peppermint schnapps, yes. So, you know, I think that we integrated what was part of our life into – you know, certainly at Grandma

Schoch's funeral. The earlier ones died before Vatican too, and you couldn't do that kind of thing at Mass, you know. But we did carry up symbolic gifts. And, you know, Mark Miller talked about the iron crosses; and just last week, I stood at my grandfather's grave, (B042) Schoch, who is buried at St. Pius in Scheffield. And I stood before the iron cross. And there are many iron crosses in our cemetery. And after listening to Mark last night, the next time I go home - my home is 600 miles from here - I must photograph some of those iron crosses and maybe learn a little bit more about them.

CH: As a child, were there traditional funeral songs? And you say it was before Vatican; there was a much more traditional style of funeral practices.

AS: Well, I would just say – I would not remember what songs were used at any of the funerals. The only one I remember at father's that my mother wanted was "How Great thou Art". And I think every time we hear that, my mother will say, "Oh, we sang that at Dad's funeral." No, I think we just picked out songs that we felt [were appropriate]. But certainly, growing up, we sang a lot of Latin songs in our church because Mass was all in Latin.

CH: Do you know, were those songs that were also sung in Landau, or in the villages, [sung] in Russian?

AS: That I don't know.

CH: But your parents were very familiar with them, so it certainly could have been - or you grandparents [could have sang in Russian]?

AS: Yah. I don't know that.

CH: So your father was a musician. Did you care to talk about that?

AS: Yes, my father played a button accordion and I can remember it very well. And he would play at wedding dances. I don't remember what he did with that button accordion, but then he got a keyboard accordion. And that still is in our family. My brother-in-law is – well in fact, I have two brothers-in-law who are musicians. But my brother, Howard McLaughlin, still has my Dad's accordion. And my mother and dad would take us to wedding dances and, you know, in those days, you would go at eight o'clock at night and you would be there 'til midnight, when the midnight lunch was served. And I can remember dancing every dance. We were not wallflowers; we learned to polka and to waltz. And, you know, that again, that experience of community. The people got together and, you know, they celebrated. And - if I could just interject this too - when I think of community, I think of – and this is going back to church - but on Sunday mornings, after Mass, everybody came out of Mass, and I can still see all the little huddles of people. And everybody, I think, talked about the news of the week. But those were good community experiences. And now I live in a community of women religious, and I think my experience of community as a child has impacted my religious life of community experiences.

CH: What were some of the songs your father played? Do you remember any of them? And did he sing and play?

AS: I don't know if he sang, but you know, to be honest, I could not name any of those.

CH: But if you heard them, you would probably recognize some of the melodies.

AS: Yes. Well, you know, what were the polkas and the waltzes in those days, yes.

- CH:** Was he self-taught as a musician?
- AS:** I don't know that. That is a very good question.
- CH:** But music certainly played a role. Did he play for you children also?
- AS:** He, you know, he was a very busy man, but on Sunday afternoons, he would often play the accordion. Now I remember hearing him playing more on his newer accordion. But I think I even have a picture of my dad playing the accordion. I think I do.
- CH:** Great, if we could include that!
- AS:** I think I have it. I have to look at – yes.
- CH:** So tell me about the foods that you grew up with.
- AS:** Well my mother was a great cook, and she taught us girls. One of the things that we made was strudel. And you know, even today, my sisters still make it, my mother still helps. But we'd get around this big table and we pulled the dough paper thin and then we'd fill it with apples, cinnamon, and sugar or cottage cheese, raisins, and sugar or – I think, sour kraut. And then you pull the sheet and roll it up and...delicious! And we all, my mother and I still love (B091) noodles and (B091) noodles and (B092) noodles and oh – you know, so some of those things. And my sisters have learned to make this and so, you know, the tradition will carry on. I think that's really very important.
- CH:** Isn't it comforting to know the food ways aren't dying?
- AS:** That's right!
- CH:** Your descendants, your nieces, your nephews, your great-nieces, your great-nephews will still have a taste for that and learn how to do it.
- AS:** Will still have a chance to keep some of that food, yes.
- CH:** Kuchen (sp?)? Did your mother make kuchen?
- AS:** Oh yes.
- CH:** Custard kuchen, with a (96) dough?
- AS:** Yes she did. And poppy seed rolls. I don't know if that was such a [popular food]. My family – maybe it's more Bohemian, because my mother has a little Bohemian blood in her. That's right. But a lot of that – we did our own poppy seed, you know, grinding of our poppy seed. In our family, we still have the poppy seed grinder. One of my sister's has it. And everybody, you know, still makes poppy seed rolls, apricot rolls. Another thing my mother made was plachinda (sp?), you know, with the dough and the pumpkin...and pig ears, sow noodles. Pig ears, (B103), is a dough and you cut it in pieces and then you have ironed cones. We still have the iron cones in our family. And at the end of the iron there's that iron cone and then a long metal piece and a little loop and then you attach a string to it. And then you put the dough square on and then you tie the string around it and you put it in deep fat and you fry it. And then when it's fried, then you put it in powdered sugar. And my family still makes those: (110). Yes.

- CH:** What wonderful food memories you have. Was your farm self-sufficient in that your mother raised the meat - your family raised the meat and the garden produce?
- AS:** Yes, in fact, I have pictures of when we would clean chickens. We would clean 100 chickens a day and freeze them. We would also sell them. We had a huge garden which we – you know, my mother would can. [My mother] did a lot of canning in her early years and freezing – I guess eventually we would freeze things, but earlier years, it was canning. Also, my father would probably have like 300 head of cattle and so we would – I remember the branding days. And I still have pictures of our brand and my brother would still have the branding irons. But also then, we would do our own butchering of, you know, for beef. And we also butchered our own pigs: meat sausage. My family still carries on the tradition of sausage making. Almost everybody makes sausage. On the farm that I grew up [on], we have a butcher house. And everybody, even though my one brother has that farm, everybody can come and butcher there and make their sausage.
- CH:** In the old, traditional way? The way your grandparents, your great-grandparents would have?
- AS:** Yah. You know those days, they would clean the casings. But today, of course, I think everybody buys casings. But it would still be the sausage maker my dad used, yes.
- CH:** So, is there a person in your family, one that is sort of designated as the king sausage maker and maybe another one that know how to make schnapps and maybe among your sisters; each having a specialty of any kind?
- AS:** No, they kind of worked together in terms of the sausage making. Like, my brother has the farm, and so they'll come in and my brothers will work together. Or some of my sisters and brothers will make it elsewhere, I think. I don't think anybody makes schnapps anymore. Some make wine, I think, from chokecherries. See, that was another thing I remember. On Sundays – maybe not on Sundays, we never worked on Sundays - but we'd go chokecherry picking and we'd make chokecherry jelly and chokecherry wine and my sisters still make jellies and that kind of thing.
- CH:** Do you remember your grandparents making any reference to the orchards or the vineyards in the old country?
- AS:** No, I don't. And I just regret that I never talked about any of this. I mean, I certainly had the opportunity. I mean, I think today we value that more. But I think what's happening is that - I'm so grateful that you people are doing this because, today, we are so busy with everything and we have better means of transportation, we have better means of communication and we do less and less of that. But, I think people are beginning to have family reunions now and trying to remember their cousins again, because we certainly knew them when we were kids. But, you know, we are trying to dig into our past, but we have to remember to live our present and live it well with our relatives. You know?
- CH:** Absolutely. Well, your family is maintaining family tradition just in that sense of community work around the food ways. And during that time, as they're working together with their hands, there's no doubt some storytelling is going on and some "remember when" kind of storytelling going on.
- AS:** Well, interestingly enough, just June 25th weekend [1998], my mother and her nine daughters went camping together and we went to Medora. It's the first time we've done it, but we want to make it a annual [event]. But we did a lot of "remember when", so we recalled a lot of family times.

- CH:** And next time you'll take a recorder.
- AS:** I guess so. We never thought of that!
- CH:** It's a wonderful way of being able to pass that on.
- AS:** We do have a tape recording that my grandmother made. My mother has that of some of the question maybe that you're asking.
- CH:** Would it be possible for NDSU to access that and make a duplicate so that we could transcribe that if you think that it is full of the answers to some of these questions?
- AS:** Yes. Maybe another thing that we might have that you might be interested in - I was just listening to it recently – is a tape that somebody made of German jokes.
- CH:** Yes. Those are becoming more and more popular, and did they tell them in German or do they tell them in English?
- AS:** They're in German.
- CH:** Ya, well certainly. We wouldn't turn anything down. So many of the memories that I'm hearing you talk about are around religious life, food ways, and those weddings. Those wedding events that went on; can you describe, for instance, what the traditions would be for a family?
- AS:** Well, you know...when I entered religious life, in the early years, we could not go home, but every five years. So I did not go to a lot of my brother's and sister's weddings, but I guess I did go to weddings when I was a kid. You had a dinner and a supper. You didn't just have a reception and a supper. And I remember being at my oldest brother's wedding and, you know, my parents hired somebody and they made the German potato salad – well, the potato salad was the oil and vinegar, which was a tradition in our family. And we had food poisoning at that wedding. And my brother almost died; the groom almost died. But anyway, that's another story. But, you know, you went to Mass at like ten o'clock in the morning and then you had dinner, and then you socialized for the day, and then you had supper, and then you had a wedding dance. And then, at midnight, you served a midnight lunch. And I think that was kind of a tradition. And at the wedding dance itself, you did the polkas, and the waltzes, and the (B187). Everybody got out and danced and everybody knew how to dance.
- CH:** So it was for all ages?
- AS:** It was for all ages.
- CH:** From the tiniest babies to the oldest member of the community. And were there certain foods? You mentioned the German potato salad.
- AS:** Which – you know, with German potato salad, you think of vinegar and bacon and all that and I'm not referring to that. I'm talking about a cold potato salad with oil and vinegar. No, I just think we - you know, my parents had their own chickens and their own beef and so you just cooked up a main meal. But I don't think – you know, you didn't get into the German foods like the (B195) noodles and the –
- CH:** How about kuchen?
- AS:** Oh yes, that you would be, yes.

- CH:** And maybe some red eye or some schnapps?
- AS:** Well for sure...and ya, the whiskey and the beer.
- CH:** And maybe some homemade wine?
- AS:** Ya – well, maybe. But, certainly, the whiskey was there and maybe the schnapps.
- CH:** How about traditional dances of any kind? Was there a dollar dance that you remember from your childhood?
- AS:** Well I don't know about them but I know, in the more recent years, they do the dollar dance, yes, or they pass the slipper around and that kind of thing.
- CH:** Learning how to polka...I mean, did someone teach you? Did you simply dance with your uncles or your grandparents and that's how you learned?
- AS:** I think, we learned at the wedding dances. Somebody taught us.
- CH:** And like riding a bike, once you know how-
- AS:** Right. Milking a cow; you know how. And we were great dancers. We loved it. And I still love to dance.
- CH:** Was there television in your household, growing up?
- AS:** No, we did not have TV until I was in high school. And of course, in fact, I think it was probably 1956. That's the year I graduated from high school and because I entered the convent then in November of 1956. And so, I did not have television when I was growing up.
- CH:** Were there newspapers, radios, or that sort of thing that came into your household?
- AS:** Oh yes, we had the radio. And I remember when we turned on the radio, my mother would say "Oh, turn off the radio." And I tease her about that today because she always has to have the radio going. And I said, "Mom, when we were growing up, you'd say turn off the radio." And she'd say, "Well that's because we had to work." And so, you know, we were a very work oriented family. We got the Dickinson Press. Which we still – you know, that's still part of our family. I think there was a German newspaper too. And I know my mother would have some of those German newspapers yet.
- CH:** So your parents read the German newspaper like the Dakota Pride Press, the (B222)?
- AS:** Right, some of those. But, they also knew English. My parents, you know, would read the [English] paper[s] too. And I can remember postage; three cents, you know, in those days. Three cent stamps. I can just remember going to the mail and bringing home the mail and seeing the postage and – I'm such a letter writer that I'm real mindful of postage - and I just remember that so well.
- CH:** Politics? Did your family involve itself with politics at all?
- AS:** Well, they were Republicans. That I remember. So I remember voting time and all that kind of thing. I know that my dad was asked to consider running for Governor of North Dakota. And he only had a third grade education. But, you know, he turned that down. And I'm sure he knew that – but, you know, I think –

- CH:** Did he have any particular political figures that he admired?
- AS:** I don't know that, ya.
- CH:** Was he active in local politics: farming, ranching, farm organizations?
- AS:** Oh yes. Farmer's Union and that kind of thing, yes. I think all the farmers were, you know. They were – and, again, I wouldn't be able to expound on that in any way. But yes, as you ask that question, you know, I think they were interested in the welfare of the state and the nation.
- CH:** Is there anybody farming your farm now?
- AS:** Yes, my brother. He's the second youngest in our family. And when my parents were still on the farm, he had a trailer home next to our home and he, his wife, and children lived there. And so he worked very closely with my father and so he inherited the farm. My brothers, my five brothers, inherited the land. So, all the land is still in our family...all of it.
- CH:** What about the daughters? Did the daughters receive an inheritance?
- AS:** Well, the way the Will is written up is that whatever is left at the end will go to the girls. And when my mother moved to Dickinson, she had my brothers and sisters take what they would like in terms of furniture and that. She still has some lovely furniture, you know...particularly her curio, which was given to her as a wedding gift from her parents. So that's still there and some of her dishes are still there, you know. But a lot of things she gave to my sisters. I have an iron that I used to iron with when I was a little girl, you know. We had a coal stove and so that was one thing - because I was in Africa at the time - that they saved for me. So I still have one of the irons that I would iron with when I was a small girl. You know, we learned how to iron and cook when we were small.
- CH:** In 1998, when you go home to visit, where do you go? Do you go back to your farm?
- AS:** Well, I was home just last week, and I stay with my mother in her apartment in Dickinson. But we drove out to the cemetery to visit my grandparents, my great-grandparents, and my father's gravesite and then we went to our farm, the home that I grew up in. Well, you know, [the home that I grew up in] from second grade on up. Yes, so it's all there. None of the stone buildings are there. Unfortunately, all of them were torn down. But I remember them as kids, growing up. And, of course, I lived in that stone house that my grandparents built. And, like I said, I helped tear it down. So, you know, we get together as a family at least once a year where everybody comes together. And, every time I go home, my sisters have said to me, "Ann, you know, when Mom's gone, just know you will always have a home." And I do feel that we've stayed connected well enough that we will. Some of my sisters are interested in heritage. I have a brother-in-law who has done a lot on our family tree, and also my sister. And I hope this book will be published soon and you certainly can have access to that then. And I will make it my business to find out what we have in our home in terms of what's available.
- CH:** Well, I just want to thank you so much for giving me this time and spending this time with me. There are probably other questions in here that I hope you'll feel free to take some time and answer them. Everything you have to tell us is valuable.
- AS:** I probably would tell you some more things about religious life; when I entered, and what that was like.
- CH:** That would be wonderful. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this interview?

- AS:** No. There is lots we could say and we could go on all day. I just want to thank you, Carol and Mark, and the rest of your group that are doing this. I know, last night, you [asked] if there's anything you have that you would be willing to give up. You know, I do have my great-grandmother's (B297). Because I didn't have anywhere to display it, my sister in St. Paul has it in her home. It's a hand painted (B299). It's very beautiful.
- CH:** Is it from your village in Russia?
- AS:** It more than likely is, yes. My aunt had it, and she didn't want it. And she just said, you know, "Would you like it?" and I thought, "Yes!" You know, because that's how things get lost; if somebody doesn't want it, you know.
- CH:** When you look at that, does it make you feel connected?
- AS:** Oh, of course! And I would have a great desire to go to Russia. But I don't know whether I'd have the opportunity, you know. That would have to be an exception. We do travel, you know and I, myself, serve on our provincial council. So if people want to go abroad they do go through us. And who knows? My philosophy is: What you want to do in life, you can do, if you dream about it. And I have done a lot in my religious life and in my lifetime. And, I mean, I've been many places in the world. And I believe that if I truly want to go to Russia, that one day, I could do it and maybe I could do it through your agency. Who knows?
- CH:** I hope so. Thank you very much.
- AS:** Thank you for keeping us alive!