

Interview with Kathryn Gefreh Vetter (KV)

Conducted by Betty & Chris Maier (BM & CM)

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Transcription by Erica Nelson

Edited and Proofread by Peter Eberle

BM: My name is Betty Maier, and I'm a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at the North Dakota State University Libraries in Fargo. It's my pleasure to have Kathryn Gefreh Vetter in Linton, North Dakota for our interview today. First of all, what is your name, your birth date, and where were you born?

KV: My name is Kathryn Vetter. I was born in [A07 Marie township] in 1924, and my birthday is April 26th.

BM: What is your father's name? Do you know where he was born?

KV: Joseph; he was born in the United States around the Hague area.

BM: Do you know when and where he died?

KV: He died in St. Michael's, [Marie district], and he's buried there.

BM: What's the last name? Would you spell that for me?

KV: G-E-F-R-E-H.

BM: What was your mother's name?

KV: Marian Mattern.

BM: Was she born in Russia or the United States?

KV: She was born in Russia.

BM: Do you know what village?

KV: Elsass, Russia.

BM: Do you know where she died and was buried?

KV: She died in [A18 Marie township] in Linton in 1977.

BM: I guess we didn't get when your father died?

KV: He died in 1945 on the farm.

BM: How many brothers and sisters in your family?

KV: I have two brothers, Adam and John, and I have one sister, Mary.

BM: Which ones are older?

KV: Adam, Mary, John.

BM: Do you recollect any of your mother's stories she might have told from south Russia, where she came from?

KV: She didn't say too much because she was only five years old, so there was really not that much that she could tell us.

BM: And her mother?

KV: Her mother died when I was a little better than 2 years old, so I really don't know.

BM: Your father was born here in the United States, but did he pass on any stories at all that he may have gotten from his parents?

KV: From his mom and dad, yeah. His mom passed on quite a few stories.

BM: Where were they living?

KV: She lived in the Hague area until she died.

BM: Do you remember any of the family stories about how they had grown up, or conditions where they grew up, or how they came to the United States?

KV: I would know some from what my mom said, but not from my dad because my dad was not born in Russia. But what my mom said when they came over was they had no home. They had to live with their uncle, which would have been her dad's brother. They lived there until they found a little place for them. Then they made a little house. She used to tell us how scared she was. She was the second oldest girl in the family. They all went out to work and she had to stay in—and how scared she was because there was nobody around. She said, "Oh I was so scared." She couldn't wait sometimes till they came home.

And this story she said about when they left Russia: her grandma and grandpa were there when they bid them goodbye, and she said how her grandma cried. She said she cried. She said if I would have been the boss, we would have never come over. She would have said we're gonna stay, but she said grandma and grandpa just took all and left and that was it, and grandma screamed and bawled and she said I'll never see you again. And that was it; they never saw each other; they never wrote to each other. I don't think they could write. None of them could write because they didn't write. But later they found out from somebody when they died. But that was a sad story for you.

BM: Yes, that would be hard. Now, they spoke German?

KV: Yes.

BM: Those were hard times not only leaving over there, but also when they came here.

KV: I don't know what they wanted here.

BM: The reason they left over there then was...

KV: for freedom

- BM:** For freedom. To get away...
- KV:** from being soldiers. They all had to join the service.
- BM:** So they didn't receive any letters then from the old country?
- KV:** Not as far as I know.
- BM:** So they almost divorced themselves....
- KV:** from the family, yeah.
- BM:** Did you learn German then as a child?
- KV:** Yah.
- BM:** Do you know which dialect that you speak?
- KV:** Must have been the Dutch.
- BM:** What were some of the childhood chores that you enjoyed doing?
- KV:** Mostly feeding the chickens—they were kind of easier—and gathering the eggs.
- BM:** What were some that you didn't enjoy?
- KV:** Pigs. They threw you over.
- BM:** So you had to do outside work. How about the kind of work inside?
- KV:** Scrubbing, carrying water and coal, fill the kerosene lights, kerosene stove, milk cows, separate, feed the calves. I never worked in the field much, just chores.
- BM:** When do you remember starting to cook?
- KV:** I cooked more for my aunt when I was about eight. They lived at the same place that we lived, and a little ways off, and they lived in our house. They had two children. I cooked more for her than I did for my mom because Mary was older than I was. I cooked for my aunt more; that's where I learned a lot.
- BM:** Who is your aunt? What is her name?
- KV:** She was Julia Wolf; she died.
- BM:** Wolf, is that her maiden name or her married name?
- KV:** She was a Mattern, she was my mom's youngest sister. I learned a lot from ma too, but I really didn't have to do it alone then. But my aunt would just take advantage of me. She'd go out and do something and said well you do this and by the time I come in. I really had to do it—like peel potatoes.
- BM:** You were eight years old then.
- KV:** I was about eight years old. I remember when I made my first cake. It was a cream cake.
- BM:** Did it turn out?

- KV:** Yah, it wasn't so bad. They ate it.
- BM:** What other things did you cook?
- KV:** Let's see, I made potatoes a lot, probably chicken. I know we butchered them, and I suppose I had to cook them too by the time she came in.
- BM:** We'll talk about the food a little bit later. Did you go to school?
- KV:** Went up till the eighth grade.
- BM:** What was it like to go to school? Did you go to a one room school?
- KV:** We had a one room school with all grades. I remember one time we had 40 children in school. Then they decided to make a double room. They made a double room and in about two or three years there were hardly any left any more—kids were disappearing.
- BM:** Did you have hot lunch?
- KV:** We had a hot lunch program.
- BM:** Did you bring your own potatoes, is that it?
- KV:** Well, first we started that way; we brought our own potatoes and laid them on the stove. Then later on we had N.Y.A girls that came in to work—National Youth Administration girls. They had to work like in schools, so they got their hours in. So they did the lunch program. They made lunch. Sometimes they made it at home and brought it. I don't think there were very many things that they made there because they had no stove. They must have brought it and served it to us. They had pea soup; sometimes we got meat stew and cooked prunes. I know it tasted good. All we had to do was bring our bread or whatever we wanted, but then at least we had one hot dish. I think they made hot beans too sometimes.
- BM:** I have not heard of this program before. Who sponsored it then? Was it a government sponsored program?
- KV:** Yeah, that was a government thing. The county agent had to deal with the national youth.
- BM:** Apparently the girls were involved with some educational programming along the way.
- KV:** Yeah, they were.
- BM:** Were they neighbor girls?
- KV:** Yeah, they were all from the same area. There were about six girls, and they could only start working for that program when they were 18. In the summertime, they would clean the schools, the desks, the windows. And the boys would do the bathrooms outside—they had outside bathrooms. Or if they had something to do in the school like if something was broken, then boys would do that kind of work.
- BM:** Did they take care of the school yard then?
- KV:** Yah, little bit, except they didn't cut the school ground. They auctioned that off; somebody else had to do that. That was not done by the boys.
- BM:** Did you have a barn on your school ground?

- KV:** We had a little barn. Some people came with their horses, and they had to put them in. Evenings they went back home again.
- BM:** How did they get hay for the horses there?
- KV:** I think they had to bring it along. They came with a wagon, and they had their own hay along, and maybe their own water too, because there was no water in school at the time when I went to school.
- BM:** You didn't have a pump in the ground?
- KV:** No, we always had to carry water.
- BM:** Do you remember any playground experiences?
- KV:** Towards the end we played volleyball already in school. That was pretty new. I don't think we had anything else. We played baseball—that was our main game. We went over to the pasture, and we had baseball games over there. There were so many kids, we could play anything.
- BM:** With 40 children from first to eighth grade.
- KV:** Yeah, they had all grades. We played like Andy-over—that was over the barn with a ball. And Pom-Pom Pull-away and tag; we played a lot of games. Usually our teacher would come and play with us, which helped.
- BM:** Do you remember any of your teachers during those grades?
- KV:** My first teacher was Morlane, and then my second one was Paul Schneider. We had him for two years. Then we had [Art V.] for two years. Then we came back to Morlane again, I don't know how he made it back again, but we had him another year.
- BM:** Apparently he was a little different in his teaching techniques.
- KV:** Then we got a couple—by this time we had a double school. Then we had Mr. and Mrs. Edmund [A132 Luge]. They came from Oakes, North Dakota. They were a married couple. We had them for two years, and by that time I was almost out of school. I had my brother for a teacher the last year. I was in eighth grade then. Those were the only teachers I had.
- BM:** Where did the teachers stay? Did they stay at the school, or did they go boarding?
- KV:** They boarded at my aunt's place. Like Paul Schnieder, and [Art V], and Marlane, they stayed at where, like I said, I worked. Then Mr. and Mrs. Edmund [Luge] started out, we had a store building that was empty. We had a little country store that by that time was closed. They lived in that for a year. It was so cold in that building that the next year they moved up to [A137 Kuntz's] store and lived there for a year. That was all.
- BM:** That was it. So what did you do after you graduated from the eighth grade then?
- KV:** Stayed home.
- BM:** You stayed home and worked and helped on the farm. So how old were you when you got married then?

KV: 22.

BM: So you....

KV: Helped a lot at home. But then at home we had a lot of things going—like we had 4-H and in the church we did a lot of things that they don't do now. We had discussion club every week. We had choir practice every week. There were more things going for you out there.

BM: So was religion and church an important part in your upbringing?

KV: Oh yes, we were looking forward for those nights. The discussion club was your religion, we had the bible.

BM: What language were the church services and prayers in?

KV: The church services were Latin. Then after we were married, the Mass was in Latin and the prayers were in German. Then later we got English prayers and English Mass.

BM: Do you remember approximately what date?

KV: What year that it was? Let's see, it was when we had Fr. Zelder, wasn't it, when we started going in English?

BM: Were your parents still alive?

KV: My mother was.

BM: How did they feel about that—such a change?

KV: I guess they didn't understand the Latin either. The German prayers they did. But then Father kind of explained it to them. He said, "You people that know your German you just pray what you know. We have to do it for the younger generation." That's why they went in English. So I really don't think we had too much gripe about it.

BM: So you were Baptized and Confirmed out there then. What church was this?

KV: Saint Michael's Church. I was married there.

BM: That's where your roots are.

KV: Far down.

BM: Were there any special activities when you were Confirmed?

KV: I still remember when we were Confirmed. It was not really special, but it was a celebration because I still remember it. Everybody went to their home after Confirmation; they went to their homes with their relatives or their family. They ate at home. It's not like now when they go to a hall. We had no hall at that time. Everybody went home, and the same way with First Communion. But we always made it a little bit [special] that we remembered it because we went over to the parish house. Then Father would give them a picture in the house, like a certificate, and we usually ended up with a candy bar. You remember that when you get a candy bar. That was so good.

BM: Do you still have your Confirmation certificate?

- KV:** I don't know if they had Confirmation certificates, but they had First Communion [certificates]. I think I still have it somewhere. We never framed it because there was no room in the house to put them.
- BM:** In those days the certificates were so much bigger, weren't they?
- KV:** Yah, and where did you hang them, you had not enough walls.
- BM:** Were your parents and grandparents involved in founding the church out there?
- KV:** Yes. My dad, after they were married, they started building St. Michael's Church. And he donated money already because Grandma and Grandpa had bought them the land up at St. Michael's. They knew that was the church they were going to go to, so they had to put money in to start building. When they came up, then they built the church.
- BM:** Did the people around there build the church?
- KV:** They all helped.
- BM:** How did your family deal with death?
- KV:** It was sort of a sad thing.
- BM:** Were your grandparents living in the home with you, or were they living someplace else?
- KV:** My grandma used to come to live with us because that was when we only had one grandma that I know. My grandpas were dead before we were born. And then my Mattern grandma died when I was two. So we only had this one grandma. She did come and live with us for a couple of weeks, and then she'd go to a different place again. She really had no home. She rotated around with the children. She died at her daughter's place in Zeeland.
- BM:** Where is she buried?
- KV:** She's buried in Saint Aloysius. That's the place where they lived—the Hague area, St. Aloysius. And my dad died at home.
- BM:** You said he was buried at Saint Michael's.
- KV:** My other grandpa, Gefreh grandpa, is buried at St. Aloysius too, both of them, and Mattern in Strasburg.
- BM:** Are you familiar with some of the wrought iron crosses? Did they have those at the cemeteries where your forefathers are buried?
- KV:** There are some there, but my grandma hasn't got one. There are a lot in Saint Michaels, but those are all that died before my parents died.
- BM:** I know you celebrated your 50th wedding anniversary here this summer. What are some of the heirlooms and sentimental things that maybe have been passed down? Maybe your family didn't save things. Maybe they couldn't. Can you think of anything?
- KV:** You mean like my mom? Really not. You mean like what I have from my mom? Well, I have a [A214 Grishhalschdo], a blanket that you put on like when you went on the car. They never went without a shawl. They call it a [A217 Grishhalschdo] in German. That's what you called it. It's a shawl with dresses

on. That's all I had. And then my other sister had a few other things. She didn't have too much; her older things just wore out.

BM: Do you know the origin of that shawl? Was it something she brought...

KV: No, it was from here.

BM: What were Christmas celebrations like with your family?

KV: Well, they were kind of plain. There was not too much. We knew it was Christmas and we were waiting to get a little sack of things to eat, but there was nothing like the gifts they have now days—those big gifts; they don't even care for anything to eat anymore.

BM: Was it an important part in the church?

KV: Oh yeah. It was a big celebration in the church for Christmas Eve—and probably the next two days. It was a longer Christmas than now, in church.

BM: And with family too?

KV: And with family.

BM: What were the Easter activities like?

KV: They were about the same. They were not too big either. You got your little Easter basket and then you went to church. I suppose you had special things to eat for Easter, but that was not like now, you didn't get that little Easter food.

BM: You didn't have any special activities as a child when Easter was there?

KV: Not really.

BM: How about marriage ceremonies. Let's talk about yours, since you celebrated your 50th. You were married in the church then?

KV: We were married in Saint Michael's Church and then we went over to Wendlin's folks. We had dinner, like soup and kuchen and chicken. Then they always had a supper yet too. The supper consisted of like sausage, potato salad, baked apples.

BM: Chicken?

KV: No, the chicken was for noon; that was the noon meal. Then they had homemade bread and kuchen. That's about all.

BM: Did you have the dance?

KV: Oh yeah, then we went to Napoleon for the wedding dance.

BM: What kind of music did you have there?

KV: We had Larry Fischer playing with the accordion and two other guys. Drums and the horn—it was a three piece [band].

BM: How many days did this wedding celebration last?

KV: Just one day.

BM: Was there any singing of songs?

KV: Yeah, like Wendlin's uncle, I think they sang the marriage song. The [A256 Ish don song] they would call it. They sang that before we had dinner already, or was it before the supper?

Right after dinner they would sing that German wedding song. Then we danced a little in the afternoon at the house.

BM: Did you have a chivaree?

KV: No. They left us go.

BM: You snuck by, huh? [laughter] He didn't have a wheel barrel to carry you from the barn to the house. How did you two meet?

KV: Well, St. Michael's and St. Joseph's were close together, and when St. Joseph's didn't have as much church as we did because we had the same priest; we had to share him. So they came over to church a lot at St. Michael's—like for Christmas Eve or...when was it Wendlen? When did you come to church?

WV: May devotions.

KV: Oh yah, we had May devotions in May and in June—for two months—every Sunday night. He was usually alone when he came to church. Then at wedding dances we saw each other. We knew each other maybe already when we were about 12 or 14.

BM: How far did your families live apart?

KV: It was only maybe seven miles, but that was far at that time, especially when you belonged to a different church.

BM: So you got acquainted when you came to a common area?

KV: Yeah, then to wedding dances—there were more dances than there are now—and ballgames sometimes on Sunday afternoons. See each other a little bit. Just knew we existed. [laughter]

BM: Well, it wasn't arranged by your parents then.

KV: No, no. That was—we knew each other. We dated before, maybe two years before already but then it kind of—my dad got sick and he was sick for over a year. I didn't have much time to go anywhere. Everything stopped, and after my dad died Wendlin came over to visit me, which was so nice, we needed company. That is when it really started I think.

BM: And by this time you were probably old enough.

KV: Then I was old enough—I was 21. Then I had time. I knew I didn't want to stay single all my life.

BM: Was there any entertainment in your home? Did you have anybody play organ or accordion?

KV: No, nobody played anything.

BM: What kind of German foods did you start preparing then when you helped your aunt? Kuchen?

- KV:** Well, we made that cream cake a lot. I don't think we made Kuchen.
- BM:** How about bread?
- KV:** They made their own bread. Oh, yah, they made Kuchen out of the bread dough. Then they put cream on and eggs, you know, a custard—every time they baked. They made cream noodles. They'd roll them out and then they put cream and sugar and cinnamon on and then they'd roll them up again and bake them. Sometimes they would put cottage cheese in too—Cheese noodles. And they made blachenda, with pumpkin. You know what that is?
- BM:** Yes, but I can't make it. I've tried but doesn't taste as good as it should.
- KV:** We usually had them by the time we came home from school. My mom would have made blachenda, and then maybe a pot of potato soup or bean soup.
- BM:** So that was your snack when you came home?
- KV:** For supper. Usually supper was ready then.
- BM:** Did you have homework to do when you came home from school?
- KV:** Studying? Oh, yeah. We had to do that after chores though.
- BM:** You had chores to do first before it got dark.
- KV:** Then you could always study.
- BM:** Did you do any dancing?
- KV:** Yeah, we did barn dancing—whoever had a shed that was empty—Sunday nights.
- BM:** Who provided the music?
- KV:** Mostly harmonicas. Somebody who could play the harmonica was a musician.
- BM:** What are some of the people that came to the dances?
- KV:** Neighbor kids. By that time I was grown up more. Like when we closed our country store we had several dances in there. That was for the public. We even had little orchestras there. That's where the people met then to have a get-together; they didn't go to town for dancing.
- BM:** Did this include children too and families?
- KV:** No, mostly the ones who started going to dances—maybe from age 15-16. And maybe some older people would come—fresh, newly married people.
- BM:** Were the children permitted to go with the parents to different places?
- KV:** Oh yah. At my age, if they had children they could go along.
- BM:** One of the celebrations I can think of are names days.
- KV:** They hardly ever took them along because there were just for older people then. They had to stay home for name's days or birthdays.

- BM:** Did your parents object to the public dances like at the stores?
- KV:** Not really. I think they were kind of glad that they had something going for the young people because they couldn't afford to go to town. It was a nice get together. Later on it got stricter; you weren't allowed to have them anymore unless you had a permit. So that's when stopped. It got stricter.
- BM:** Were your parents or your grandparents superstitious about any different aspects of life? Did they talk about hooting owls? I know you mentioned that your mother was the youngest in the family.
- KV:** The only thing I know they believed was there was a light. They called it the [A346 alischt]. The [A356 alisht] would be a light that's lost—a lost light. Did you ever here that?
- BM:** No, I haven't heard of that one.
- KV:** They were so scared of those. And then they made people believe that they were there, but I don't think there was anything like that. I think it was a reflection of the moon or something that they saw and got scared.
- BM:** Was this out on the prairie?
- KV:** Yeah. Then some just had a real head strong belief that there really is a light that went after the people. It never did anything, but if the light followed them. But I think that's what it was, a reflection.
- BM:** Can you identify any specific healing techniques that were used during those times?
- KV:** There was a lot of brauching done.
- BM:** Anyone in your family do it?
- KV:** No, not in my family. But I know my folks went to the brauchers.
- BM:** Do you know who they were? Were they neighbors?
- KV:** I don't think we had anybody in our community. But they went to Wishek, where there was a lady that brauched. I don't think we had anybody in our community that did it.
- BM:** Did it really help?
- KV:** Yeah, I suppose.
- BM:** Do you remember any of the special techniques that were used? Did you ever talk about it?
- KV:** Yeah, when they had ringworm, they had to put some [A365 Schpeck] on, like bacon.
- BM:** [Schpeck] being fat.
- KV:** Yeah, they rubbed it in. While they were there the lady would pray over it. Then they had to come back maybe three or four times and by that time it was gone. I think it was the prayer that probably healed it. Like when they had an infection in their finger they would call a [A374 varm]. Did you ever hear that? The [varm]. We figured it out later on that all it maybe was was a fingernail infection. Why don't they get in now anymore? But nothing helped except brauching. Oh, they would look so terrible. My sister had it. Even meat would come out of it on the side—you know would grow out of it. It was so bad already and she was so in pain. There was a lady here in town that brauched. She came in and she

stayed overnight. She put a prune on that night. I don't think it was a cooked prune, maybe a raw prune and then she prayed over it. She came home and she had to come maybe another two times, and that darn thing healed. Didn't need a doctor, nothing. I'm sure if she would have gone to a doctor he would have cut all that meat off, trimmed it.

BM: Did they pay her then?

KV: Yeah, probably brought a little food. She was my cousin, so she was glad maybe to have company.

BM: So you think there are different sicknesses today as compared to back then. Probably because of the use of soap, huh?

KV: Maybe the dirt that was in there caused infection. Had a little sore there, then it got inflamed. I don't really know. But they got it in the toes too.

BM: Do you remember any roles about the midwives?

KV: Yeah.

BM: Did they deliver?

KV: They delivered the babies. I remember my aunt, the one I used to work with, her second and her third child were midwived and then the fourth one too. There she had a different one then. The other one had died by that time or moved away. And they had a different one. They liked them.

BM: And they were paid?

KV: They were paid a little, 5 dollars. I still remember when they said they paid her 5 dollars. But they had to get her and take her back, and she probably stayed a couple hours longer just in case something would come up.

BM: Did you get Newspapers at home?

KV: Yes.

BM: Do you remember which ones?

KV: *The Herald*, [A414 The Landmund], that would be the Land Man in English, the [415 Statsonzier] what was that? The State's Reporter—I think that's what it was.

BM: How about the *Dakota Free Press*? Did you get that?

KV: No. Those are the only three I remember. Well, maybe other people got different ones, but that's all we got.

BM: What kind of information did your family get from these newspapers? Did you keep track of families?

KV: It was something like a tribune now. There were a lot of headlines in there about things that had happened. And maybe it was old stories too, like that had happened before already. Letters from the other country that they would write up on.

BM: Debts?

- KV:** Debts probably. Or maybe ones that wanted to let them know you're still living.
- BM:** Were there any funnies or comics, do you remember?
- KV:** See, I didn't read them. We couldn't read German, we could read a little bit, but not in a newspaper. We read in our Catechism. I could read pretty good German, and we had little bible stories; there I could read.
- BM:** So when you were going to the country school, you were learning strictly by English then?
- KV:** That German was during the summer when we had like CCD here—we maybe had three or four weeks of religion. We had more than they have now.
- BM:** You didn't speak German at all when you were growing up?
- KV:** You weren't supposed to, but we did. We got a lot of punishment, and I'm glad to this day that we did. If we talked German and then we had to come in and sit down and write maybe a hundred times, "I will not talk German again."
- BM:** Did your teachers speak German?
- KV:** We had some that spoke German, but then we had some that didn't—some that didn't even understand. Those were the strictest ones, but that's maybe where we learned the most.
- BM:** Do you remember when your family got its modern conveniences?
- KV:** I know when we got our first Maytag washing machine with a motor, and that darn thing wouldn't start. But still when it did start it was good.
- BM:** Still better than scrubbing it with a scrub board and ringing it by hand.
- KV:** A washing machine where you rubbed it.
- BM:** I don't know what you're talking about.
- KV:** You never had any like that?
- BM:** No, we sure didn't.
- KV:** It was a washing machine, but you had to do it by hand. You pushed it and that would rub your clothes, but when it was standing it wouldn't do anything. The kids had to take turns doing it. Then after that we got one with a motor.
- BM:** So you had no electricity yet then?
- KV:** No.
- BM:** So what was the next thing that you got that was modern?
- KV:** I still remember when we didn't have any kerosene stove. We got a kerosene stove and a little oven to put on that we could bake bread in. You didn't have to use your wood stove. That was a big accomplishment in the summer.
- BM:** Do you remember when you got electricity?

- KV:** We were married, and we had two kids already. That was great. The first thing we did was put our washing machine into electric; we put a motor on it. We still used the same washing machine. Then we got an iron right away. We had kerosene irons before. Then we got an electric motor on the milk machine. We had milk machine, but we had to do it by gas motor and then we changed it into electric. That was a great thing. The separator we changed to electric. We had water in the basement, and we had to pump it, so we got an electric motor there that pumped our water—a sump pump.
- BM:** Did it change your lifestyle any, for reading and doing things at different times of the day or anything like that?
- KV:** I think it saved a lot of time. We had a little more other time to spend with the family maybe. And it was easier on us, too.
- BM:** How about the radio?
- KV:** We got our first radio, we had battery radio and then we got electric and then afterwards a number of years came television. We really didn't have the first television in the community, we were kind of behind. A lot of people had it before we did.
- BM:** Now you were already married by that time?
- KV:** We had maybe six children already by the time we got television.
- BM:** So what were some of the first television programs that you watched?
- KV:** The fights were really—the wrestling.
- BM:** Did you watch the Lawrence Welk Show?
- KV:** Yes, always. What else? Days of our Lives. Soap operas.
- BM:** What family members do you remember the best? Think back generations.
- KV:** Well, my sister and her husband lived really close so we were together a lot, and Wendlin's folks didn't live too far, so I knew some of his brothers and sisters.
- BM:** Where did you farm then? Did you have a farm of your own?
- KV:** We lived on my mom's place when we were married. When my dad died, my mom didn't want to move to town, so we moved in with her, and later she moved in with us when we bought the land. She lived us almost 33 years, till she died.
- BM:** Now they go to the nursing home don't they?
- KV:** Yes.
- [end side A] --- [begin side B]
- KV:** We had 11 children. Mary Kay, she was born on June 23rd, 1947; Verna, March 7th, 1949; Joe, May 5th, 1950; Theresa, October 7th, 1952; Josephine, January 5th, 1955; Elizabeth, August 1, 1957; Denita, June 21, 1959; Diane, January 4th, 1961; Leonard, July 29th, 1962; Gerald, February 22, 1967.
- BM:** Wow! You didn't have any spare time, did you?

- KV:** That's why I say I forgot the years.
- BM:** I don't think we recorded when you and Wendlin were married.
- KV:** September 16th, 1946.
- BM:** And you were married in St. Michael's church?
- KV:** St. Michael's church.
- BM:** When did you move to Linton then? You had a farm out there.
- KV:** We moved to Linton in—it's 10 years now. We were married 40 years when we moved there, and now we're married 50. We moved in in '86.
- BM:** Were there any special members in your family that you particularly looked up to and wanted to be like?
- KV:** You mean like our aunts and uncles or something? Oh yeah.
- BM:** Did you have good family models?
- KV:** Yeah, we looked up a lot—like my uncles, the Matterns, I really thought I could live like them. Learned a lot. Respected them a lot. I think Wendlin had some too that he looked up to.
- BM:** Is there some things now that we need to go back to, that you'd like to say some things about? There is one question that came up about schools that I'd like to ask. How far did you have to go to school?
- KV:** A half a mile.
- BM:** So did you walk?
- KV:** We walked all the time.
- BM:** Even when it was cold and snowy?
- KV:** Well, when it was cold our neighbors would drive, and we would just jump on the sled and get a ride.
- BM:** Apparently they had farther to school than you and came by your place.
- KV:** Yeah, they came by our place.
- BM:** Are there some things that we maybe missed that you'd like to talk about?
- KV:** We mentioned this YCL. It was Young Citizens League. And that was started in our school. I think it was really helpful, and we had it every Friday afternoon. But once a month we had election when we got new members in. Like the president, secretary, and treasurer.
- BM:** So somebody was president one month and then there would be another person in the school that would be president...
- KV:** ...the next month. This way they all got a chance to see what it was like. I think we learned a lot because we always had a program when we had a YCL meeting. We always had to think of something. We had songs or a little play that we had to put on. I think it was really useful for the kids to do something like that.

- BM:** Must have had a business meeting too then?
- KV:** Yeah, we had the business meeting too. We had a lot of committees for working. We had a clean-up committee, a lunch committee, outdoor committee.
- BM:** I suppose you had secretary and treasurer.
- KV:** Well, that went with president, secretary, treasurer, and vice president.
- BM:** So everybody was learning certain leadership skills. Did you just have it in your local school, or did you go to other schools?
- KV:** Well, we had it in our school, but after we had a two room school we invited the little school to come over to participate with us during the meeting and with the program if we had a little act or sing songs. Then they would do the same thing, if they had something, then they invite us over. Not every time, but maybe three times a year.
- BM:** Did you have county meetings with the YCL?
- KV:** Well, we had a YCL convention that was in the spring. All the schools got together then. We all had to do something. Some put on songs and plays. It took a couple hours in the afternoon till it was all over. Then usually our county superintendent would have something to say to all the schools. Then our teachers would probably introduce their schools. It was kind of interesting.
- BM:** I bet it was. You got the chance to meet other kids from other schools. Some of the following questions are specifically related to things that the women would probably be involved in. Was there anyone in your family who had a talent for sewing, basket weaving, textiles, bobbin lace or any of those? And paper cut outs, and I can't say the name in German, but it's there.
- KV:** Yeah, my aunt that I worked with, she taught us to crochet. My mom didn't know how to crochet but she sewed. My mom couldn't read so she sewed patterns by heart. She sewed a lot of our dresses. I don't know how she made them, but she did it. They cut out piece of papers, made their own patterns. Then they would sew them. They sewed all the bedding. They did a lot of sewing.
- BM:** Did your sisters do their own clothes too or did you?
- KV:** We didn't sew very much. Not really.
- BM:** Did you have a sewing machine?
- KV:** We had a sewing machine.
- BM:** So you did mending?
- KV:** My mom did the sewing.
- BM:** Do you remember reusing old clothes?
- KV:** Yeah, sometimes like if there was a lot of material she would probably make something out of it.
- BM:** Did your mother quilt? Did you make any quilts?

- KV:** No, that's one thing she didn't do. She made like what you call the covers that you'd put over quilts. Like they make flannel covers to put over the quilts for winter time and then in the summer time they were made of cotton.
- BM:** Did you have feather quilts?
- KV:** Yeah, we had feather [B77 ticks], and then later we just had quilts or blankets. We never made them ourselves.
- BM:** Do you remember getting *The Dakota Farmer* from Aberdeen, South Dakota?
- KV:** Oh yes, that was really something. I looked forward to the quilt patterns in there and the recipes and the lazy farmer, who would always have a writing in there. Then there were news, like a lot of times from the missing people; there was a page always in there. Then there was a page of what they were asking for, like some were asking for certain dishes or a pattern that was kind of hard to get. Some people would send it in if they would have it, probably reward them a little bit for it. That was really interesting.
- BM:** Now is there something that we have missed that you can think of that you would like to share?
- KV:** Not really.
- BM:** Thanks so much Katie...and Wendlin. He's here to keep us on the straight and narrow.
- KV:** You mean that's all already?
- BM:** That's it.