

Interview with Walt Zimmerman (WZ)

Conducted by Joyce Reinhardt Larson (JL)

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JL: I am Joyce Reinhardt Larson, a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection of North Dakota State University in Fargo. It is a pleasure to visit with Walt Zimmerman and his wife Doris in their home here in Fargo, North Dakota.

JL: Walt, we'll begin just by asking you to state your name and your date of birth and where you were born.

WZ: My name is Walt Zimmerman and I was born October 4th, 1924 at Lehr, North Dakota. [Born] on the old farmstead that my grandfather built in 1905, I guess.

JL: Was that the homestead then?

WZ: That was the homestead, yah. We finally ended up..., my folk's bought that but my grandpa built that in 1905. So that's where I was born.

JL: Your grandfather. Was he you father's father?

WZ: Yah.

JL: Where did they come from in South Russia then?

WZ: Well, my dad wasn't born in Russia. He was.... I suppose even my grandpa was born in Germany, originally. I mean that's where they...[originated]. I never quite figured out how they [got to Russia]. Because I've got a cousin in Minneapolis and he's been over there. I guess they were well-to-do, the great-grandparents were. Because during the war they had a building or house over there that was all built out of rock. And I guess with the war, they had to leave everything. Now, I guess, they would classify him as a millionaire, the great-great-grandpa, not my grandfather though. But of course, they had to leave everything. And now my cousin's been over there and he has found this place and the cemetery where my relatives were born. I guess now that house is still standing. But they made an apartment house out of it now because in Germany you can only have so much square footage for an apartment. So I guess there is four apartments in there now in this big home that they had there.

But my cousin has been over there and he does a lot of this [research]. He works for 3M and he has..., well, his job is like a scientist. Whenever they come out with something new, [then] he goes for 2 or 3 weeks to Germany, Africa and Australia. Wherever. So while he is in Germany, he is always traipsing around in the cemeteries and looking for his ancestors. He has a lot of information. He lives in Minneapolis.

JL: When did your father die then and where is he buried?

- WZ:** My dad died on November 8, in 1965.
- JL:** What was his name?
- WZ:** Christ.
- JL:** Christ Zimmerman.
- WZ:** Christ.
- JL:** And what was your mother's name and where did her family come from?
- WZ:** Her name was Emilia Dalke. She was born in Russia. She was 4 years old when she came over from Russia.
- JL:** Do you know where?
- WZ:** Well..., wherever it was? Friedenstal and the Bessarabia and those areas. We never found out much about my mother's relatives.
- JL:** Is that right?
- WZ:** Grandpa was not the kind to tell everybody anything and for some reason [we don't know]. But like she [his wife] said, now with our side, and of course, being the names are the same, they've got it back to 1732. 1632, I guess.
- JL:** That's amazing.
- WZ:** The list is clear back. Down to ministers and bankers and just about everything. So we used the same background because up to her great grandpa and mine, they were the same down the line.
- JL:** That is very interesting. How many brothers and sisters did you have?
- WZ:** I had one brother. He passed away 2 years ago and a month after my mother passed away.
- JL:** What was his name?
- WZ:** Melvin Zimmerman. He lived in Tucson.
- JL:** A small family then?
- WZ:** Yes. Just the 2 of us, yah. And mother passed away two years ago, too.
- JL:** Did she live out there?
- WZ:** She lived in Lahr and Ashley and that area.
- JL:** The family farm. Was that passed on?
- WZ:** It was passed on to my uncle. But it belongs to my cousins now, except the land. When my dad had a heart attack in '55, then my uncle bought it and he is gone too now. But anyway, the daughters own the land and they rent it out to the state, or wildlife or something. So it's still in the family.
- JL:** Your mother didn't tell you much about the "old country"?

- WZ:** Well, she didn't know anything.
- JL:** But your father. Did he talk about Germany?
- WZ:** He didn't know too much either. See, he never..., he was born in the United States. So I don't know, he never said much either, except what we found out now through Dallas in Minneapolis. But that's where we got all of our information, through him and through her uncle Dave. He's a minister and he did a lot of checking into all this.
- JL:** So you really don't know much about that time of their lives then?
- WZ:** No. For some reason, it was a secret. I don't know. There must have been a reason for it. Maybe they had to get out for some reason, from Russia and from Germany, and a lot of these people would like to forget things rather than remember.
- JL:** Did you speak German as a child?
- WZ:** Oh yes.
- JL:** Can you still speak it?
- WZ:** Oh yes.
- JL:** Do you know the name of the dialect?
- WZ:** No, I don't. I think it is Platt Deutsch or whatever. It's mixed up, is what it is. It's half German and half English. But we talk German, I guess, just to be funny or something. We have some friends in Minneapolis and when we are together we talk German a lot. It is kind of interesting because if you don't [speak it], you are going to lose it. And at my age, I can't lose too much anymore.
- JL:** How about your children, then?
- WZ:** No, they don't.
- JL:** How many children did you have?
- WZ:** Three boys.
- JL:** Three boys. What are their names?
- WZ:** Wayne and Neil and Merle. Wayne and Merle are in Fargo here, and Neil is out in Seattle. We are going to see them in a couple of weeks.
- JL:** So they've never heard you talk German then?
- WZ:** They did. But they didn't talk it. The one of them always said, "how come you talk German?" So they wouldn't know, understand [what we were talking about]. Neil said, "How come you always have to talk Mexican?" But Wayne was in the service and he spent 2 1/2 years in Germany. So the first thing he did, he enrolled in some Mary's college out in Virginia or someplace..., Massachusetts. He went to school at night to learn. So, between his German and their English and their sign language, he made it in the 2 1/2 years he was over there. In fact, he even got credit for going to school. He can understand some of it, but not enough to amount to anything.

- JL:** What are some of the childhood memories that you have?
- WZ:** Oh, boy.
- JL:** Did you have to work pretty hard?
- WZ:** You bet we worked hard. We had running water at our place.
- JL:** You did?
- WZ:** We had 2 pails and went down to the well and [then] we ran from the well to our house. That was our "running water."
- JL:** I should have known that was coming.
- WZ:** We had...? I guess a lot of things that.... Then, of course, different things like at Christmas time. There are some things you can remember. I can't hardly remember my name but I can remember some things. Things were rough. The depression and all the things like the grasshoppers and dust. Oh, it was bad. But one thing I remember at Christmas time. One time and I don't know why I do, but I do. But one Christmas when I woke up in the morning, what I had gotten for Christmas was an orange and about 6 or 8 peanuts and a little rifle that looked like a pencil. You know, a pencil on the end and that was my Christmas. We used to get a catalog. I think it was called the *Force*, or something. [Was] like the *Spencer* catalog they have now. And for 19 cents you could buy that thing. That's what I got for Christmas. And I always thought that they COULD HAVE afforded 50 cents worth. But that was it! You know, that is something that sticks in your mind.
- JL:** They didn't have that many kids to buy for.
- WZ:** No. My dad hardly ever bought anything unless he could pay for it. I remember when they got married in '24, in the fall of '23. After he was gone, after he died in '65, my mother had all receipts and stuff. He had bought equipment, like a drill and a plough and a harrow and a disk from an implement dealer in Lehr. It was \$450.00 and it took him until 1937 to pay for it. But he paid for it.
- JL:** Did he take a loan from the bank, do you know?
- WZ:** I don't know if it was from the bank or whether it was just a promissory note through the implement dealer. But maybe it was only \$400.00 and some dollars.
- JL:** That was a lot then, too.
- WZ:** But he paid for it in 1937. I looked through his stuff. He had made a little filing cabinet out of cheese boxes and stuff and that is where all his stuff was in. And after he was gone, then I went through all this stuff that he had. It was in 1937 when he finally paid that up.
- JL:** Were they pretty frugal? They hung on to their money then.
- WZ:** Yah. They hung on to whatever in the thirties. There was no money until 1937, or 1938 when the crops started getting a little better. And then we started [buying]. Bought a tractor, a couple of tractors. But it was slim pickings. Just like I always said, "I got a lot of lickings from my dad and I know I needed them, most of them." I got some tough lickings. I guess I forgave him but I never forgot.

- JL:** Was he pretty strict?
- WZ:** Oh, my dad was strict and so was my grandpa. Oh, he was strict like that.
- JL:** You mean...?
- WZ:** Just, THIS WAS IT!
- JL:** No questioning.
- WZ:** That is the way the old Germans did it then. My dad was good to me. I guess I needed the lickings.
- JL:** You hate to say anything bad.
- WZ:** Jah.
- JL:** But they were known to be...?
- WZ:** O yes. They were strict.
- JL:** But not always. They probably didn't have to be like that. [Not] quite that much.
- WZ:** No, they wouldn't have to be. That's the way they were brought up.
- JL:** I know it. And some people have a hard time talking about it then.
- WZ:** Jah, that's right.
- JL:** Bad memories.
- WZ:** Like I said, "I forgave my dad for the lickings I got, but I never forgot."
- JL:** Were you as strict with your kids?
- WZ:** No. No I couldn't. I guess I'm... and that's not right either, not good. I mean, I tried to be..., we tried to almost be too good to our kids. We do things that we couldn't [when we were young]. Of course, her dad was good to her and us, so we tried to give them whatever we can. I mean, come Christmas time and whenever. And the same way with the grandchildren. They could talk me out of my shirt, I guess, if it was warm enough. I mean, that's what it is about.
- JL:** That was a totally different philosophy then what you grew up with. What do you think made that change?
- WZ:** I don't know if our hearts softened that much or not, but it's different. Well, I think for one thing, money is easier to make. Boy, I know one year and I don't know the year, she had my total earnings for the year were \$3,300.00. And it doesn't take much to make that much now. We have been married for 49 years now in October, so things have changed.
- JL:** But also, the prices have gone up so much too.
- WZ:** Gosh you know, when we started farming in '48 [1948], I bought a tractor and I paid \$1,800.00 for it. And then I farmed with it for 3 years and I sold it for \$800. Made \$500 on it then already. You can't hardly buy a lawn mower for \$1,500.00 now. So everything, cars and everything. But I've enjoyed it.

- JL:** When did you and your wife get married?
- WZ:** October 18th, '46 [1946].
- JL:** You farmed then?
- WZ:** We farmed for about 3 years, yah.
- JL:** Was that down at the homestead?
- WZ:** Down at Lehr, yah. In that area. One year we were dried out and one year we blew out and I don't remember what the other year was. But then I said, "That's it!"
- JL:** Then you moved to the big city of Fargo?
- WZ:** No. We moved to Bismarck and I worked in a Standard station up there in '49 [1949]. After we had our auction sale and everything, I think we had \$760.00 left over and we bought a trailer house. That was enough for a down payment. And we lived in that a while and then we sold it. Then I went to work for the Davis music store. They had a music store and an appliance store in Bismarck. We were there until 1961 and we moved over here to Fargo. I wanted to get closer to good fishing and now I'm here and the fishing still isn't any better. But we have a lot of fun. We got a cottage down at the lake and the grandchildren and the kids come down.
- JL:** What did you do here in Fargo then?
- WZ:** First I worked for Allan's Auto House, a Volkswagen dealer. After that, then I worked for the Americana Nursing Home until I retired. That nursing home job was the best job that I ever had. I really enjoyed it.
- JL:** Where was that?
- WZ:** Americana. Right on University. Right from 13th Avenue where that Standard station is. Right north of Scheels. I worked there for 14 years. I enjoyed that.
- JL:** Oh yes. I know where it is now. Could you tell me a little bit about when you were in school as a youngster?
- WZ:** I went to country school. Our school was about a half mile from the house. We always had the teacher staying with us. Not that they [the teachers] stayed there [with us] helped me any.
- JL:** Did you speak German in school?
- WZ:** No. No.
- JL:** You weren't allowed to? So the teachers spoke English too?
- WZ:** Oh yah. Most of them spoke English at that time. In fact, I don't know of one of them when I went to school that didn't. Well, I guess one of them did. He was the only one that talked German. He was a local man and he taught there for about 2 years. He could understand it.
- JL:** Did that help the family to learn English by having the teacher living in?
- WZ:** Oh, yes. My dad and like her dad too, they made it a point to learn English.

- JL:** They didn't want to hang on to their language?
- WZ:** No, no. Neither my dad or her dad. They lived in America and that's the way they were going to talk. But a lot of the Germans, they hung on as long as they could.
- JL:** Yes, they did. In your school, do you remember other nationalities of kids, or was it all German children?
- WZ:** Yah, I think they were all Germans.
- JL:** You went through the 8th grade?
- WZ:** Yah. And then I took one year of correspondence and I went to high school one year. Then I had to stay on the farm and help with the work.
- JL:** Did you feel bad about that? The fact that you had to give up high school?
- WZ:** Well, no. I guess I would have liked to have gone to high school. But that's the way it was then.
- JL:** How about your brother? Did he get more?
- WZ:** Oh yah. He went to college and everything.
- JL:** Was he younger than you?
- WZ:** Yah. He was 11 years younger than I.
- JL:** And things changed in that amount of time then?
- WZ:** Oh, yah. They changed by then already.
- JL:** Was religion important in your family?
- WZ:** Oh yes. We were Baptists. We were strictly Baptists. We still are, but not that same kind of Baptist.
- JL:** Do you think that things have changed over the years?
- WZ:** Oh yes! You know, it used to be that the Protestants and the Catholics they just didn't inter-mix. You just didn't!! They wouldn't allow it. But now a lot of our best friends are Catholic. Like I always said, "they all want to go to the same place," I think. At least that's what they tell me.
- JL:** It doesn't really matter what they really are?
- WZ:** Yah. Like I said, "that has really changed with all of them, even the Lutherans and Catholics." They were pretty strict too, years ago. But now it's not so much.
- JL:** Being Baptists then, could you go to dances or play cards or anything like that?
- WZ:** You could if you got by with it.
- JL:** Were you folk's strict about it?
- WZ:** No. I guess I never went to dances very much. I played at dances a lot. I played the keyboard and the accordion.
- JL:** You do? Do you know some good old German songs?

WZ: Oh, I know a few. Yah.

JL: I am going to have to come back and get that on tape. How did you learn?

WZ: By myself. My family was... and a lot of her side of the family were musically inclined. My uncles and some aunts, most everybody played something. There was a couple that maybe would sooner sew or cook or something that didn't. But all my uncles were musicians. One played the fiddle, one played the guitar and one the accordion and my dad played trombone and the piano and the old pump organ, years ago. I had some uncles and aunts too that didn't have the interest in music though.

I've got pictures of all of that. I have an uncle that was a photographer. One of the first ones from way back in 1915 - 1920. He took pictures in black and white and I've got a lot of those. They were always fooling around and playing the accordion, fiddle, or guitar.

JL: Did you listen to Lawrence Welk?

WZ: Oh yah. I always listened to Lawrence Welk.

JL: So he was looked up to, wasn't he?

WZ: Oh yah. He lived only about 40 miles from where we were born and raised. I still listen to him. I listened to him last Sunday night when he was on there.

JL: I am glad that it is on again.

WZ: I am too. I would like to go to Branson. I guess they have quite a place down there. We were going to go last fall but then my health wouldn't permit me to leave early enough. Next year we are going to go for our 50th wedding anniversary if we are around. See, we make plans for a year or two ahead all the time.

JL: Good for you! You always have something to look forward to then.

WZ: Sometimes the planning is just as much fun as actually doing it. Last year we went to Seattle by Amtrack from Tempe. We bought our tickets in May. We planned this for a whole year. Then all of a sudden, it was over with and there wasn't anything else. Time to plan something else again.

JL: In your church, was everything done in German?

WZ: To begin with, yes. Oh, I would say that I was probably about 10 or 12 years old, then they were real good to the Germans. They only had one English service a month and then the others were in German. Well pretty soon, they got turned around and they had every other Sunday in English. Then pretty soon they had one German service a month and then they got away from it completely. But we used to have songbooks that had English on one side and German on the other side, so you could sing the same song, or the verses were alternated in the book. We had a lot of good times.

JL: What was the Christmas program like?

WZ: We had a lot of fun. We sang and everybody learned something [a part in the program]. The Sunday school teachers were the leaders. And of course, we had the big bag of goodies, apples and stuff.

JL: Isn't that the German tradition?

WZ: I kind of think it is.

JL: I remember it myself.

WZ: See, we have a German club here in Fargo. The Red River German club. We have Christmas at the Moravian church. Last year we weren't here, but I think this was the 4th or 5th year. They have Santa Claus come in or someone, the Belzennickel from over there [in Russia]. They give out little gifts and if somebody wants to give a little recitation or a little piece he wants to say. Last year, even I got up there and made a fool of myself and said a little verse. The Moravian church, they do a lot of singing too, German singing. Then they serve cookies and coffee. We just have a really good time there. They have it usually the first Sunday in December in that church.

JL: Tell me about that Belzennickel.

WZ: Belzennickel. That was the..., I guess I have seen pictures of it. They didn't call it Santa Claus then. But they would have, usually the dad or an uncle dress up in an old sheepskin turned inside out and he was the Belzennickel. He brought the stuff and he also had a whip or a stick with him. If the children hadn't behaved or something, they got a bag of coal or something. They didn't get presents like this [now]. I guess from what I gather, the kids were pretty scared of the Belzennickel. I guess that was probably the idea to get the kids to mind. They'd tell them that if they didn't behave the Belzennickel would come and give them coal instead of candy or something.

JL: Do you think that it really did happen, or was it a scare tactic?

WZ: Oh yes. They had this Belzennickel. I've seen pictures already and write-ups. Like we get this magazine 4 times a year from our German club and there is write-ups in there about it.

JL: So you remember that in your home?

WZ: No. We didn't have Belzennickel. In fact, we didn't have Santa Claus either. Well I guess the Sunday school teachers or who ever passed out the gifts and stuff. That wasn't the real reason for having it in church. We had our little songs and stuff. Santa Claus was not supposed to be in church to begin with. It was the birth of Christ, of course. Now with Santa Claus, you make a buck off of that stuff now.

JL: Would you say your parents and grandparents were superstitious?

WZ: I can't think of anything. The only thing is..., when somebody would get sick, they would take their Brauche. If you had ringworm, or something. You didn't go to the doctor all of the time. If you went to the doctor, the only thing that I can remember is if you had a sore hand or something, they would pack it in axle grease and tape it up and you would go home and wait for it to heal. That was supposed to help so you wouldn't get infection. There was Brauche for warts. It helped too. It worked too, I know it did.

JL: When we say Brauche, why do we laugh a little? What is there about it?

WZ: Because there are so many people that don't believe in it. They think it is just like a quack doctor. My grandson, he had a wart on his hand and I had an uncle too that did a lot of this for boils and stuff. I told my grandson that I can take care of that wart. He said, "How Grandpa?" I said, "Well, never mind. Just get me a piece of string." And I tied it around the wart and then I went outside and buried it. That was a big joke to some people.

JL: Did it take care of it?

- WZ:** Well..., then anyway nothing was said. That's why I say, "They laugh when they say..., about Brauche'ing." My sons laugh too. That's a big deal and then nothing was said. Then one day I asked Pat, "How's your wart coming?" He said, "Grandpa, it is gone." Well, I said, "Do you believe in it now?" He said, "Well, I guess I have to. I had it here and now it's gone."
- JL:** So what did you do?
- WZ:** I took a string and laid it over and around the wart. Then I took it off and tied a knot in the string besides. Maybe a couple two or three [knots], I don't remember. But anyway, I took it out and buried it. And he wanted to know where I buried it and I wouldn't tell him. You see, that is part of the secret. He asked, "Well, what did you say?" I said, "I can't tell you that either." Which I can't. You aren't supposed to. Maybe a couple of months later I said, "Pat, how's your wart coming?" I wanted him to tell me that the wart was gone. When I asked him about it, then he said, "oh, that's been gone a long time already." Of course his dad, my son, he kind of chuckles and I think to myself, "Go ahead and chuckle. I don't care." But it worked.
- JL:** So in your mind, you said some verses then? Would you call it a little prayer?
- WZ:** Something like that, yah. Just a little line.
- JL:** It had religious connotations to it then?
- WZ:** Not really.
- JL:** Magical then?
- WZ:** Magic, I would say. Yes. It's something, but I can't explain it. But I..., at one time had a bleeding wart where you put your glove on and my uncle took care of it that way. Years ago people had a lot of boils. I know of one gal that had a boil and it was in this spot where she wouldn't want to show it to everybody and of course, it hurt. So my uncle told her that he could take care of it. "I'll Brauche for it and it would go away." Well finally, it hurt so bad that she had to let him do it and he Brauche'ed. It took about 2 days and it opened up and it was all gone.
- JL:** Where did you learn that from?
- WZ:** I didn't learn it from anybody.
- JL:** You mean your parents weren't Brauche'ers or aunts and uncles?
- WZ:** My uncle was. But you have to have faith. You have to make up your mind that this is going to work.
- JL:** You must have seen it a lot when you were younger?
- WZ:** Yah, my uncle did it. But he never told me what he said either. Then we had an old lady in town and years ago we used to have a lot of ringworm. I had ringworm right on my cheek and down and it was bad. So my folk's took me into town. I don't know how old I was, 8 or 9 years old, I guess. I had to lean on a little chair and then she Brauche'ed with her foot. With her shoe and she had nails in that stupid shoe and [it was] scratched all up. But she mumbled something [German words]. It was about 2 or 3 days and it started drying up and it went away. I don't know why but it works.
- JL:** Would they do it for more serious things?

- WZ:** I guess nobody's ever trusted me for that.
- JL:** Nowadays, you don't have many boils and warts either. But how about stomach aches?
- WZ:** I guess if I did [Brauche], I did to myself. They did it with the babies. When they had colic, they rubbed them down and you would think they were going to break their arms. And boy, you would lay them down and they would go right to sleep. So there is a lot of these old remedies. This fellow, he teaches at NDSU, Kloberdanz. He wrote a book about this Brauche and stuff and I read his book. He is quite a sharp guy and then, of course, his wife Rosie is pretty sharp too.
- JL:** What I read in his material is that a lot of times Brauche is..., that it runs in the family. Then you often find that there is a blacksmith in the family that would have made iron crosses.
- WZ:** They did that too. Have you ever been to Strasburg? You see, he had that [book too]. Sometimes, when we've gone from Ashley to Bismarck, either going out west or something and then we drove through Hague. I'll tell you, it is really something the way those crosses are made. These guys around here now that claim they are artists, or something, they don't know anything about it.
- JL:** About that...?
- WZ:** Well, about building stuff. I mean with the different doves and leaves and everything. It's quite a deal.
- JL:** You don't know of anybody that made them?
- WZ:** I don't know of anybody, no. You see [those crosses] mostly there around Hague. The Catholics did most of those steel ones. First they were wood and then they were steel. In fact, I read in a book where they could tell..., no it was on a tape. I guess I saw a video tape that they could tell the different ages, not ages but times, how [many] years ago [they were made]. They say that it was before 1900 when the crosses were made out of wood and then at another time when they started making certain crosses and stuff for the cemeteries.
- JL:** You mean certain designs?
- WZ:** Certain designs, yah. Father Sherman is another one that is really good. For an Irishman, he does a pretty good job. I think he teaches in Grand Forks.
- JL:** He has some good books out, too.
- WZ:** He has some good books, too.
- JL:** He had a class that I would have liked to take. That's very interesting. What about marriage ceremonies? Do you know anything in particular about them? You got married in the church?
- WZ:** You just asked the girl to marry you. Then her parents and your parents got together and if it was all right, you went ahead and got married.
- JL:** You mean the parents had something to say about it?
- WZ:** Well, yah. Well, I guess we did. I don't know why. We had her folk's and my folk's [permission].
- JL:** What if they wouldn't have agreed?

- WZ:** We probably would have gotten married anyway. Of course, my folk's and her folk's knew each other very well.
- JL:** How many miles apart did you two grow up?
- WZ:** About 5 miles.
- JL:** So you went to the same country school?
- WZ:** No. Not the country school, but the same church.
- JL:** Did you have a wedding dance? This was a Baptist wedding?
- WZ:** No, no. We just got married on a Thursday night, no Friday night. A lot of our friends got married on Thursday night and we went to theirs. Then Friday night we got married.
- JL:** Did you have a reception at the house?
- WZ:** No. At the church in the basement..., no schoolhouse. That was, I guess, that was the big building then. Now it's not even..., you couldn't have a clubhouse meeting in there [now].
- JL:** What kind of food did they serve?
- WZ:** Well, kuchen and coffee and cake and whatever. Cookies, I suppose. I don't remember too much.
- JL:** Any German food do you remember?
- WZ:** I don't know. We didn't have any sausage, did we? Sandwiches, I guess. Germans eat good.
- JL:** I know. How about hochzeit schnapps?
- WZ:** No. We didn't have that.
- JL:** How about the bride's clothes and things? Was there anything traditional there?
- WZ:** Not at our wedding, no. She had a nice dress and I had a suit I guess. That was it.
- JL:** Do you know of any people who had arranged marriages or was that farther back in time?
- WZ:** Oh, yah. That was a little bit before our time. There were couplers [Kupplers] that coupled one [a marriage]. They [would] say, "I know this guy over here and he's got a daughter and she'd like to get married. Why don't you take your son over there?" I guess these couplers [Kupplers] got paid a little money for it, too.
- JL:** What is it they do?
- WZ:** They call them coupler [Kuppler]. It's a coupler.
- JL:** Is that how you spell it, too?
- WZ:** Jah.
- JL:** C-o-u-p-l-e-r?

- WZ:** Ja. In other words, a coupler [Kuppler] would be to get you together to make a couple. They call them the coupler [Kuppler] in German, which means that too. Evidently they didn't have a German word for coupler [Kuppler]. Well, maybe they did, but I don't know. There was some lonely hearted daughter or who was a hired girl or somebody. They would get them together and get married and live happily ever after.
- JL:** Who were these couplers [Kupplers]?
- WZ:** They were neighbors. Some guys that they didn't like to work and charged \$2, \$3 for coupling [Kuppling]. That's probably all they did. Witch for water [too].
- JL:** Were they the same people?
- WZ:** Yah, a lot of them were. They probably did a little Brauche'ing too, so they had enough money for schnapps or whatever.
- JL:** It's all a little bit related.
- WZ:** Jah. It all fits together.
- JL:** A little bit magic. Magical is the word I think of.
- WZ:** Jah.
- JL:** I am going to talk again about food. I am interested in some of the food. What kind of things did you have at home?
- WZ:** Oh, we had a lot of homemade bread and homemade sausage and knepfla, sauerkraut and strudels and pickled watermelon and whatever you had. The food was good, yah. You didn't have a refrigerator or freezer or anything. And the hams in the fall, you stuck them in the grain bins after it was good and smoked and that would keep for a long time out there. Canned chickens and made ice cream about once a week or so.
- JL:** Once a week?
- WZ:** Well, I don't know once a week. It was quite often.
- JL:** Did you have a friendly neighborhood? Did people do things with other neighbors or did it have to be the relatives?
- WZ:** Oh yah. That one game that we used to play...? Go directly to jail..., Monopoly. And we played rook(SP) and stuff. Those wasn't supposedly the regular [playing] cards. And then you played Chinese checkers and ate. Then we played some more and then we ate some more. Went skating and sang songs. Yah, a lot of times, someone on the pump organ or the piano and play and everybody would sing.
- JL:** It was all good clean entertainment, wasn't it?
- WZ:** Yah. We have..., 'course when we're in Arizona, I have my accordion along and last year I took my keyboard along and we had jam sessions in the different parks. Every Friday night, we would play for 2 or 3 hours and get a whole bunch them together. Bunch of fiddles, accordions and guitars and singing. That's what I miss, because here we don't get time in the summertime to do that.

- JL:** And we don't have the same group of friends.
- WZ:** We had one, not last year, but the year before, one of our guitar players and singer passed away the day before Christmas. He was about 80 years old. All these young guys! And we had 4 guys. One was from Oregon, one from Oklahoma and one from Arkansas and I was from North Dakota and this gal was from Illinois. The name of our band was Four Hits and a Miss. Four guys and a gal. And we just had a ball.
- JL:** Did people dance then?
- WZ:** No. We just had a small clubhouse. There was usually no room to dance. They'd sing and tell a few jokes or something.
- JL:** How about a German newspaper? Do you remember any German newspapers in your home?
- WZ:** Well, we got..., I think, the *Der Staatsanzeiger* or something. But I guess I didn't pay much attention. We had the local papers, the *Ashley Tribune* and the *Wishek...*, whatever it was. Wasn't *Star*, was something else. That was about the only papers we had.
- JL:** Do you have any idea of [what in] the United States culture that maybe caused the most concern in your families? I know that was before your time.
- WZ:** Well, just before the war, my dad, and this was back in the thirties. They had a lot of relatives over there [in Germany] and they had a lot of unrest over there. My folks used to send a lot of stuff to Germany, to the cousin's and....
- JL:** Like what?
- WZ:** Oh, clothes and shoes. Just about anything. Then after awhile, they got so many clothes and stuff, then they even sent some money over to them. Because from 35 [1935] on up, I guess, was somebody in the 30s [1930's] which caused unrest over there then already. My folk's sent quite a bit of stuff over and [so did] other aunts and uncles. They would get together and make a package and send it to Germany to cousins over there. I don't know if we still have any, but I am sure there are some over there, probably a third, or fourth cousins. But I can remember when one time, I know my dad would always send stuff over there. One time, one of them wrote and said, "they had enough stuff now, could you send me some money?" And Dad didn't go for that. He said, "I haven't got any money either." That was the end of that. I think that kind of took care of the letter writing too, because once they didn't get anything, they didn't write anymore.
- JL:** No more communication?
- WZ:** No more communication. No, because they had to take care of themselves.
- JL:** Right. I guess one more question now. How about the political views of your parents and yourself as you were growing up? Who did they favor in government?
- WZ:** Of course, my dad and her dad, they were strict Republicans. They were always on the election board and school boards too. And if they had anyone as far as committee men or something, my dad was on it and so was her dad. I don't know if they ever all voted or if they always voted Republican, but that's the party they favored. See, years ago, you were one party or the other. There was no crossover in voting. You were Republican, you voted Republican and that was it. Where now, you can cross over. You vote

for the man you want, but in those days they didn't. In fact I was..., even before we were married, I was on the election board and sat up all night until 4 o'clock in the morning counting votes. So I know a little bit about that too.

JL: Walt, this has been very interesting and maybe I'll come back with some other questions. I think you have a lot of interesting things to share.

WZ: Well, like I say, "I have been around the horn."

JL: Thank you so much.

WZ: Your welcome.