

### **Interview with Helen (Feist) Krumm (HK)**

Conducted by Katie Wald (KW)

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Transcription by Joy Hass Stefan

Editing by Janel Wald

**KW:** Questions with Helen Krumm from Hague, North Dakota, by Katie Wald. Now after the war ended and you were in Germany, did you ever contact the Red Cross then, to find out what happened to your relatives that got separated from you as you were leaving Russia?

**HK:** Yes, we did.

**KW:** How did you ever find out that some of them are in certain villages in Siberia?

**HK:** Because some of them came back to Germany.

**KW:** Did some of the people from there return after they put in their 20 years of hard labor or what?

**HK:** None of them.

**KW:** What happened to your father?

**HK:** He died in 1935.

**KW:** You mentioned that he was hurt in the war, but then you only mentioned that you fled with your mother and sisters. Did he die before that?

**HK:** Yes, he died in 1935 of emphysema.

**KW:** You mentioned that you tried to get to your aunt's place in Germany. What was your aunt's name, and where did she live?

**HK:** She lived in Augsburg, in Germany, and her name was Josepha Muislbaugh

**KW:** Did you ever get in contact with her once you got to Germany, or did you never find her?

**HK:** No, because they bombed everything and we never found out if she got killed in the war or if she died before.

**KW:** What was your Aunt Josepha's husband's name?

**HK:** I don't remember.

**KW:** You mentioned a Meier family that had five members taken away at once. Do you remember the names of them, since my great grandmother was a Meier, and most likely came from Strassburg also?

**HK:** I remember the name of the father was Adam Meier, but I don't remember all the kids, the sons and daughters that they took away. I don't remember, because they were quite older than I was.

- KW:** Maybe these were some of her people. What happened to your mother?
- HK:** She died in 1980.
- KW:** Did she stay with your sisters?
- HK:** Yes.
- KW:** Did she ever come over to America to visit you?
- HK:** Yes, she came in 1962. She stayed for a whole year. She went back to Germany again.
- KW:** Did your sisters ever want to come over here?
- HK:** Lots of times, but I don't know, they just didn't make it.
- KW:** You mentioned that you went to Odessa to shop sometimes. Were there many German people living in Odessa?
- HK:** All nationalities. There were Germans and Jews and Russians and Corsaka everything you want to see. It was a port town, you know where boats and ships come in and go... there were all kinds of people living there.
- KW:** Of what nationality were most of the people living there?
- HK:** Russian.
- KW:** Did any relatives live there?
- HK:** No.
- KW:** Did you sell grain in Odessa, or was there a place closer to Strassburg where you could sell grain?
- HK:** Yes, we had our own elevator where we could sell grain, but in the early stage they had to go all the way to Odessa.
- KW:** You said your father was a carpenter. Was your brother also a carpenter?
- HK:** No, no. He was like a farmer or whatever. He was a farmer.
- KW:** Was there enough business in Strassburg to keep them busy, or how did you supplement your income?
- HK:** There was enough work to keep them busy because they all had to make whatever they had themselves, by hand, so they had enough work to do, yes. But they didn't get very rich from it. They just made a living.
- KW:** What do your sisters' husbands do in Germany?
- HK:** Well they both work in the factories.
- KW:** I think what you discussed after the tape ran out about your childhood was probably interesting. Can you relate some of the things you remember about when you were a little girl and a teenager?
- HK:** That would be a lot of stuff to remember, but you mean growing up, how we passed the time?

**KW:** Yes.

**HK:** Well, we passed the time, like boys and girls used to go together for having a dance, or having a party, but there wasn't much danger in having a party, because there were no cars. Wherever you go you had to walk. So we passed the time playing games and singing songs. And teenagers paired up too, when they were 18 or 19. That's all. We thought we were lucky or happy. We didn't know of a different way.

**KW:** There were no movies or anything like that?

**HK:** No, no. They came later on. When the Communists took over, then they showed some movies and stuff, but it was more propaganda, you know, than enjoyment or entertainment. It was more like how you grow up to be a Communist, or listen to your parents, or don't go to church anymore. But it wasn't entertainment. It was more a force on you. You had to go because the dictator said you had to go and see them. But you had to make your own choice if you would like this or not.

**KW:** Were there any magazines available at that time to buy and read?

**HK:** No, no. There was not such a thing. You could go to the library and pick up books, but they were selected by the government. You couldn't say, "I'd like this book from Germany or America." We never even knew there was an America or Germany until we went to school. There was no talk about that. But there were no magazines. There was just the paper that was the local paper. It was censored so there was nothing.

**KW:** Who were your grandparents and what do you remember about them?

**HK:** Well my grandparents were Steve Feist and Grandma was Margaret Feist. I was four years old when they died. They died not too far apart, but they were kind, old people. Down to earth. That's all that I remember about it.

**KW:** How did they make a living?

**HK:** Grandpa was a carpenter and they had a vineyard. And they had a cow. That's the way they did it, they made no money, but they lived.

**KW:** What did they tell you about their past?

**HK:** I was too little. All that I got was what Ma told me. They had a hard time, but that was all.

**KW:** What were they like? Were they real friendly or shy towards others?

**HK:** Well, people at that time, they weren't outspoken like now. When the priest told you something, that was Holy that you kept, so that there was no hard feelings or resentment.

**KW:** Try to remember what your grandmother's maiden name was, also.

**HK:** She was a Schlosser.

**KW:** How did you celebrate Christmas when you were young?

**HK:** We were just like the kids now. You waited for two months before Christmas, but there was no gifts like now. We made our own tree. We went down to the river and cut a living Weeping Willow. Then we made little ring papers... we glued them together and we painted nuts silver and gold, and we hung

them on. Then Ma baked some cookies and we made little rings and hung that one on, and little candy canes. Something like that. In the morning you got up, and later on, maybe... my sisters got dolls later on, but I never got dolls. We made a homemade doll, but then you got an orange, a couple of apples, a couple of nuts, and that was it. That was Christmas. There wasn't much to it.

**KW:** But I imagine the church services...

**HK:** Oh, the church. That's what was the important part. Everyone went to church at midnight, and then the next day, the first thing you went to your Godmother and Godfather. There you got maybe a scarf or a pair of socks, or two hankies, or you got a ruble. That was all. But they celebrated too. All through Advent, there was no dancing. And then on the second day, they had a big dance too, at the end of the year. As far as gifts go, I don't think they spent 10 ruble or 15 ruble on the whole family. Nobody knew nothing about gifts.

**KW:** Did the whole family get together at Christmas?

**HK:** Yes. They invited you... Grandma and Grandpa, or the neighbors, or an old widow or an uncle or aunt that had nobody. A duck or a goose was prepared and served. They celebrated with pigs feet, maybe stuff like that. But there were no gifts. People didn't have it and they didn't need it.

**KW:** They also had a Midnight Mass?

**HK:** Yes. Midnight Mass, yes. And the *Christkindel* came by. On every street there was young people together and they made a *Christkindel*. A girl... they put a crown and put all the ribbons. She had the lace veil. The girls who walked with her had wings like angels, so the kids all washed their hair and they'd wait for whatever they got, a little doll or just something little. Then the *Christkindel* came around with all that stuff.

**KW:** There was also a *Belzenickel* at that time.

**HK:** Yes, when the *Christkindel* came around, she said, "You've got to be good and you've got to listen to your Ma and Pa, you've got to say your prayers, or else the *Belzenickel* comes." So the *Christkindel* went out and then they had big chain rattling beside him and the *Belzenickel* had a fur coat inside out and he made noise. And the kids would jump. They had to give him something so he'd go. So that's the way Christmas was celebrated.

**KW:** There was no such a thing as a real Santa Claus at that time then.

**HK:** No. Nobody knew nothing. We didn't know nothing about Santa Claus until we came to Germany. There was *Christkindel* and *Belzenickel* then. That's all there was.

**KW:** That's what was in Russia then.

**HK:** Yes. Then we came to Germany and there was Santa Claus. And like for Easter, there was a celebration where you go around for 40 days of Lent, and the kids went around... the ones who... In Holy Week they had to watch on the Lord's grave. You had the Mass. They went around on each street and they had a little thing that made noise. It was a wooden thing. People said [178; "We have been standing guard by the Lord's Holy grave; we want from you an Easter day."] People gave them four eggs or two eggs or a ruble, or an Easter Basket or stuff like cake or coffee cake. So they gave them... that's what the kids got

for standing guard on the Lord's grave those three days. That was so beautiful. It was so nice. They stood guard all the while. Easter was very beautiful.

**KW:** They had like Holy Thursday special services?

**HK:** Yes, and Good Friday. From Holy Thursday night on until midnight when Easter and the resurrection, they had to stand guard on the Lord's grave. It was real nice.

**KW:** Then did the children get a little Easter basket with little candies?

**HK:** We made little houses. Under the house we dug out and we put out... at that time there was always grass. In March the grass is green already where we used to live. We dug a hole out and we put grass in it, and we'd leave grass for the Easter Rabbit, so he'd see where he has to go, and we'd see it when Ma colored eggs, but we still believed in the Easter Bunny. Real early, Ma went out and she put the eggs and little candies and stuff like this, and she [199; "Yes, the Easter Rabbit has already been by with a little Easter gift".] The Easter Rabbit went by. So we went out and there it was, the Easter basket full of eggs.

**KW:** So it was pretty much like the customs we have today.

**HK:** But it was mostly, you just prepared whatever you had. There was no extra going to the store or buying an Easter card or Christmas card. We didn't even know what the Easter card or Christmas card looks like. That was out. You just made whatever you had. That's all.

**KW:** Was anything special done during Lent, like special services in church?

**HK:** Oh yes. Twice a week we had Stations of the Cross. Wednesdays and Fridays in the afternoon we always had Stations of the Cross. I was in choir and we always had to sing for every station.

**KW:** Once the Communists took over, did everyone have to work seven days a week? Or were you given a day of rest?

**HK:** You were given a day of rest, but if it was on a Saturday, you had to take a Saturday and you had to work on Sunday. But there was no Easter, no New Year, no Christmas. There were only two holidays and that's in October, the Revolution, when it started, and in November the 7th, when the Communists took over. There were only two holidays. If it fell on a Sunday, you had a holiday. If it fell on a Monday, you had Monday. First they tried working five days, and six days. And it didn't work. Sunday was out. It was no holiday.

**KW:** How could you attend Mass then?

**HK:** There wasn't any Mass anymore. We were afraid to go, even if there was. If there was a mass just the old people went.

**KW:** If a church holiday fell on a weekday...

**HK:** They didn't even consider it a holiday. No, there was no... see, they didn't believe in God, so there was no Christmas; there was no Easter. No way. That was not even on the calendar. Just those two holidays.

**KW:** So it was just the government holidays.

- HK:** Just those two. That's all. But there was no Christmas and no Easter. No holidays. But in the early days, they had them all. Pentecost, all those holidays. But when the '30's came, they stopped.
- KW:** Did they ever have something like bazaars or Fall harvest festivals?
- HK:** When the Communists took over in 1914... that was in October the 7th. That's when they took the Czar over. That's when they celebrate our *Octoberfest*. Then we'd celebrate for three days. But the people themselves couldn't do it. The government did this. We ourselves couldn't say, "Well we have harvest and all." But we had what you call here, I don't know if you ever remember your pa or ma talking about (254; Carver). It is when everything is in, so the people who worked out, they gave their labor a little more money. They said, well you can celebrate now. The young married couple, they went together; they had a little celebration, like a supper or dance, but that was all. Nothing in church or anything. No. That's what they call [261; Carver (German for Thanksgiving). That used to be big. And the dung fest (Thanksgiving) it used to be big, but they cut it out.
- KW:** So actually it would be kind of where the *Octoberfest* got its beginning, that we have here now.
- HK:** That's what it was. See, they brought in every dung fest, see, that's what they celebrated in Germany, and it comes in October. It's three days. That's what the people took in. They had it. But when the Communists took over, they couldn't take it anymore. See the dung fest; it means give thanks for whatever the Lord gave you through the year. That's what we call Thanksgiving.
- KW:** It started in so many communities, where they have what they call *Octoberfest*, where they have the German meals now, and the beer from Germany, and all. How were baptisms celebrated?
- HK:** They were just, well they invited your grandma and grandpa if they baptized a baby in church and everything. It was almost like it is here too, you know. But not like to a Mass where the whole community could. You'd have it in the afternoon or whenever you wanted it. But the brothers and sisters, if they wanted to witness it, they could go and witness too.
- KW:** Did they celebrate Names Days over there too?
- HK:** Names Day but no birthdays. No birthdays. Names Day every other day or every day, but not the birthday.
- KW:** How did they celebrate then, was it a big occasion?
- HK:** Well, they gathered together and they'd have a potluck; they'd make potato salad and pigs feet and all that stuff. They'd set it out and everybody helped themselves. Some of them played cards. Then they cleaned the big hall out and some of them danced and some of them sang. Just like here. Just the same.
- KW:** Did the Feist family ever have a Bible with any family history written in it?
- HK:** There was nothing from a Bible. I don't even know if there was anybody who had any because you couldn't even get it. All I knew was the catechism but that's all. All that we knew was what Grandma told Ma and Ma told us, but there was none.
- KW:** So there was no Bible ever in your family. Did the priest there allow the Bible to be read by Catholics, if anybody had any?

- HK:** There was none. All that we had was the catechism, and we had to go to catechism and everything, and everything was Latin in church at that time too. So there was nothing from a Bible.
- KW:** What happened at a funeral? In some areas the bells tolled for as many years as a person was old when they found out someone died.
- HK:** When someone died, they'd say somebody died. And then it spread around, who died. At that time there was no embalment so they only kept them... but a man came and checked to see if they were really dead. So they kept them from one afternoon till the next afternoon until he got buried. But from the time they walked out of the yard, then the bell rang until they were in church, and then from the church to the graveyard. But not all the years they were old. Maybe in some communities, but not by us.
- KW:** Did that still happen at the time when you were a little girl? That they rang those bells.
- HK:** Yes. I still remember. When my pa died I was 15 and I remember when we had to go and tell the church father what you say, like an usher, there was always somebody in who helped Father get dressed or get ready. So you had to tell them somebody died and he rang the bell then. Then it spread who died. Then you made the arrangements.
- KW:** Did they have a funeral home?
- HK:** No.
- KW:** I assume coffins were just pine boxes.
- HK:** Pine boxes and they were painted and laid out with some kind of cloth. They put some kind of satin in the bottom and they made a little pillow and laid them in there.
- KW:** Were they allowed to say rosaries?
- HK:** Well, they could say it when they had their own funeral, but they couldn't say it in an open funeral. But they did say the rosaries, yes. They had like the big service when they came to the house. There was all night long where people would come and go, and come and go, but not by Communists.
- KW:** Were they allowed to mark the graves after they died?
- HK:** Oh yes, with the cross. They put crosses on them.
- KW:** Did they make grave markers out of iron? Or did they use stone or marble?
- HK:** No, no marble. They made them all mostly out of iron. Some of them, people who were poor and couldn't afford it, they had wooden crosses. But most of them had by the blacksmith the iron made. They had the name and the date printed on them, and when they died and who they were.
- KW:** What were the ones used by the family like? Can you remember what pattern they used?
- HK:** Well, they were real nice ones. They had the nice cross with some roses, and they had the sparrow head and a cross there, and some of them they had the corpse of Christ hanging on, but most of them were black... painted black. But they were real nice ones.
- KW:** If there was no family left to care for the children, what happened to the children?

- HK:** They had what you called *Waisenhaus*. That means what you call it now when they put one child in another house?
- KW:** Foster home?
- HK:** Foster home. Well they had some homes where people could put the kids there, and later on people who wanted to adopt could. So they took them out. If there were no relatives, they put them in that. They had a home for them.
- KW:** Were there any foods that you ate, that you learned to cook, from the Russians besides borscht soup?
- HK:** No, not much. They cooked too much from pork. Too fat. And they used too much salt. So, whatever they cook with, they make kraut blachenta, that's what they make good. That's the only thing, but the rest of it is too fat and too salty.
- KW:** Did you ever stay in a Russian home?
- HK:** Oh yah, yah. We had good friends. They came over the river and they helped us with our vineyards and painting our house and stuff. Yah, we had good friends.
- KW:** What was it like when you stayed in a Russian home?
- HK:** Well, they're just people like we, too. They're not just as particular on themselves like we are, but they like to have fun too. They like to play; they like to sing; they like to dance; and they like to have fun too. They're not too different from us. And they're beautiful girls. They're much nicer than the white girls. They're so beautiful because when it's hot in summer, they never have their face out in the sun. They always have closed their face and everything. But otherwise, they're fun.
- KW:** So you had some good girlfriends.
- HK:** Oh yes. When there was something going on, we invited them to come over, and when they get married, a whole week they have the wedding. They have three days in his house and three days in her house. So you can be prepared for a whole week wedding when you go to a Russian wedding. And a headache for a whole week, too. (laughter)
- KW:** Did they have big meals and German music then too?
- HK:** Oh yah, yah. They liked the German music and they have big meals. They cooked pretty good. But they just cooked simple like borscht soup and then they cooked some other stuff but not as fancy as the Germans. They didn't know about scrambled eggs or cake or what. They like to bake Johnny Cake and stuff like this, but they were happy.
- KW:** Were their clothes made a lot different than ours?
- HK:** Yah. They were dressed different. They didn't like to be thin. They liked to be stout girls. They had those wide skirts, always on. The men have the wide pants, flared and stuff like this. They never cut their hair or anything. They always braid their hair and everything.
- KW:** Would their lifestyles kind of remind you of the lifestyles of the Hutterites that we have living over here now?



- HK:** No, not quite. They're more livelier, the Russians are. The Hutterite, they're a little bit ... they live on command. Like the cops tell them what to say. But the Russians, they'll speak out. And they're lively. Like if they had one wine or two wines, they jump with all feet and everything, so they're really different.
- KW:** I want you to pretend that you are taking a walk down Strassburg in the 1930's or 1940's. Pretend you are coming into the village from the north side and tell me who lives on either side of the street. Tell me what you remember about the family, and especially try to remember the first and last name of whoever lived there. When you get to the middle of the village, tell me what you see. If you remember when any of the buildings were built, tell about that too.
- HK:** Well, I can remember when you come to the middle of the village, I can see the church and I can see the courthouse, and I still can see the school. Everything the way it was. But I cannot remember the time it was built. That was before I was even born. And then from the courthouse up, I know there were some Fettigs living there. There were some Lauingers living, there were some Senger, there were some Fischers, there were some Schumachers, but I really don't know their names anymore. It's been too long already. That's all I can remember.
- KW:** Well, we described most of it on the sketch that we made.
- HK:** Yes.
- KW:** Was your first husband any relation to you, or your father's family, since his name was Eugene Feist?
- HK:** No. Not related at all.
- KW:** Were there several different Feist families?
- HK:** Yah, there were five or six of them, I'm pretty sure, in Strassburg. None of them except Grandpa who was a Feist. The other ones, they were not even cousins. So they were no relation at all.
- KW:** Do you remember his father and mother's name?
- HK:** I just think and think about it and I cannot put it together. I wish I could get it together. Maybe some day it will come into my mind.
- KW:** What were some of the names of the people who lived in Strassburg? (Only background noise)
- KW:** Do you recognize or remember anything about a Joe Feist who lived in Selfridge?
- HK:** I never knew anything about him, but maybe he was much older than I am. I don't know where he belonged or what.
- KW:** Was there a good education system at that time in Russia? Did they have many schools?
- HK:** Well, they had... it was the law you had to go up to the 4th grade, and you could study in German and Russian. But when the war broke out, we couldn't talk anymore German and couldn't study anymore German. Everything was in Russian, and you had to go eight years to school. School started the same, like from seven years old, you had to go.

But you could go in, not a high school, but upper grades, *Oberschule*, what they called it. But you had to go to Odessa. If you had the money and you wanted to study. A lot of the people who were richer and well to do, they sent their kids to Russian Studies. Some of them were doctors, some of them veterinarians, a lot of them teachers, secretaries. But most of the poorer ones, the middle class, they couldn't afford it. So they had to work in the field and different jobs, like a skilled bricklayer, or making houses or wagons, or like a shoemaker and schneideri and stuff. They learned all the skills, the ones who didn't learn from the books. But you had to go to school. It was the law. But in strictly Russian after World War I. Couldn't talk German. But all the people in their 20s... the older people didn't know Russian, but they knew as much so nobody could sell them, but after that, all the people knew German and Russian. They knew both languages. Like being appointed into office or stuff like that... they had to know both. Because people came in and couldn't talk Russian, so they had to have somebody. But everybody knew Russian and German. There was no other language. But you could pick up reading, writing, arithmetic... the three subjects what you needed. But if you wanted to do something else, then you had to go to the *Oberschule* in Odessa. That's where you picked up whatever you want to go in for.

**KW:** Did they have an age limit then, like, would they have to be say 16 years old before they could quit school like it used to be here years ago, or didn't it matter?

**HK:** No, you had to go eight years no matter what. And they had grades too. When they didn't let them pass, they had to sit two years in one grade too, so they had to pair them up. But they got graded too, just like here, everything, you know. They got good and bad, and satisfactory and stuff like that. But, see the government said you have to have up to the eighth grade, no matter how long it took you. And history was a big factor. History, you had to take.

**KW:** What were some of the names of people who lived in Strassburg, if you remember some first and last names, maybe you can give them both.

**HK:** There were Schneiders, Andre Schneider, and there was Mike, Michael Fettigs. And there were some Feists, like my grandpa, my grandfather. Steve Feist. My father was Steve Feist. There was Schumacher, Joseph Schumacher. There was a Mitzel; Franz Mitzel. There was Monsignor Aberle's parents, he used to live there. Nicholas Aberle. Reinhardt, but some of the first names I don't know so good anymore. There were quite a few Sengers, Schweitzers. The first names I can't remember so good but the family names.

**KW:** How were the fields worked and the crops planted?

**HK:** Well the fields were all about seven or eight miles out. They went out Monday morning to the field and they'd come back Saturday nights. They took the wagon with the water barrel, and they had a covered wagon where they kept the food; the food would be cooked out there and everything. Because they took the feed for the horses and everything because it would be too far to go back and forth. So they stayed out all week. They'd go out like... the two share a plow. Later on they had three. But everything they did with the horses. They seeded mostly winter wheat, and then sunflowers and corn and barley and oats. Not much spring wheat. It was mostly winter wheat. When it was time to cut it, they cut it and tied it, like with the bailer. And they hauled everything home. They had a thresher. A threshing machine came to the yard. They hauled the wheat... you had the upstairs in your house or you could haul it to the elevator right away if you needed the money, and some of them stored theirs outside, just covered it up. And the corn too. The corn had to be cultivated with the horse too. And the sunflowers, and they cut them all the sunflowers, and hauled them home and then patted them out. They had such big round

heads, and when they were ripe they'd just shake it and they fell all out and they shovel the seeds up in the air to blow the chaff away, and then took it ... there was an oil mill, and they took it down and they made some oil... sunflower oil. The sunflower oil, people used. Some of it they sold. And the cakes that they'd make from the shell and stuff, they'd feed it to the pigs. And the corn too was used mostly for feeding the pigs.

**KW:** So they made oil out of sunflowers way back then?

**HK:** Oh yah, oh yah. And good sunflower oil. That was real good oil. And they chewed a lot... they had special sunflowers for chewing, the big ones. Real big ones. You could buy them at the market, they were roasted. But they made a lot. We had a lot of sunflowers. The stem from the sunflower; chopped them all off and tied them together in bundles and hauled them home and burned them. That's what we used for burning. And the corn. When the corncob was broken off, we chopped it all off and put it together in little bundles and hauled it home and fed it to the cows. There wasn't any hay. The horses got the oats and the oat straw. We mixed it together for the horses, and the cows got the cornstalks.

**KW:** How long were the winters there, where you had to feed your cattle?

**HK:** Well, see, people didn't have too much. Maybe one, two, three cows. Depends on the family and the little barn they had and stuff. But the rich people, they had horse barns; they had big ones. And it got cold too in November already, but by March the snow was gone. There was hardly any wind. We had snow sometimes too, it got real cold, but it didn't last. Over the summer we had two or three rains a month, and that was all. Nothing was irrigated or anything. Just what we got from above. The soil was as black as coal and as smeary as butter. When you drove through it with your horses and the wagon, it got such a crust on it from that and it was just black. Black soil. In some places it was a little more sandy, but where we used to live... most of Russia the soil is black. Rich, real rich. We didn't have to do nothing. Just stick it in the ground and it grows. Like the gardens and stuff. The cabbage and stuff, it was big heads. And the potatoes, just like baby heads. Didn't do nothing to them. Just planted them and that's it. They smelled so good, so fresh. Never chemical or nothing.

**KW:** Yes, too much of that is used now days here.

**HK:** I think that's why there is so much sickness and stuff. People died too short... it is the life, the way. People have to die so young. But you didn't hear anything about heart attacks.

**[end of side A – begin side B]**

**KW:** Were summers hot over there?

**HK:** Yes, it was quite hot, but it always cooled off at night real good. We needed the heat because we had all that food. From May on, the cherries came already, then the apricots, and then all the fruit through the summer. In September and October the grapes got ripe and they didn't cut them until the first frost went over. That's when they said they got sweet, see. They had people come in from Odessa, rich people, and bought your whole vineyard, the crop, not the land. They bought all the crop and said, "you get so much." They came in spring and they bought the whole vineyard and the fruit trees. They gave you so much a tree and stuff. We'd take care of them all summer and in Fall when it's time to pick, they came out... they had their big wagon, like what you call the flat box. Then they had grains in, and they brought some people along, but you could help too. You got paid. And they'd pick the grapes and they'd

pick the apple. The cherries first and then the apricots in June, and then all the way down. And you got good, because transportation was real bad but by the time we'd pick them and haul them into Odessa, it would take two days. So they came and they had a thing going. Then they made a deal with you. Next Spring how it looks, how the tree looks, and they came, you always had your same buyer. Then a lot of people kept some grapes. You'd make your own wine. We had wine made from five or six years in the cellar. Never touched it. Then you could sell them. You got a good price. And they made whiskey out of that too. If you didn't need the money, you could leave it lay.

**KW:** Were the wheat fields and the corn fields quite large fields, or were they small?

**HK:** Yah. Well, see, when they divided the land... first when they came in, they got as much as they could handle. But people had nothing to work with. They had no seed, they had no money, so they took away maybe a quarter or two, and then later on, there were always people coming and somebody else wanted to plow. And they had a land commission set up while they divided it out. A father with two sons, well then he got three quarters. So many hectares, so they called it. It was okay. They could make a living too. There were so many. You didn't have the money to buy the machinery, and you didn't have any horses, no plows, no seed. So some people got themselves working a different job instead. Some people bought the land up, but they could make a living. Nobody got really rich, but they made a living.

**KW:** I imagine some of them seeded some land and still had a job in town, too or the wife in town like today.

**HK:** No, it is not like this. Like where you lived in Strassburg there... everybody, whatever the shop... they had their own. Well, they hired the Russian people. They came over and they worked for next to nothing. They were like the Mexican couple that were here. Worked for 75 kopek a day, with the fruit. They were glad they could get it. They came every year. But see, you had to have more people because the corn and the sunflower, they had to all be hoed and then the vineyards had to be cut every spring. They had to be tied up and cleaned out and stuff, so you needed a lot of hired hands to help. That was not like here where you get, you get an extra job or what. You did whatever you could. You were satisfied.

**KW:** So like all this cultivating and hoeing and stuff...

**HK:** This was all by the hand... all hand work. Yes, and then pruning all the trees. The grapes in summer, they grew up as high as ten feet and they had to put some posts in and tie them on. When the grapes were hanging. In Fall they all had to be covered up with ground, and take those sticks together and tie them up in the little rap house (tool shed) what they called it, with the tools. This was a lot of work, so they needed a lot of help. You couldn't do that with machinery. You had to do this all by hand.

**KW:** That was your Grandpa Feist who lived there in the center of this town that we drew on the map.

**HK:** Yes. Steve.

**KW:** Steve Feist. Do you remember the saying used to invite people to their wedding?

**HK:** Yes. We used to say like they picked the nephew and the niece to be the junior bridesmaid and so, we had to go around with a little stick in their hand, and there was a little ribbon, and we said in German, "Die Braut und der Bräutigam lässt Sie kennen- zu ihrer Hochzeit Sie sind eingeladen," ("The bride and groom lets you know- to their wedding you are invited,") and that was the invitation. So we went from house to house. We had it written down on a sheet of paper who we were supposed to invite and that was the whole invitation. There was nothing else. No cards or anything.

- KW:** About how many people did they usually invite, approximately? Fifty or a hundred?
- HK:** Oh, they had more. They had about a hundred or more. See the first day they'd celebrate with the close family, like 50 or 75. Then the next day the whole youth; all the young people came, all the pals from both sides, and they had a party. So that's the way it was.
- KW:** Did they sew all their own clothes, like the bride and the bridesmaids.
- HK:** Yes, there was a *Schneiderei*, a lady, and there was two of them in Strassburg, and they made wedding gowns. And the groom, the man too. The *Schneiderei*, they made the jacket and everything, oh yah. The veil and everything. Just the shoes they had to buy. But the veil and all, the (crown) they used to say, that was made in wax. They were made all by hand. They were done in wax, and here their corsage, it was all made with wax.
- KW:** So there was no cloth flowers or paper flowers or anything like that.
- HK:** No, nothing. But they decorated the house too. They had some greens... they put like an arch around the house with green stuff, and they put some paper roses. And the buggy that they took the bride and groom to church... that was all with ribbons and stuff, decorated you know. But in church there was nothing. You just went in like regular Mass, and if a girl was in trouble, they had to get married, they married at 7 o'clock in the morning with the Mass and everything. But it had to be at 7 o'clock.
- KW:** Did the groom and the best man, did they have clothes, suits, different than what everybody wore, like they do today?
- HK:** There was just navy blue or black. And the bride white all the time. And the flower girls, all white. But there was black and navy blue. Those were the two colors they were. Not like here, white or champagne or whatever. No, there was just one.
- KW:** And they were made just like regular suits? They weren't like the tuxedos they wear today?
- HK:** No, just like a regular suit. And I know when my mother got married, then they had black wedding dresses on. That was in 18; 1918. Then they had a big train in the back and a short little skirt, a blouse here that was poofed together and they had some kind of corset that made it so round here, you know. It had stripes down here and it was black. And then they had a shawl. A white shawl, a silk shawl with long fringe down. That's what they had hanging over. And a cross. When she got married. We had it hanging a long time in the closet, and then it just fell apart. Because it was silk, it just fell apart.
- KW:** So that was really different. I often wondered when they started this custom with the white.
- HK:** Yes, it started there in the '20s. But before it was black or dark green she said. But they were all homemade.
- KW:** And the meals, did the family and the relatives do those?
- HK:** They hired the cook. The cook came to the house and they hired him. It was always the same, like they took old hens and they made chicken soup. But they made the noodles. She cut it so fine. Then they had ketchup sauce and meat and coleslaw and beet salad. And they had sugar kuchen as much as you could eat and all the wine you could drink. And then in the evening, they had like sausage and ham and potato

salad and all the salad that was left. Then the next day, when the young guys had their day, then they cooked vegetable soup. A big kettle of vegetable soup, so that's what they had.

**KW:** So that sugar kuchen goes way back.

**HK:** It goes way back. At that time, you had to do everything, because there were no ice boxes around. So they butchered the chicken and they put it in a big barrel, and it hung down in the barrel in the water well overnight so it stayed cool. Then the next morning they took and cooked them and made soup.

**KW:** Yes, that's really interesting. Can you mention the names of some of the streets in Strassburg?

**HK:** We had under dorf. That means the main street who went straight from Strassburg to Baden. The second street was gessel. It was a little shorter. Then there was another one; sand gessel. It went up where we got the sand when we'd scrub the floor. Not scrub the floor. We had no wooden floor. Saturdays we always had to scrub the floor and then we sprayed sand on it. So that's where we got our sand for the floor, from this sand gassel. Rap gessel is where the people had a lot of their vineyards.

**KW:** Now in these different dorfs in the town, there were different blocks like we have today. Were the people living close together then in residential areas?

**HK:** Yah, they always had like two lots, and they had the house and they had the shed and then they had a garden, a vegetable garden. They had just what they used over the summer. They had other vegetable gardens down by the river or in their vineyard, but just what they used for over the summer, that's what they'd plant. Yah, and they had the cellar and the summer kitchen. It was almost like here. You could talk together when you'd stand out in the yard. You could talk to your neighbor.

**KW:** Did they ever try to can any of the fruit?

**HK:** No, we tried everything like the vegetables. The vegetables were all made in barrels. Like cabbage and the watermelons. We all pickled that. And the apples what we got and saved, you could keep them in the cellar until spring, until May. The cellars were so cold. Like apples and [182]; what you call prunes, grapes, apricots, we all picked the stem out and laid them on top of the roof. Put some sheets there and laid them on top of the roof and dried them in the sun. When they were dried we'd put them in sacks and you'd hang them up in your attic. If you wanted to make vegetable soup or compote or what, you went up and got a bowl full and you made dumplings and compote. What they called fruit compote. That's what they did. We cooked a lot of jelly. Because there was a lot of fruit and sometimes we had more than we could eat, so we cooked a lot of jelly. But there was nothing from canning. We knew nothing about canning. Maybe way later on, but not... until we came to Germany. That's when we canned the stuff.

**KW:** The meat too?

**HK:** The meat they butchered, they made sausage, they smoked it, salted the meat, smoked the meat and hung it up in the attic. It was cold up there so it lasted real good. We made the sausage for over the summer and then we grind the lard and poured it over and set it in the cellar. See, that lard sealed the sausage. So every time we took the lard off, took a ring of sausage out, and we put the lard on again.

**KW:** That's really amazing.

- HK:** But like the chicken and stuff, then you had to butcher them and cook them right away because there was no ice box. But we had ice cellars. Two of them. So if you wanted some ice... the people who worked out in the field, they got big barrels and filled them with ice and stuck the milk pitchers and water pitchers in there. They had a big chunk of ice. All winter, the boys, they worked for that man. He paid them. They went down to the river and cut the ice in blocks and filled the ice house. They put straw over it. You could go down and buy yourself two or three blocks and chop it off and stick it in. It kept the cream and stuff until you made your own butter. That's what they had to use with the ice. You had to buy the ice.
- KW:** That is really amazing how they had ways to help themselves.
- HK:** I said it didn't take much schooling, it just took practice to figure it out. Because in school you couldn't have learned that. You had to work with it and do it and see how it worked. That's the way they did.
- KW:** That's just really using plain common sense, you know.
- HK:** Yah, that's what it was. There were two big ice houses and you could go and buy the ice and use it all summer.
- KW:** Did the family make their own butter too, I'd imagine.
- HK:** Oh yah. They had a butter turner. Some of them you turned with the hand and some of them you pushed up and down. The butter... the cream was always in the cellar where it was cool and whenever we had to make butter then that morning you had to get up real early. As long as it's cool. That's when we made the butter. And there's a guy coming around and he bought your butter and he hauled it to Odessa. He'd weigh it and you got so much a pound. He took it away until next week he came again, and if you had eggs too, the same thing. Or if you had chickens or ducks or what you wanted to sell. He'd go through town and blow his horn, and then every lady walked out. She had a big bowl full of butter and stuff and she sold it.
- KW:** Did they have mostly chickens at that time?
- HK:** We had ducks, not geese, but ducks and chickens. Because there was a lot. Everybody had a big... it's not a swimming pool but just like a little bench out of cement and you filled it with water where your ducks went around there. That's the way they kept the ducks happy.
- KW:** Did each family have any pigs or horses?
- HK:** Oh yah. Pigs. Some people raised them to sell and some of them just raised them for themselves. But you had to have a little pig house. There were four posts and it was like this so the stuff fell down, the waste, and they had to haul it out. There was a little roof on and a trough. You could feed pigs easy because you had all that vegetable stones, like when you made the wine. One fall we made so much wine so we pressed all the wine out and we took the stuff and my ma said, "throw it in to the pigs." Pretty soon my sister came in and said, "The pigs are all dead! The pigs are all dead!" Then Ma just said, "No they're drunk. They ate so much of that wine." They were just laying there. They were drunk.
- KW:** So pigs, I guess, can't handle it either.
- HK:** Yah, they could handle it, but they thought they had to drink the whole thing. We had horses. Two or four of them, and then two cows, but some people had more. We needed them. That was the only

transportation you had, was with horses. But everybody walked wherever they wanted to go. They had to walk. There was no car or nothing.

- KW:** About what year, can you remember when they started getting those old time tractors to start doing work in the fields with tractors?
- HK:** Oh, that was in the '30s when the Communists took over. Not when the people worked for themselves. It started in the '20s there, but see at that time we didn't own nothing anymore so they took everything. But then they brought those big tractors with the steel wheels, whatever they called them. I don't know. But that was in the '30s. They came with the combines and the big tractors and the big plows. That's when it was introduced.
- KW:** Did you have periods of bad drought over there too like we did here in the '30s?
- HK:** Yes. There were seven years. My ma said it started in '27 and lasted until '33. That's what she said. Nothing grew, and then that year in '33 or '34, that's when we had that... what you call "hungers nod" (starvation) people died from hunger because, nothing grew. We had nothing and we didn't get nothing. The government didn't give us nothing. So many people died. They just lay on the street blown up and they died. Then it started getting better... we had rain and we had crops and everything. But then the Communists took everything over again. That was bad. That was in '28 and lasted about five years. That's what my ma said. They drove way to Moscow. She sold her golden cross. She sold her wedding ring for bread and flour and stuff so we didn't starve. She bought some bread and for every day she cut little pieces so it would last long. That's why I'm so glad. I say when I have three meals a day and a roof over my head, I'm the most richest person in the world. I always remember that. Yah, it was bad at that time.
- KW:** Did the soil from the fields blow into sand piles too, then and up the fences like it did here?
- HK:** Yah. Well there are no fences and there are no rocks. But it blew up in fields, just like a water wave comes. See, there's no rocks. You couldn't get a rock and throw it at a bird. There's no rocks. And no fences. Nothing. The fields were just plain fields. The wheat field was just as far as you could look. But no fences, nothing. But there's some thistle growing too, and all kinds of weeds. Stink weed and stuff. When the Communists took over then they had this program like how to work the land and all. You leave so much laying and that and that. See, people didn't care and they didn't work as good because it wasn't theirs. So the land got all... they didn't care to do a good job so the land just stayed laying idle and stuff like this. Everything went backwards. No matter how big the machines were. The Ukraine was the whole bread basket for all of Russia. They sold wheat to the whole world, and pretty soon the people were starving. It was the Communists who made them starve.
- KW:** Did they just allow the farmer a certain amount then, or how did they do it?
- HK:** Well, like if you worked for a company, you'd get so much pay for a year. You get so much paid when the year is over. But if nothing grows, they couldn't pay you nothing. So you had nothing anyway. The people had just this little garden they had and then pretty soon the law you only could have one cow, and pretty soon they took the horses away so you had not even horses. Because they said they needed them. It was bad. Yes. It's just like a corporation. You worked for a corporation.
- KW:** Our government better wake up before the corporations take over here.



**HK:** Where I used to work, I worked in a vegetable garden. They had I don't know how many hectares. There was a lot of young women and girls working there. It was everything irrigated. But we raised everything. But it would make the eyes open here if they would have to work like this. There's no Sunday, no holiday, no nothing. You'd just be there all the time. That's it. You get no time for yourself.

**KW:** How were the different owners' lands divided, then, if there were no fences? How did they know where their land ended?

**HK:** The people knew how many acres they had. And people were not that greedy, so if you come a half a foot over, people got along real good. There were no fences. There were so many hectares and stuff, even if you seeded over in the next field, well cut it in the fall... you came a little bit over too far. That was all.

**KW:** What about in the pastures, the different people's cattle that they had?

**HK:** See, there was only one pasture. You paid for your cow, they called it the cow herdsman. In the morning he came and took the cows out at 7:00 or 5:30. He went through every street. He had some kids yet. There was a well there and everything, and in the evening he brought them back, and each cow walked in the yard where she belonged. And you paid this man every year. See, when they came in, that's what people said we have one piece of land, just for the cattle. So you could have three or four. You paid by the head. That's what it was.

**KW:** So they all just grazed together in the same field.

**HK:** Yah, yah. Like this Monday they had them on the east side, and then he moved them to the north side and they grazed until the grass came up and he moved them around. It started from April until September.

**KW:** Did they have any areas where... if bigger farmers had more cattle, where they'd just put them up in the mountains through the summer and then bring them down?

**HK:** No. That is in Germany. That is in Germany. That's not in Russia. That's in Germany. That's in Austria. They take them over for the summer, but not in Russia, no.

**KW:** I know when we were over there, we saw that.

**HK:** Yes, but not in Russia.

[question asked while tape stopped]

**HK:** We watched them. Every horse, there was always two horses tied together on account of stealing. That was something in Russia. Horse thief. Some young boys, they'd hire themselves out and they watched them through the night. They always had it just like you take a criminal in handcuffs... they had two horses together all the time. But there is no hay. You didn't make no hay. It's just what they eat from the corn and oats stuff, but there's no hay.

**KW:** The horses, like at the time of year when they didn't do field work, did they take them out in the pastures too then?

**HK:** In winter time you mean?

**KW:** In winter or even in the summertime when...

**HK:** They had them out in the pasture at night yes. They were walking out in the pastures, yes. They had a big pasture where they had the horses. They were watched too. Each barn had an iron across the door and that was locked. You could go in, but you couldn't take the horse out. But in some places we saw a crowbar that was real heavy, and in some places they sawed it through and stole the horses. That was way back. Later on it got better. They got punished real bad if they stole a horse. That's one of the biggest crimes they ever had. Stealing horses. The horses were so precious, because there weren't many around and they needed the horses to work the fields.

**KW:** Now talking about crime, was there any other crimes like stealing food, or...

**HK:** Oh yah, there was a lot. There was killing too. I still remember... this is a sad story, but I was a big girl already. I was 14 or 15, when a boy from next orchard, he used to have a girlfriend in Strassburg, and they used to go together and she became pregnant. He didn't want to get married to her so one evening he came and said he changed his mind and they were going to get married. He'll pick her up and go up to his folks. That was just 2 kilometers to go up to Baden. In her house, her mother used to be a bed nun, At that time we had no priest or nun and so people got together, maybe 10 or 12, and say the rosary every night. So that night it got to be at their house, and she went in and she told her mom that the guy came and she said his name, and her mom said yah, so they went and on the way they had to go through a big vineyard. Each vineyard had a little house there where people kept their tools and stuff. And he took her in there and he killed her. And she didn't come home and that lady said well, maybe she stayed overnight with his folks. She wasn't scared at all. So a teacher from the next orchard had to teach school in Strassburg and he always walked this road down. He had a little dog, and before he came to the vineyard, that little dog was running ahead and he went around this little house. So he walked by and that little dog wouldn't let him go. Then he went back and he opened the door and there she was laying dead. So he went straight to Strassburg, to our community and he reported and the police came and they had blood hounds. And they traced it straight back, and he was home in his house. He admitted everything. That I remember. When I see a crime like that, it always comes like this. And he got in for life. Life in prison. Hard labor in Siberia. There were crimes too. People got killed. Like you say, people stole cows or something because they had nothing to eat and they were hungry. That happened too, oh yah.

**KW:** I imagine prepared food or meat hanging someplace, probably too, huh?

**HK:** Oh yah. Even if you had your door locked, that doesn't matter. You cannot lock the door for a thief. They'll get in anyway. There was not such a thing as a bank because people didn't have that much money, so they kept it in a little safe or a little box or whatever. But you had to be careful too. You had to know who you could trust. Later on it got a little better. There were lots of robbers too. But it wasn't such a... like you see, it happened in Strassburg. Well it took maybe too months before they came to the next orchard because people didn't go back and forth like here. We take the phone, you call. It's still warm at that time. Like if somebody dies you have to send a rider to notify the relatives and stuff. There was no telephone. The telephone came... the big cities had telephones, but in a *Dorf* there was no telephone. You got a letter, but it took forever to get it.

**KW:** Now, was there some radio, or was there no radio yet right away?

- HK:** Oh yes. The radios came in the '30s. See, a newspaper was Russian. See, *'The Wanderer'*, this came from Germany, but that got stopped by the government, so that didn't come. If you wanted a newspaper, you had to take the Russian newspaper. That was only lies. But a lot of smart guys made their own radios. They got outside information, but you couldn't ask who they are. They wouldn't tell you either, because they were afraid, you know. They didn't know who their friends or their enemies were, so they kept it quiet. But later it came out if they owned a radio. They had a receiving station where they got their news. But at that time you couldn't tell.
- KW:** If some of these did get caught at some time or other, would they have been punished?
- HK:** They are the enemy of the land. That's a crime against the state. There's no way they could get out of that. You didn't see them anymore. They didn't even have court with people like that. They were just taken away and that was the end. They didn't have no court or nothing, because you wouldn't go and testify. You couldn't. They had at that time, like in the '30s, they had homemade abortion too and stuff like that. There was quite a few that had that. I suppose that's all over, but it happened in our community too. Two of them even died.
- KW:** There really wasn't much doctor care at that time was there?
- HK:** That was such quack work. Some lady, they did it and something got wrong and they died. But you couldn't go and sue her because she didn't say you were supposed to come to her. You went to her for that. But that happened too.
- KW:** Say, like if they got an infection, I suppose there wasn't much medication.
- HK:** At that time they said they had to drink something. It was... they had to drink some kerosene and stuff. And then it's supposed to be aborted. But it died in them and it stayed in them, and then and it stay in them and then they had this infection and they died too.
- KW:** Seems like many of these things that happen today, like this abortion and this robbery and killing... it actually all goes way back to the beginning of time already.
- HK:** You always think that didn't happen at that time, but it did happen. When a rich girl got in trouble it got covered up and all that stuff. It happened the same like here. Not just so much, but here it's always... I said sometimes you wish you wouldn't hear nothing, but if you aren't listening, you don't know nothing either.
- KW:** That's right.
- HK:** It was terrible back then, even among the Russian people. They were not even educated yet. Like the German people were a little more up to date, but the poor kids, there was no help for them or anything. Now, today even, abortion is much higher in Russia than in the whole world.
- KW:** Oh.
- HK:** Yes. Elisabetha Donahue was in Moscow and they said they have it. They said you cannot raise a family because they have no housing, so they have abortion.
- KW:** Did it happen quite often or very seldom that any of the Germans got married to a Russian?

**HK:** Yes, it did happen, but not so much. After the war, in the '30s when there were more educated German girls, and we had the army close around, a lot of them got mixed up. There was quite a few. But before, there was never hardly any plain German girl who would marry a plain Russian. It just happened among the educated, the ones who had a good job or a teacher. Like I said, we had the army there at least five years. A big camp was there because from us to Romania wasn't that far, and that was the West. So they were involved there. So there were quite a few. Then the funniest thing happened when the Germans came. All those girls were single. They didn't go with their husbands because they had to go in the war. Now all the girls were single. But never heard... we had quite a few Jews living in our town. They had little businesses, they sold shoes and stuff. There were young people and they went to school with us. They had a synagogue there and everything. But you never heard of a Jew getting mixed with a German. Not in the whole colony. I never heard anybody getting mixed up with a Jew. When they had schools, that's when they did.

**KW:** Did you hear of... like Americans marrying German girls during the First World War and so forth.

**HK:** Well, see the First World War I wasn't even born yet at that time.

**KW:** And then the Second World War, you were still over there weren't you?

**HK:** Yes, I was in Germany, but there were quite a few who got married to, but a lot of them ended up in divorce. There were a lot of them. Here I even heard where they married over there and when they came back they were not divorced from their first wife. There were quite a few black kids over there. But it's not the girls slept with the black guys... they raped them. There were so many... the white ladies and the girls couldn't go out as long as they were around because each and every one... and you know what, those white girls, they gave the kids up. They're all in a home in a foster home or an orphanage. They didn't take them. There were thousands and thousands. But you go to Germany, you see so many blacks. It's just like if you go down to Atlanta. There were all kids who were raped.

**KW:** Didn't they ever get punished, then?

**HK:** Oh no. See, it was just when the war was towards the end, and I guess what they all were sent over there, over here they ended in jails. They sent the black guys, the criminals over there. In every house they went, like in Germany, everybody makes their own wine. Everybody makes their own whiskey and stuff, and they took this all and they got crazy. They started drinking and celebrating and they said their commander couldn't do nothing with them. They said, "We are here and we are fighting and we can do what we want." They couldn't control them. But the girls over there, they'd made their face black and had old clothes on and walked like old ladies. Oh yes, I've seen that.

**KW:** Just to try and get away from them.

**HK:** Yes, and if they found out. You see there were so many people, young widows in the country when the big towns got all bombed. There was nothing to eat and no shelters. So the government took all the ladies and put them out to the land. They helped the people a little bit, so they had to stay until everything was straightened out again. Each and every one got hooked with one.

**[end of Tape 1 – begin Tape 2, side A]**

**KW:** Okay, now we can go on.

**HK:** Now I'm going to talk a little bit about how people got medical help. There was no medical help. It was later on, way in the '30s when doctors came in from Germany, but they usually went to the bigger cities. In the colonies where we used to live there was no medical help or nothing. So people, when they got sick, they just helped themselves with home remedies. When they had a sore throat, they took wine and put sugar in, boiled it real hard, and they'd drink it. And they lay in bed and they'd sweat it out. Or if they got a cold, they did the same thing. If they got a sore, an ulcer, then they made their own salve. They took lard and onion and they browned it and they made like a little salve, and they tied it on. There was a lot of stuff. They had what you call ringworm here... they had that in Russia too, and they made the salve with some honey and I don't know what other stuff. They had the aloe vera plant and they cooked that and laid it on, put little plasters on around. The hair came all out but it dried up and later on the kids got their hair back again. When they got a toothache, there were some old guys there and they'd go there and they just pulled them out. That was all. You didn't know nothing about false teeth. But people had good teeth because later on, the doctor said because we eat a lot of raw vegetables. Through the summer they only cooked once a day. Otherwise, you just ate fruit and cold milk, and the bread was brown. That's what they said, because we ate all that fruit, that's why our teeth were so strong. There were people who were 80 years old, 85, and they didn't lose one tooth. Sometimes when you got a toothache, then they'd heat sand up. Real yellow sand. You got it from the sand gessel, and then we'd heat it up in the oven and you'd put it in a little bag and lay it on [the tooth]. When it had pus, then you pulled that together and it got away again. But there were no cavities, or nothing. And then like with bearing the children, they were all born at home. They had the *Hebamme* ladies. A lot of them died. They got infections and stuff, but that's the only way you could have them because there were no doctors. You couldn't drive to Odessa when a baby came, so they were all born at home. But a lot of them... the mother died and the baby died. When a little one died, they got *Erschüttern*, convulsions. A lot of them got it. Usually... some of them they could save, but most of them, when they got it, they died. And there were kids born, too, like we say retarded. But not as much as you see here, but it happened there too. Not really that bad, though. That's the way the hospital situation was. Later on, in '30, '35, that's when they built the hospital. By the time... they didn't take you in, they didn't check you in right away. By the time people... like my father, he died, he had the flu so bad and then he got pneumonia, and he didn't stay in long enough. He went out again and then he died. There were a lot of people they didn't check into the hospital like here. There were no accidents. There was nothing like that. But there were good doctors. They had doctors in from Germany and all over, but it was too far away from us. It wasn't high priced, because they worked for the government. But it was too far apart. By the time you'd get the person there it would be too late anyway. In '19 they had such a big famine. I think in '18 it was in America when they had that and so many people died. It was there too. My mother said they just fell like flies. There was nothing anybody could do.

[interruption in the conversation]

**HK:** They had good doctors. They came from Germany and all over. The way everything was set up, it wouldn't help. In the early days, even like my ma said, her mother and their mothers, they all had their babies like this. That's what they had in Germany too. They didn't go to the hospital. Not many.

Another subject I wanted to touch on... There is no old folks home like here. They live in the yard with their sons and daughters. They have a little house they call *Austeinhaus*. That's for Grandma and Grandpa, and you take care of them. So, whatever they saved, if that's not enough, then you supply them with all the food and the clothes and whatever. If they want to go someplace, you take them. You

are responsible. The one who got the homestead, the house and the land, they'll take care of Grandma and Grandpa. There was no Senior Citizens home. No, that was out. But they had for children... if the parents died in the war, they called that *Waisenhaus*. Then they had a Housemother and a Housefather, they called them. And the kids were brought there by friends and relatives, until they were 18 years old. They took care of them, just like their parents. And they sent them to school, and they had to work in the vineyards and the gardens. But they were their guardians, that's what they called *Waisenhaus*. Like if a man's wife died and they had quite a few kids and maybe the mother died too and the father died and there was nobody there, so that's what the guardians did. Even the church. If there were no relatives where they could be taken in. But if there were relatives who could take them in, then they took them in. Otherwise there was this *Waisenhaus*.

**KW:** There was no such thing as a funeral home then either.

**HK:** No, no. The body was laid out in the house when the person died. There was a man who came in and he washed the body and dressed the body. The people who made the coffin, they brought the coffin and they laid him in and they sat up for one night. Usually about 12 or 14 hours after the person died.

**KW:** They weren't embalmed or anything like that.

**HK:** No, no. That was not even a law or required. They'd make the grave, like for Grandma and Grandpa or whoever it was, and then next time this person came in, and then the other one stepped in, and that's the way it was. You didn't have to hire nobody for nothing. Just the coffin. Those people you paid, but the rest of it... and then at that time when they... before they go to the church... you know, like in a Catholic burial they've got three high masses for every week there was a high mass. Just like the funeral mass... it was repeated three times. That's supposed to cleanse the soul now. Later on when there was no more church, they just sprinkled Holy Water in the grave and said the prayers and said the rosary and everything in the graveyard because... the church was there but it wasn't open anymore. They let the people bury them. They didn't bother them with that.

**KW:** Like you had said earlier, you couldn't go to Odessa for any doctor's care because there were no cars to travel.

**HK:** Yes, and with the train, you could go on the train, but you have to ride all day on the train, and when you came to Odessa you had to take the streetcar and you had to have your number just for the time being. People didn't even bother. They got sick when they got old. But the young people died too. Maybe an accident or stuff like this. There weren't any medical bills. Like my grandma, she stayed with us. My mom was the oldest one, so we took care of her. It would be nice to see, now when you see on television how many doctors they have in Russia and everything, but at that time, no. All they wanted was to keep working for the Communists. But you weren't supposed to get sick in the first place.

**KW:** It can't be helped sometimes.

**HK:** I'm going to tell you something else. Where we grew up by Odessa you could raise all the crops you wanted, all the fruits and everything. It was a beautiful, beautiful country, where we used to live. It's not like what you call Russia – Siberia. This was just such a beautiful place. It was almost like everything was so nicely laid out... trees, the fruit trees, and everything was built so nice... the streets and the houses. Wherever you drove you could see where the German people were living. You could see their work, their pride, their joy. You could drive through a Russian community and you'd see straw bales... like you

drive for the Indians. But if you drove through a German community, there was the church in the middle and there was the school, and we even swept our yards every Saturday. It was kept nice and clean. It's called the German pride, ambitious and proud. It means you care for whatever you do. You can drive all over the Black Sea and see around where the Germans were. There were a lot of Lutheran people who used to live from Odessa west, Franzfeld, Josephstal, Lustdorf... those were all Lutheran peoples. See, they came the same when ours came, but that was all wilderness when they came in. Because they said it was as high as the horses, weed stalks. They didn't have any road to come out or come in, and they cleaned it all out and made it tillable land. It shows when you are a German you can be proud of yourself. It shows how nice it was.

**KW:** We saw that when we were over in Austria and Germany. I think in Austria even more so, it seemed like at the time. Everything was just so clean.

**HK:** Even now in Russia where the German people are. Every year, just the houses... they were from clay built, and the weather beats them up, so every spring they had to be painted and every fall they had to be painted, and the shutters in the houses and everything. And it looked so nice, just beautiful. When we left Russia and you looked back at this colony, you see all these houses, you think, well part of your lives stay there forever, no matter what. You could take nothing along, whatever. Your coat and a blanket, but when you looked back and you see all this you worked for so many years, for a hundred years, your grandparents... and you walk away, it just looked bad. It was so sad. Just sad, you know.

**KW:** I'm sure.

**HK:** Like the dogs and the cats, they were meowing and howling. They didn't know what's going on because people all walked away and that was so sad. It's just like you go and walk away now. And you didn't know what was the future holding for you. You had no destination. You didn't know where to go. All your work and everything is just for nothing. But still, it wasn't for nothing. It's going to be remembered, but you think you lost something. I always think, there's a part on me that stays in Russia, no matter what.

**KW:** Did you ever get over in Mannheim?

**HK:** Oh yes. Elsass, that was closer. That was about 25 kilometers from us. First you come to Elsass and Mannheim. That was the road you took when you went to Odessa with the horses. That's where the road went. That was another little orchard, a little colony. It was in Russia. When you passed that one, then you could see Odessa already. You could see the ocean, the *Mer*, what they called the Black Sea. It looks black, and when you walk in, it's clear as daylight. You can see your feet way down, but when you look at the sea, it's all black.

**KW:** That's why it's called the Black Sea.

**HK:** There is a big tourist there, because people go and take baths there. It's salty and there was a lot of people taking baths for their health and stuff like that. It is a port where all the ships coming in go to Turkey and Lebanon and Iran and all that stuff. That's where all the ships come. It's a big port, a big sea.

**KW:** I was kind of wondering about this Mannheim. I believe some of my relatives came from out of there. Were the living conditions pretty much there the same?

**HK:** It was almost like... there were all Catholics, nothing but Catholics. Elsass and Mannheim. See, like Elsass, the Volks, down here, like Roy Volk and Pete Volks down here... those folks came from Elsass. Because their language... that's the way they talked in Elsass. But they're the same. They had their big school, they had their big church, and all were farmers, and bakers too. And Mannheim was the same. There were rich people, real rich people down there. And they were not too far apart, maybe five or six kilometers, Mannheim and Elsass. They were the two sister colonies, what they called them, because they were just there with each other.

**KW:** So the countryside and as far as the sea...

**HK:** Yes, they had nice... the streets were nice. They were all built the same like all the Germans. There were a lot of Brauns... they were all, the Wolfs, Brauns... I think Steve Wolf and them came from Mannheim too. Miller's, Volk's, Heier's, Goetz's. Like when there was a wedding and some girl married in Strassburg, and one married in Elsass, we usually were invited over to the church feast. People used to come for this too, oh yes. They were nice little colonies. They had big houses. In Elsass they had [a quarry] rocks under the earth and they sawed them. That was all... their houses were mostly built from rocks, cut rocks. Real nice. In the early days they just had it with clay, but then the weather allowed them to fall together, so they all went to Elsass and they got themselves the rocks, cut rocks. Sand stone, what they called it. They were yellow. You didn't even have to paint them or anything, and then they made the (geebel)– that means the fall house, the stuff they made from rocks. But they were the same farmers. They had their flour mill too and all that stuff. But see, they were closer to Odessa, so they went a lot to Odessa to go shopping and stuff like that. Odessa, like here in Bismarck diocese, that's where the bishop is, well in Odessa was the church, the Immaculate Conception was the church where the bishop sits. That's where all our priests came through him. There was no shortage of priests, but then they took them all away. But before, there was no shortage.

Now I want to tell you something. We were seven years without a priest, without a church. And in seven years there were a lot of people who got married; a lot of them died, and a lot of babies were born. But there was no marriage in church, there was no baptism in church, and no church burial. Nothing. So people just did their own, whatever they did before. But then when the war broke out and the Germans came in, they brought priests along. They had chaplains in the army so they brought priests along. So we fixed the churches up again. We painted them and we took everything out what was in the church from the Communists and made a big bonfire. We burned everything in front of the church and we buried the ashes. Then we painted the church inside, all the way. But we had no more steeple and no more bells because they took the bells down and they cut the steeple off too. Then the church was consecrated again. They brought a bishop... Bishop Klaus came... and he consecrated the church and then there were three priests, three chaplains from the German army. For three days, they baptized, confirmed, and married. There were parents and kids who got baptized and confirmed and married at the same time. They took all the chairs out of the church, the pews, and people stood around, and the priests went from one couple to the other. They said the "I do", and the priests said it all, and the people had to repeat the "I do" all together because it would last forever. So they married them all and they baptized all the children. Then they confirmed all the children. Then they had mass in the graveyard and they said confession for a whole week. Around in the church, some of them went to houses for older people and heard confession and they gave communion. That's what they did. See, they went from one colony to the other. But people still knew how to pray. They knew everything. They knew what's right and wrong, but they just couldn't do it. That's the way we got back to being Catholic. We were Catholic, but we had



to cover it up. But that's the way they got everybody. And then we had mass again and church service. And they brought priests along and they stayed with the parish.

**KW:** This was now in Russia?

**HK:** Yah, this was in Russia in '42. That was when the Germans declared war in Russia and they came in. They brought their own priests along. That was not just in Strassburg... it was all over. All over, wherever they went, they had to baptize and marry and confirm and they had confession, and then in the graveyard they said one mass for all the ones who died. That was just a whole month holiday. It wasn't really a holiday, it was a renewal or whatever you want to call it. There were some people maybe before who didn't go to confession for 20 or 25 years who weren't under the Communists, or had a job they couldn't afford to lose, so they didn't go to church anymore. Maybe some of them 30 years. And they made holy water and it went back to normal again. But it didn't last, but at least we got that satisfaction. We all got confirmed and everything.

**KW:** Did they destroy any of the Holy pictures or statues in the church?

**HK:** Oh yah. Everything got smashed. But a lot... we stored a lot. People hide a lot of stuff. They didn't care. The Communists didn't care. If you want to take it away, take it away. If not, they smashed them all. So there were a lot of people who stored statues, Stations of the Cross. Like our church was St. Joseph's so they had to take the statue of St. Joseph and stuff like that. We had such a big pipe organ. That they didn't remove, the Communists. They kept it in there. So that was still working. And the floor was marble, just like ours over here. And in the church at that time, they didn't have electricity. They had chandeliers, big chandeliers and then they had candles. Like at Christmas and Easter if there was a special Pentecost, they pulled them down and lighted each and every one of them. It looked beautiful, real nice. Like the altars were all covered with lace tablecloths, alter cloths and whatever.

**KW:** Well those chandeliers... our first church had those big chandeliers.

**HK:** Yah, I've seen that and I said to the kids already, "That's the way we had it in our church." They had four of them. It was a big church. It seated about 700 people. The first couple of years, only the older people could sit in there. Later on they could afford to make more pews. And my grandfather and my father, they made the pews for that church. He was church father for 25 years, you know helped dress the priest, light the candles and all that stuff.

**KW:** Did the people bring some of the statues and stations back in again?

**HK:** Oh yah. We put them in the church again. And around where the church used to be, you come in like... there were four corners and they made four altars, like when we went around praying for rain... and that's where each altar the priest came and blessed the north, the south, the west and the east for rain and good weather. And each altar there were 10 or 12 girls or ladies who took care of it, the flowers. The girls with their white dresses sprinkled flowers and stuff like this. They were around the church. Those the Communists smashed before, but otherwise, the inside was safe. The church was built from brick and was all hand painted. The sky had golden stars, like Heaven in night.

**KW:** Were they pieces of gold, or...

**HK:** No, they were just made to look like gold. But they were pasted on.

- KW:** I was told our first church also had those gold stars.
- HK:** Yah, that's what they had, because the church was like this, round, like the old churches. And all the churches, like Baden, St. Michael's church, in Selz, St. Stephen's, there were three doors where they go in. It was a bigger community. They had three doors. And the bells, they were high priced but the Communists took them down. They smashed them and took them away.
- KW:** So our ancestors who came over, they basically built the same churches like over there.
- HK:** Oh yah. And see, when they came into Russia, they built it the way they had it in Germany. They took this along with them. That code like they had in Germany when you go to the churches are high and big and fancy inside. They thought they had to put everything in the church so it looks pretty. You still have that feeling. Even if you go out, the statue means nothing, but it reminds you of what you believe. Because if you have no reminder, like you say I have to do this and this tonight, but if I'm forgetful, I make me a note. And it's with your faith too. Maybe you don't even think you go to church today, but if you see this statue, well maybe that was the reason I had to come today and stuff like this. I say faith is what kept the German people in Russia going through the Communists. And I say now, too, when you listen, there is a big change going on in Russia. They let a lot of Jews out and they let out a lot of the people they had locked up, like this man, whoever the president is, he said. "Forty years when Stalin was on. He was a tyrant. He was a mad man. It takes maybe another forty years to make good what he made evil, but I'm going to start." Now they can go to churches too. But once you're away so long, you don't want to go anymore. It's real slow, maybe, they find a way back again. I think it has to do with praying, and I think maybe those people now they have a different guidance from God. I always think there's going to be a change. Like the Blessed Virgin Mary said, "Russia is going to be converted and we're going to have peace, but it takes years and years and years." So it just doesn't say, well, I'm going to let them all out and you do whatever you want. He's maybe one man. Maybe there's ten against him too. But like when Stalin was in, he was a mad man, just a mad man. He just slaughtered people, it's unbelievable. So I hope to God people keep their faith. If you have no faith, you can have no sanity and no goal in life. That doesn't mean you have to be a millionaire. Maybe you don't even know what you'd do with a million dollars. Maybe you're not even going to be happy if you have it, you know.
- KW:** I think many times the millionaires aren't as happy as the common person is.
- HK:** Yah, but see, they have to live behind closed doors and they cannot go out and talk to their neighbors or go out for a cup of coffee, or stuff like this, with all the money. And like the faith, what kept the Russian people and brought them to America, and the faith that the pioneers had kept them going up to now. That's why when there's a change it's so hard to accept because somebody always tells you that's wrong and you should do like this. I always say faith keeps you going.
- KW:** That's like our pioneer families that came over; the struggles they had to get a home built and the land broken up to seed. It had to be faith to keep them going too, to protect them.
- HK:** Not all people are like this. Not all nations are like this. It takes a German to strive forth. Like we're going to go here, we didn't get enough land in Russia. We're going to America where we can have all the land we want. Maybe they were satisfied with a little land, but they wanted to make it big, so they went to America. But they took the chance. And if you miss that chance, then you're out.
- KW:** I think the German people are much harder working people as a rule, aren't they?

- HK:** A proud people. And they used to be real honest. But there are always crooks among people. But they are proud whatever they do. And working hard whatever they do, they're proud people.
- KW:** And as a rule they always do good too. They do good in their work.
- HK:** At whatever they do, they do good, yah. When you stop and think they don't shy back for whatever comes. Like Germany in 1945, I wish some people from America could have seen it. It was down to this level, down to the ground. For a hundred marks they got ten cents, and there was nothing. Everything was bombed out, and you go over to Germany now. And they're such a proud people. They got defeated. They have to live with it, with defeat, but they still show their pride.
- KW:** Can you even tell anymore? Like when you were over there last time, the destruction?
- HK:** Yes, you could tell because the way it's built up now, it's not as historical. Like you tear this church out and you made it a modern church. You see it. They have all those high rise houses now. Those big apartments, and hardly any foot of land left for a sidewalk, because they used to bury their people and after 20 years they could bury another one on top of this grave. Now they say they have to build a house where they can push them in. They don't have land for a graveyard. Because my ma died in '73. We were home in '84, and they said, in another few years somebody dies and they need a place to just push this coffin in. It's wood; it's not steel like here. You pushed it in one corner and you bury another person there.
- KW:** Are they getting that crowded?
- HK:** So many people. And the land is less because they've built so much. There are so many people and the land doesn't get more; it gets less. That was the problem, because Hitler started the World War II. See, all this, what they call [Czechoslovakia] and part of Poland... see that belonged to Germany once upon a time. I don't really know what the year was. Then they lost it through the war, and when he started the war, the people were so crowded he had more people living in one city than North Dakota has all the way. And Germany isn't as big as North Dakota. See, that's when he fought and he wanted all of those colonies back. Then he said, "I need room for my people." And he got defeated. Now they have more people than German there. See, through the war, all the Germans, the men all died almost. 75%. So when they started building up, they put letters out that any men who wanted to work, they could come to Germany. So they built the city up, and now the people who were working there for 30 years, they didn't go home to Italy or France or England. They have their homes; the people have their schools there, and they like it so they didn't go home anymore. So now they have more people than they had before.
- KW:** I suppose some of them married Germans too.
- HK:** Oh, yah. See, in the German schools they took German up and everything. There are a lot of Italians and Greeks and Polocks and whatever you want to see. They're all living there. They didn't go home anymore. And some of them work in the factories now, like my sister. She's an engineer, and she said they have people working there as long as she has. She says they would be dumb if they would go home. They have nothing in Poland or in Italy. It's way different than it used to be, but you still see the German heritage, but the modern style looks a little different. But it's a clean, clean land.

...They didn't like us too much, because we took some of their jobs away and stuff like this. They weren't satisfied. But they were in a pinch and they needed the people. They always had that in them. If America hadn't stepped in, they would have won the war. I think what Russia made losing the war for Germany, because see, they fought on too many fronts. Like when they came in Russia, they weren't used to this climate. Their soldiers froze to death. They didn't get shot or anything, but the winters in Siberia and Stalingrad and in Moscow, they're so cold. They're 65 below zero. When you put out a cup of water, it becomes ice. And they had those little caps on and short coats and little boots. And the vehicles that they had. There is no highway, nothing. There's prairie and mud and stuff. They froze and they starved. It's over 5,000 miles with the railroad or the road to get the stuff into Germany to Russia. They had to haul this all in and they couldn't get it fast enough, so a lot of them starved. Most of them froze. They weren't shot to death; they froze to death. They said what they found... they were just sitting in the snow and they were dead. Russia lost 20 million soldiers. Just soldiers without civilians counted in. Germany lost because they fought England, Poland, Czech, Hungarian, Romania. They fought down in Africa and all. I read it once, I think [two trillion] And then the home front when they bombed everything. They killed 50 – 60,000 in one night. See, people went underground when they threw the bombs, then the water pipes busted, the gas pipes busted, and they couldn't make it out. There was no way out. They lost just as much, like Stuttgart is a city, maybe a quarter million, and there were just a couple a hundred people left. So they lost just as much at home as they lost in the front in Russia. Like Stalingrad... it was the biggest fort the Germans had against the Russians. But see, it's so cold there in Stalingrad, and I don't know how much is in an army, but that whole army was in there. They all died. They let nothing come in and let nothing come out. See the Russians were outside and they were inside. That's the way they died. A whole army. I don't know how many men are in the army. They didn't get shot. They just starved.

**KW:** So the people at home went with no newspapers saying the truth or anything. I suppose they didn't even realize how bad it was.

**HK:** Oh, they knew it. When we were in Germany, the people I used to work with, their son got killed in Russia. And the first year they got news, but towards the end there was none. Like my brother or my husband... there was no report... nothing.

**KW:** You never received notification.

**HK:** No, no. There was not such a thing. Who could pick them all up? They would be up in the mountains or got driven over to Czech or whatever. Towards the end, everybody tried to save themselves. And there was no place you could go to save yourself. And there was nobody to keep the record, like when you talked to German soldiers when you were on the road, they'd say help yourself, we have to help our self, too. There was no government, nobody knew where anybody went or what anybody did. If you come by, "Save your life. Good luck." If there was a person laying dead here, you just walked over them.

**KW:** Didn't the army have generals?

**HK:** Oh yes. They had generals and everything but if you lose the war, you have to run. The general has no more power. It's not the way they show it. Don't believe that. Don't believe that, oh no. It's not like that, no. Like when they came and throw bombs, you could just hear the roar from the planes. Then they dropped down, just like popcorn. They didn't look where they bombed... they just threw them down.

**[end of Tape 2, side A. Begin Tape 2, side B here]**

- HK:** Oh yah, they were shot with cannons too. They were only 2 or 3 kilometers away. You always would hear behind you. Yes, the Russians are coming, we've got to go ahead. We've got to go ahead. That's when we lost my one sister. See, people used to walk in bunches. We had nothing anymore. Just a blanket or whatever on our back. So they were walking with a bunch, and me, my mother and my sister were walking with a bunch. She was a teacher in kindergarten, and she used to go with this group. She traveled with this group, with the kids and their mothers and everything. They got cut off. We didn't know where they cut off or anything for three days. We didn't find her. Then we said well, maybe she turns up some day, when we come to this destination where we were going. We had to go across a bridge, and there she was standing waiting for us. Then she said a lot of the kids died. They put them on a train. They put no engine on, just let them sit there. Then they came with the bombs and threw the bombs and they were all killed. She got out. She and a couple of other ladies got out. That's what they did to the people. See, the Russians said, "We'll take you back." So they put them all on a big train, like a cattle train. But they put no engine on. They came with the machine gun on this side and this side, and they all died. Yes, we were close. We could see the planes the way they bombed. I didn't know. Sometimes you wondered how you could go 2 or 3 days without eating or water. You didn't even get hungry, you always had this fear in yourself. You had to go ahead, no matter what. You cannot stop. And there was nothing to eat. Wherever we had to go, all the people were gone already. There was nothing left. And it was winter time, 45 below in January and there was nothing there. We had no more shoes on our feet. It was terrible.
- KW:** What did you do during the night, then? Did you find any shelter?
- HK:** Well, sometimes you came in a little community and you'd sleep behind the barn and covered yourself up with your blanket for a couple of hours. If you heard the roar, then you knew you had to get up and go again. That's why we left Poland. It took 16 days to come to Germany. So we had to walk 16 days.
- KW:** That's a long time to be up there without anything.
- HK:** Oh, a lot of people died on the road. You just covered them with a blanket and walked away.
- KW:** I imagine it took quite some time, when you did find a place where you could stay, to really get your strength back.
- HK:** It was cold, but you never could feel it. You always had such nerves or such a scare that urged you to go. You didn't want to settle down. I know for weeks and weeks, when we were living with those people, your feet were always like this. Your nerves were just shaking. You laid down and pretty soon, you just jumped up. That stayed with me for a long time. You always thought "Is it true you are safe, is it true you are safe". But you couldn't believe it. Maybe you're not safe. It was sad. It doesn't take much imagination, how to pray, but people just... Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary. They didn't talk to each other much, just... Hail Mary, Hail Mary, Hail Mary. Mary and Joseph. I think they were walking with us. They were just there with us. And then the food... some people had little kids and they died in their arms. There were a lot of girls who were raped by the Russian soldiers. They caught them and they killed them after that.
- KW:** That's something a person can't ever forget when you go through something like that.

- HK:** Then I always think, well it happened at home too. Like here now... there's a family and they have a little problem, and they think that's the biggest problem in the world. If people would step backward, if they would have to go through what we had to go through, they'd think this is a problem. And I think now days they say, well, they didn't get along with each other. Go to the psychiatrist. I wonder how many psychiatrists we would have had to have to help all those people. There was a lot of people who lost their minds.
- KW:** Yes, that all just took too long, and then the hunger.
- HK:** And the scare... and then where's my brother, where's my mother, or who got lost. That's the stuff. The ones who they took back to the Russians, you couldn't even write... you were afraid maybe they'd come after you too. So you had to sit still and be quiet.
- KW:** That was just a never ending fear.
- HK:** But I wonder sometimes, how strong a person really is. I think we're made out of steel. I know my mother, if it wouldn't have been for my ma, we wouldn't be here either. I wouldn't be in America either. But on the way when we went away, she was sitting in the wagon, and she was petting the horses, and saying, "Go ahead, go ahead. We've got to get out." She must have thought she had to save the family no matter what. She dragged through everything. It takes a mother. And when I decided to come to America, it was my ma. She talked me into it, and I still don't regret it, but I said sometimes, "Oh, what does she know?" I know she knew, because when she was little, not too little, maybe 7 or 8 years old, their parents went to Siberia. They got so much land out there and it was so cold, so they came back again. So she knew a lot of that stuff. Oh, ma, she was a good one. It takes a mother to guide you. She was kind of tough, but you had to be, because she raised us without a father. Then you had to be tough in a Communist country. The way she said, "Well, that's not too far to go to America. There's a ship going." She meant the boat. "And there's the air plane" and then she said, "and there you can start a new life for you and Marie. Here you have to be a maid all the rest of your life." Well, I thought, she's right for once, I still think she was right. There was no high school, no college, but she had experience. That's what I think.
- KW:** Experience, and I think it's instinct from God, too, that just tells you what to do. That's the way I feel sometimes.
- HK:** I think so too. Like you say, she had faith in God and she thought maybe that's the right thing for her to do. That's the way I landed here. And then she came over in '62 for a year. I said, "Don't you want to stay here?" She said, "No, no. You like it... that's too much open space here." Like in Germany, everything is more together, with trees and stuff, and not like this. She kind of liked it, but she wanted to go back to her friends there.
- KW:** Yah, she had spent her whole life there, and her last few years...
- HK:** Yes, her last couple of years she wanted to spend there. But she was the one who got me to go. Sometimes I laugh when they show this commercial about that girl. She takes Anacin, and she says, "I listened to my mom. It's the only thing we agree on." And I said, "Yes, I listened to my ma too."  
[laughter]

...When the bishop came for confirmation in town, they got him from the train and then they had the buggy and they decorated the buggy with flowers. Then they had six white girls, they were all dressed in white, and they made a nice wreath with flowers, and then he stepped in that and that's the way he walked into the church. Then he confirmed... that's the way they respected or honored the bishop. I was once along when they had the six girls that walked the bishop in. It was real nice. Like the priests do... they had a maid too. They had their own house. They had a cow, they had a garden, their own chickens and everything. They lived just across from the church. It was almost like here now, too.

...When they said masses, they gave him a ruble or two, and when somebody got married or died, they got paid too, for that. But they couldn't speak out in the way they're really supposed to speak out. In the early days, the girls never had their hair cut. They always had it braided and they had those buns. When my generation came, they cut their hair, and they cut it down here on the side. But they didn't curl it, they just cut it. Then one Sunday the priest said, "The ones who cut celery, it's too short. They don't have to come back to church anymore." He called that celery. For those girls, they had to go up front and stand in the community of all the church because those were the first ones who had their hair cut. But then later on, he got over it. But then they put some curlers in. They had a curling iron that you put in the lamp, and then you curled your hair. But a lot of them had braids. The older people still kept theirs, but the younger ones. There were a lot of them that had them shingled the ones who worked in the offices and stuff.

- KW:** Yes, putting the curling iron in the lamp... I still remember that. My mother, when I was little, used to do that.
- HK:** Yah, I remember when we did that. Then we paraded, and we led him around. There was like a crown up front, and the clothes, you know. The *Schneiderei*, she made all the dresses. She'd go and buy the material. She had all kinds of patterns. She made her own patterns. She took the measurements, and she made you a dress. You'd go and try it on, and you paid and picked it up.
- KW:** So none of the mothers did sewing for their families?
- HK:** Oh, little stuff, like little aprons and stuff like this. But if you wanted to have a nice outfit, then you'd go to the *Schneiderei*. It might be underwear... we made all our own underwear, the bras and everything. You couldn't buy it. Well, in Odessa, in the big cities, but not by us. You had to make your own. You bought the material. Each house had a sewing machine. And the furniture, like this china closet, you all had it made. They were all hand made. They were, what you call bedroom, bed commode and dresser, and this china closet, and eating table, and you went to the ones who made this. You went and picked out your patterns or your color, and then he made it. You could have good hardwood. They made a lot from walnut, from nut trees. They have that nice grain like this. And girls, like they used to go five or six years together, and maybe two years before, she made her order. Her bed-stedding for the bedroom dining room and kitchen, what we called it. That's what you ordered all together. Made by one man. That's what they do in Germany too, because they have their own forests, they have their own trees. So they go out and pick a tree out, then they cut it up and they come and get it and take it to the sawmill.
- KW:** That's a cheaper way of making furniture. Then it's just the actual labor of making it.
- HK:** Well, then you can pick your pattern out, whatever you wanted. The color... some of them are light and some are darker. Like the man, too, if they wanted to have a nice buggy, there was a guy who made it

for them. Like my dad and his brothers, they made buggies and all this stuff. They had it made and then you took it to that guy and he painted it all fancy around.

...Things like this, it was all glued together and they had pointy things in the wood. They never came apart. Like that chair. They go back and forth. They didn't wiggle back and forth or nothing. I don't know what kind of glue they used. They cooked their glue, lime they used to say. They bought it in sheets. They put it in the oven and when it was melted, just like brown syrup. It had a funny smell. You had a little brush and you'd brush it all and stick it together and it never came apart. We had the soap... we cooked our own soap too, everything like lard and stuff.

**KW:** I supposed you couldn't even buy any soap at that time.

**HK:** No, no. Like in big cities like Odessa or Moscow, but people around, even the Russian people, they didn't even use soap. They went to the river and they washed their clothes in the river. See, there... clothes there... their material is woven, and it's that coarse stuff. That's not like ours, so it goes apart. They'd hit them on the rocks, their clothes. That's the way they did it. Their clothes were all made out of flax. It's not flax like we have. It's a different flax. It gets that high, and when you cut it off, it's about this thick and you peel it down like you peel celery and stuff. It's just like foam or what. Well, they take it to the factory and stuff, and they make some thread out of it. That's what they made their clothes from. It was tough, rough clothes. It was warm. It was real warm.

**KW:** So that flax grew about four feet tall and as thick as your wrist, then.

**HK:** Yes, and then you pull it down, just like you peel it and then they took it to the factory or the thimble mill or whatever they called it, and they made yarn out of it. Then they brought it back and they made their clothes with it. And the dresses, they were wide. About eight yards around. And they never had stockings or socks over there. They have boots on, like half boots, but they were all barefooted in them. Straw in, and you slept in them. See, straw keeps it warm. The dumb Russian way wasn't that dumb. They drink a couple of quarts of wine, and they got warm. They didn't feel the cold.

**KW:** Now days they say that vodka is a popular Russian drink. Was it at that time too?

**HK:** Oh yes. Vodka, yes. They made it, and it was cheap. It was made out of corn and stuff. But the people around by us just had their regular wine. When we had lunch or what, we didn't have no coffee. We had Zigorie, remember that?

**KW:** Oh yes.

**HK:** And tea. But when we got older, we drank wine with our lunch. Before we went to bed we had a glass of wine. But see, the Russians love vodka. They drink a whole quart down and throw the bottle away. That is a problem.

**KW:** So the Russians didn't really drink that much wine.

**HK:** No. They had more vodka. They could take it. The Germans couldn't take the vodka. They are hot blooded people. They're tougher. But the Germans didn't drink too much vodka. Oh they had "zucker brind", wedding schnapps, and stuff like that. They had their wine and there was nothing added, it was just natural grape wine. When it aged, it got a little stronger. You had to watch out.

**KW:** Did they have yeast in those days to brew the wine?



**HK:** In wine? Oh, no.

**KW:** Yeast they use, I guess in beer.

**HK:** No. See the wine, they cut the grapes and then pressed it, and there was a wine mill... they made it for you, but a lot of people made their own. All you do is press it through, and you had your big barrels. I don't know how many gallons, but they stayed down in the cellar. You carried it down and filled the barrels not all the way full. It started cooking on its own, because there was so much sugar in the grapes. You couldn't go down to the cellar... you'd fall down, just from the fumes. When it cooked off, they sealed it. They put the cork on and they put wax around it. In the front of the barrel they put a faucet on it. A wooden faucet. They didn't take the wine from the year they made it. You always waited a year back. Every wine they made stayed a year, and then they took it out. That was good wine.

**KW:** I must have been thinking of making alcohol, where they used to use yeast, I guess, to start it. I don't know what reminded me of yeast.

**HK:** Well, around here when they burn the alcohol, that's what they use, yeast, in for when they make beer. But for wine, no. Like for us, they never added anything with the grapes because they were natural grapes.

**KW:** I wonder if that's how they make it in the big wineries, like in California where they make a lot of wine... if they do this the same.

**HK:** Yah, they do too, but see, each grape is different. Some of them are more meatier and some have more sugar, some have more water. That's why those wineries add some stuff to the wine. Sometimes you get a headache from wine, and sometimes you don't get one because of something added to the wine. It says sugar added, so much percent. The longer you wait the better it gets. Their wine was just like going to drink water out of a faucet. We had white grapes, and we had those long grapes, white eating grapes they used to call them. And there were eating grapes, they had no seeds. They had all kinds of grapes. And see, the grapes that grew in the sand were stronger, and the grapes that grew where the river was, they had more water in them. See, in sandy soil they got a little stronger. They got more sugar in them. The ones that grew along the river they got not as sweet and got more water in them. That's what made a difference in the wine.

**KW:** Did they use just strictly one kind of grape for each barrel?

**HK:** Oh yes. Because there was real dark ones, real dark red wine, and then you got the rosy wine, then you got the white wine. They couldn't mix it up because the flavor wouldn't match. Each one was in its own barrel. And when you sold them, when you cut your grapes, you'd sort them. They couldn't be mixed up.

...got the pail full up and when it was empty you went down and got another one. But really, you could drink wine. You didn't get a headache or anything. It didn't hurt you. They used to say there were a lot of alcoholics, but there's just as much here too, now.

**KW:** Did they strictly drink wine, then, when they had parties, or...

**HK:** Yes, because people didn't buy any whiskey. They had schnapps, but the young guys said, "Why should we buy whiskey when we have the wine?" There were a lot of young people who didn't drink. Even my brother, he never drank wine in his life. He was 23 when he went into the army. He never drank. There were a lot of young people who didn't drink. He didn't drink it at all. He got so sick when he was little, from wine, and then he never drank after that. There were a lot of young people who maybe had a glass in the evening, but that's all.

**KW:** I suppose that's kind of like today too. Some will drink too much and other don't.

**HK:** And some think they have to have so much to be happy. They'd have wine, chew seeds, and then they'd tell stories or play cards. That was the time passing that they had. There was no show hall, no television, no radio... well later on we had them. There you couldn't have the radios on anyway. Time passed too, you know.

**KW:** Did they play card games like [? 373]?

**HK:** [? Same word] and [? Another one] There was another one. Seven High. I never played cards.

**KW:** It wasn't Spades?

**HK:** [? 377] They had another game, but I don't know it. Three or four games they had.

**KW:** Whist?

**HK:** Whist, yes. But [? 380 and ?] Then, what was that other game they used to play? [? 384 – speaking in German] We played it with beans. We had cards and... it's almost like Bingo, and [? 389] That game the girls used to play a lot. Low Deuce. It was in Russia. It's almost like Bingo.

**KW:** Did they have prizes then?

**HK:** It was just among, maybe 10 or 12 girls who would get together, and that's what we played.

**KW:** It was more or less just to pass time, then.

**HK:** Just to pass the time. It wasn't for a... well, we had little prizes, like little combs or a little pin or something like that. Real cheap, and then we got the prizes. Like Sunday afternoons, we went down to the river and went ice skating, and they had little sleighs, but all the brothers and sisters made their own skates. Bought the iron and made the skates. And the sleigh went down to the river and we'd skate until we had red cheeks like this. That's the way we passed Sundays.

...it was on a family's children. The bigger the family, the more you had to give.

**KW:** Like for church dues.

**HK:** Yes. But then there they had a problem too. People paid their church dues, but there were rich people and they had people who worked for them. They talked to the priest if they couldn't eat meat on a

Friday. Because there was 40 days of Lent. Just, not even Sundays. Just strict Lent. Even on Sundays you couldn't eat meat. And there were the two brothers who had the flour mill, and the one was allowed to eat meat for his people and the other one didn't. He said, well, if I have to buy that lamb, then my wife cannot cook it. But if you can buy it, you go to Heaven with it, but I'm not going to church anymore. The priest had to go down and talk him into it, I think. But one was allowed to eat meat, I think he gave the priest something... with his people and the other one didn't. There all you had to cook was bean soup and noodles and stuff, but no meat. Not even to produce lard. Like if you make noodles and you want to fry a little bread crumbs, you couldn't even use this lard. Strict... butter or cheese or eggs or fish, but no meat for 40 days.

**KW:** That must have gotten awful tiresome in the end.

**HK:** Well, people are poor and everything, and pretty soon there was nothing there. Just noodles... people got tired of just noodles and watermelon, you know sour watermelons and sour pickles and stuff like that. People just thought that was just too dumb. But it wasn't changed until we left. It was 40 days and strict, strict... not a piece of meat or nothing. Nothing.

**KW:** Now days, our young people for sure wouldn't listen.

**HK:** No, no, no. And then there was too... in Lent, nobody could get married in Lent, and nobody could get married in Advent either.

**KW:** I still remember that custom when my parents were alive, but now it just seems to pretty well fade out.

**HK:** Yes, well, I think with so many people working, it's different. Different jobs and different companies and different surroundings. Maybe they had to do the law a little like this, but I don't know. Maybe they should still be a little more strict and we should have a little more faith in the church. I have nothing against modern religions, but at least once in awhile you've got to remind [? 469] There is still a lot of room for improvement. I think sin is out of style. It's not here anymore. You don't find it in catechism or nothing. I think it's out of style, because they don't even want to mention it. Some priests say if we say it's a sin, they don't come anymore.

**KW:** Yes, it's just not the way it used to be. Now were the parishes poor at that time too, or were they able to make ends meet?

**HK:** Oh yes, we could keep the church up. Not like here... there was no electricity in church, and there was no heat in church or nothing, but we could take care of the priest. Oh yes. Like in our community, I wanted to tell you. There was about 1200 souls from little until old. That's how big the community was. But like in Selz and Kandel, they were bigger communities. But there were usually 1400 or 1500 people living there. Each parish had to take care of their own. We had to hire a *Schulemeister*, we needed an organist, we had to teach catechism and the choir and stuff like this, so we had to pay him too.

... You should be honored, or you should be proud to be a Christian or a Catholic. You should know a little sacrifice for your church. It shows on a person, what you are.

**KW:** This is a continuation of some more questions with Helen. From page 1: Did you ever find any of your aunt's children in Germany, like Aunt Josepha [? 514] in Hapsburg?

- HK:** No, because they bombed everything. We could not even go near Hapsburg. So we didn't find anything out about them.
- KW:** Okay, on page 4: Who were your mother's parents? Give the maiden name of your grandma too.
- HK:** Grandma was Johanna Schtall, and Grandpa was Franz Joseph [? 523].
- KW:** Did they live in Strassburg too?
- HK:** No. They lived in Kandel. It's about 10 kilometers or miles, or whatever you want to say. That's where they lived. That's where my mother was from.
- KW:** Page 4: Where did the rest of your Grandfather Steve Feist's family live? Did all of their families go to America?
- HK:** No, he and his families stayed in Russia, back in Strassburg. And his brothers and sisters went out to America.
- KW:** Page 4: What kinds of cookies did your mom make at Christmas?
- HK:** We used to bake the cookies with sour cream and they called it [? 541] and [? 542] in English, and lots of eggs. The cookies were baked four weeks before Christmas. They were baked and put in boxes or hanging sacks up in the attic. The longer they were hanging, the better they got. That's what they called... some of them we sprinkled with the colored sugar. They called them *mar*. That means they were kind of crisp. That's what the Christmas cookies were. And they baked some Christmas bread too. They put molasses in and brown sugar. They baked it in loaf pans. And the pretzels... they used to bake the pretzels too with salt on top.
- KW:** Do you have any of the recipes she used?
- HK:** No. They didn't use any recipes. They had it all in their mind. You take 12 eggs and six cups of sugar, a jar of cream and a little salt and a little [? 564] salt, and they beat this up and they rolled it out and they had a cookie cutter and that was the end of it. They baked it in those big ovens. They heated the oven, then they swept it out and they put the cookies on cookie sheets and stuck it in and baked it. There was no recipe. You take a little handful of this and a little handful of that and you taste it and add some more, and that was it. If the soup was too salty, they peeled two potatoes and threw them in. They'd pull the salt out, and then the soup was okay. That was all the hints and stuff like this. They cooked by ear, by smell, and cooked a lot with wine too. We cooked a lot of ducks and stuff. That they cooked with wine.
- KW:** Page 5: When the mass servers watched on the Lord's grave, did they wait and watch inside the church, or outside the church?
- HK:** Inside the church, under the altar. There was a big altar, and it was just like it was a closed door. At Christmas they opened the door and a corpse was laid like Christ, like a big human man, was laying in, and there were six mass servers standing with the candles... standing there. It was inside the church. Day and night, all three days, from Thursday night until Sunday morning.
- KW:** Did they make an actual grave, or what?
- HK:** No. It was built in under the altar. That corpse, like a statue, that stayed in, and when Easter was over, they closed it. It was a kind of little folding door.

- KW:** Did different mass servers take turns?
- HK:** Yes. They couldn't stand for three days, so they had so many hours and then grownups, 17 or 18 years old served from midnight until daylight. For the little ones it was too hard. That's what they did all three days.
- KW:** Page 6: You talk about digging little houses under the house for the Easter Rabbit to lay eggs in. Wasn't your house on the ground, or was it on a foundation?
- HK:** It wasn't little houses. It was little holes you dug. No there was no basement in our house. They were just solid on the ground. But you dug a little hole out and you built it like, you made a little roof on in, and you put grass in it and then the Easter Bunny was Ma and she laid the eggs in. She colored the eggs and she laid them in there early, and that's... we believed it. Maybe we knew, but we still made it. There was a lady who loved kids, and she always told them that story about *Christkindel* and the Easter Bunny, and she had a little dog. So she colored all her eggs and she had paint left, so she made little dots on the little dog. The dog didn't like it. He went down the street, up and down, and kids went after him... "The Easter Rabbit, the Easter Rabbit!" And they believed it!
- KW:** Page 7: Did the common people go to celebrate the government holidays by getting a day off and being able to participate in the celebration or not?
- HK:** They had to participate. They got the day off, but they had to be there. Otherwise they wouldn't have gotten the day off.
- KW:** Page 11: What was your husband Eugene Feist's dad's and mother's names?
- HK:** His father was [? 659 – Eros ?] Feist and his mother was Catherine Schneider Feist.
- KW:** Did he have any brothers and sisters, and who were they?
- HK:** Yes, he had four sisters and one brother. As far as I know, they are all in Siberia. There was no contact with them at all.
- KW:** Did his family come from Strassburg too?
- HK:** Yes.
- KW:** Where do his family live today?
- HK:** In Siberia. That's all I know.
- KW:** Page 11: Who were some of the other Feist families in Strassburg besides your grandpa and dad?
- HK:** Well, there were a lot of them, but maybe some of them even moved out to little towns or little villages around there. But there were quite a few Feists, but I don't remember all the names because I was still young then. Buy like all my dad's brothers, they were all Feists. They all lived there. They had a lot of sons, and they stayed all there. But that's a long time back.
- KW:** Page 13: If some farmers were rich and had lots of cattle, did they make hay for their cattle, or did they just feed them cornstalks all winter?

**HK:** They never made any hay there. There was never any hay land. All they did when they threshed, they had the straw from the oats, and from the corn, the cornstalk, and the oats, they grinded too, like here, and that's what the horses got and the cows got the straw and the cornstalks. But there was no pasture like here. Just in the summer. Well, they didn't have that many. Two or three cows and that was all, so they didn't need that much.

**KW:** Page 14: How many trees were there in your grape vineyard, about?

**HK:** Oh my gosh. I don't know how you say this. See, there the land was even out in hectares. I don't know how much a hectare to an acre means in the United States. But if a person had a hectare vineyard, maybe they had 1200 or 1500 grape stalks in there, and they were only two feet apart, and three feet on this side. I really don't know how much they would have had. But usually, they had a hectare of grapevines. But the fruit trees... Oh, you had fruit... they were just piled in. You couldn't count them. I don't know what a hectare and an acre, how that works. Maybe she could figure this out, if a hectare is more than an acre, or what. A yard and a meter are different, so I don't know how that worked. But they all had a lot of grapes.

**[end of tape 2]**