

Interview with Fred Wieland (FW)

Conducted by Ron Wieland (RW)

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Streeter, North Dakota

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RW: My name is Ron Weiland, I am interviewing my dad, Fred Weiland. This is July 24th, 1990. My dad was born April 16th, 1901. Tell about that funeral.

FW: I couldn't say anything about the funeral, what should I say?

RW: When the person died, the name of the person and then how they died.

FW: 11-13 (in German). He carried some corn in a bundle, with a rope tied around. He slipped and fell backwards. That was my second cousin. Then he stayed at home for a while and felt good. One day he woke up and it had gotten worse. Stan was going to take him to the hospital but he died on the way to the hospital. They brought him back dead. When they had a funeral out there, in the old country, where there was no house. We had to walk as far as two miles sometimes. Carried him out to the funeral and so my dad was a casket carrier. I walked on the side where my dad was. That is all I know.

RW: How about the time you got lost, grandpa.

FW: Oh, that was before noon. I always walked myself to the flourmill and there was fog. I thought that I was walking towards the flourmill and when the flourmill never appeared it was the other way. I was so twisted. I found a street that went downtown and I walked down it, but it was not our street, it was a strange street. Then a lady found me and said to her son, go to this boy, he's lost, take him home. They took me home. The worst thing is when you walk out there are the dogs. Everyone always had two dogs and sometimes three. They would come and do anything to you if you didn't have a stick. That is what I was most scared of. If you had a stick the dogs would be afraid of the stick.

RW: What kind dogs were they and how big were they?

FW: They were just common dogs like here. Some were big and some were little. The little ones made the most noise.

RW: You mentioned the mill, what other businesses do you remember from your town?

FW: We had a grocery store and two blacksmiths. That is all of the businesses that I know. You couldn't buy any clothing, material was there and the women made their clothing. They would get a little help from the neighbor lady. There was a tailor and he made the clothing for the men. I remember when we went the United States; he came up to our house and measured us all. How tall and how wide and then he wrote it down. Mother made the material from black sheep cloth. The women had other stuff that they could weave and spin. They would spin their own wool and knit stocking, socks, and mittens, all from wool. You could color them red or blue if you liked. The clothing was dad's material and he made a suit coat and pants for the trip to the United States.

RW: So you had new clothing when you left.

FW: Yes.

RW: Now, you mentioned many times that you went to the Russian school.

FW: That wasn't the same school. In Russia, it was a half-day with a Russian teacher and the next half was a German teacher. We don't get to walk to school; you had an Old Russian teacher and we had to talk German; other wise you couldn't get along with her.

RW: When your mother cooked over in Russia, what were some of the main dishes that she cooked? Do you remember?

FW: She made her own sauerkraut and strudel.

RW: Was it the same there as it was here?

FW: My mom still made the most flavored food here or there. Sauerkraut they made it over there in fifty gallon barrels and thirty-gallon tub of sauerkraut. A man came to cut it, I was in the barrel to walk it down. My feet washed and then they start to water them and water came to the top. Left was that type of sauerkraut. It was at least a fifty-gallon barrel, and the smaller one maybe a thirty.

RW: How much sauerkraut do you think that you made in a year?

FW: Well, I would say seventy gallons.

RW: Oh, those two barrels, that is how much you made.

FW: Yes. When the season for kraut was over, then we had to get more kraut. We bought it, and we grew the cabbage in the garden. Other times we would buy cheaper then we could raise it.

RW: You never raised it yourself then.

FW: No, and they were very big heads.

RW: The boys and girls in those Russian days, what did they do for fun?

FW: Well, they had dances. They played sometimes a whole bunch, they had ring around the roses and the boys had a ball game. They played some kind of a game. In the night, they had a little game that they called hell. There was a hole and they went around that hole and then when you would guess the right thing you would get out of the hole and go to another place. Then they played a game a lot called stones. You sent up two stones and caught the lower one. I still remember it. There was another game but I forgot the name of it. You would set two stones in a place and then you would throw a stone up, pick up the two and catch the stone. If you loose it then it was the next persons turn. They would play that all day. They would play that in the house and outside.

RW: Did the boys have a lot of work? Like your brothers?

FW: No, they were too little to work. Just driving horses. We had two horses, in front of each other. Once they had four horses on. The front horse was a girl and the back two boys; I sat on a seat and just hauled the back boys along side.

- RW:** Did they have jails or something like that? What did you do with the people who committed a crime?
- FW:** Well, we convicted them like anywhere else. They had a jail, the only jail in our town, and they would keep them there for the judge. Then they took them to a different town to the judge. They also had an orphan's home, and an old peoples home.
- RW:** That was the poor house, right?
- FW:** Something like it, but they had only a three people jury. There was my grandfather; he locked people up. I watched all of the people.
- RW:** What did your grandpa do?
- FW:** My grandpa was a farmer. My mother's grandma helped him out.
- RW:** He never got to know your dad's folks at all?
- FW:** My grandma was still alive when he went. My dad's brother.
- RW:** Your mother's parents, you knew both of them? Were they farmers too?
- FW:** Yes, they were farmers. They lived in town and when they retired they stayed in town. She lived right across from our house.
- RW:** How many acres do you think that the average farmer farmed at that time?
- FW:** My dad had about a hundred acres. There was corn, and wheat.
- RW:** Did you have such a thing as sweet corn?
- FW:** We had lots of corn.
- RW:** What were some of the local buildings that you had?
- FW:** They were built with clay and were made square like cement blocks. They built our houses with that. Then they blasted the outsides and the inside with clay. That was so that the rain wouldn't wash it away so easy. They got some rowel, they called it, and it was wrapped into ten feet long. They tied them in bunkers and layed them length-wise on the river. They laid right on that crack. Then they nailed them down. They had ropes that were tied to them. One was upstairs and one was on the roof. The rows were sewed together. It did not rain.
- RW:** Did you have any other buildings other than the grocery store and the blacksmith shops?
- FW:** We did not have any other business. The blacksmith shop made wagons, the tailors made the men's clothes. The women made their own because they were unnatural in clothing matters. They even weaved their own clothing.
- RW:** Did you ever remember or heard your dad talk about moving from Germany into Bavaria?
- FW:** He could not remember.
- RW:** You have lived in Germany before you moved to Russia, correct?

- FW:** My mother said that she remembers my grandfather who moved over to Russia with a dog team, when our mother's father was his biggest bully. Moved with him to Joshua and he and I made it. Attached four bags to it. We went all of the way and took the four bags and the rifle with us. Our mother's dad was so old that he was feeble. Then those boys had fun throwing rocks. She can still remember that. Then he always thought that God was hidden. 278-279 (in German). Her father came out, the boys ran away because he was a colonel in the Army. You can see the military pictures at home. I was going to bring them, but I forgot.
- RW:** Those pictures are upstairs in that one closet, aren't they?
- FW:** The one that is upstairs. I only have two pictures, and I paid twenty-five dollars for the frame.
- RW:** They put those pictures in between the walls of the house.
- FW:** They forgot to take them out and they closed it. He was always there taking what he wanted.
- RW:** So that is still in the house today.
- FW:** Mary's house.
- RW:** Do you have an idea of what year you moved to Russia?
- FW:** I couldn't answer that because I don't know. My father told me once that he was eight years old when he moved. He lived in Russia, and some other place. He was much older. It was my mother's grandfather that moved over.
- RW:** He was eight years old, huh?
- FW:** They had a Turkish ruler. During the Turkish War they were ready to move because the Russians were going to lose. The Russians reinforced the army because they had plenty men. They put fresh troops, and then they would chase the truck. When we left that was Turkey's. The Russians couldn't get away from the Turkish.
- RW:** Bessarabia.
- FW:** Then we would come up with a bunch of sacks. Then when they counted them, it was like the pope himself was coming. They had long spears and they just went and 343-44. right through him. They had some kind of attachment on their saddle. Every road would wash out. They'd turn pictures, and they couldn't stop their horses from moving. They would come out with a big team. That is why it got so big. He won all of the wars. Then the machine gun was in the Russian system, they had everything kicked before them to the cross. The Johnny's were the first ones to have machine guns and the Russians took over 364 and they had a few machine guns. They dreamed of that. They had several saddles. The one with the spear had to spear it. Then the crucifix stood alone.
- RW:** They were on horses, right?
- FW:** They were all on horses. They had so many horses in Russia, wild horses. We caught horses and then they got big, tough guys to train those horses too. When you fall off of a horse you fall down and maybe hurt yourself. My dad said that they are all machine guns that cut that out. When my mother heard that story, they saved the Russians from losing all of that land. I will get this ready and that is one of the best people in Russia. He got it.

RW: And still has it today, because Turkey lost World War I; so Russia just kept that.

FW: They didn't lose it, they gave it away, and they gave it to the Romanians. Our country, where my grandfather lived, that belonged to the Romanians for seven years. Then when the time was up, the Russians came and took it. All of those Germans moved into Germany when Hitler took office. They didn't lose that to Russia, that was a kind of contract with the remaining government. They were going to make themselves stiff. Russia after World War I, had a much better army than they ever had. Then Romania was scared that they would lose all of it. So, they freely gave it back to the Russians again. That was just some kind of a contract. They never lost that land. Then the poor were surprised, and the army had rations given back up to Moscow. Then they went in the shelter; the Russians soldiers. They had ice and sleet that night. It rained and sleeted, and the Polish were all lined up outside to wait for the morning, they were going to take Moscow in the morning. They would have done it. Then in the morning, the Russians saw the Poles standing up there and they started shooting. No shots came back and then the Russians went out in the sand and the whole Polish army was standing frozen. They were dead, frozen to the ground. The Russians just pushed them away. Then we took the whole fort.

RW: When was that now, when the Russians took all of Poland?

FW: They had a little Polish. If they wouldn't have frozen out there, they would have. Poland was a very strong country at that time and very tough in fighting. I don't know the year. You learn old history in book. My folks talked a lot, and we had a book too. We gave the German Kaiser.

RW: Were you still in Russia when that happened?

FW: Well I wasn't even born.

RW: Oh, you weren't born.

FW: Then when the Polish came, to give up their power, they had a book on that and he gave it to the German Kaiser. He turned it around and gave it to the German Kaiser. There was no clothing any more. The Russians and the Germans gave to them. That was quite interesting. The Russians weren't wearing shelter. The Polish were standing outside

Begging of Side Two

FW: The Sleet that night was pretty bad out there. The rain was so fine it felt like warm rain. My dad said, once there were some wild geese and they froze their wings and they couldn't fly. Then people caught them and butchered them.

RW: Did you have any celebrations out there like we have the Fourth of July here?

FW: We just had the church holidays, no other holidays.

RW: Which holidays were the biggest?

FW: Sanction Day; that is the only one I can remember.

RW: Did you say any peace in church over in Russia for Christmas?

FW: No, the younger kids never got to go. The kids up to fourteen had to stay home. The ones that were fourteen and fifteen got to go and speak a peace and sang Christmas songs. Then in the daytime, the

fourteen and fifteen year olds had to stay home. All of the little ones would get and see the Christmas tree. They had a big one. They had long sticks to light the candles. The top candles sometimes would fall; then they were on guard for fire. They always had the candles out so far that they wouldn't...

RW: How did the men prevent it? Did they have pails of water?

FW: I don't know what they had. They probably had a pump, which they could spray.

RW: Did you celebrate when you came into the United States? Did you celebrate other holidays like the Fourth of July?

FW: I was in Streeter when we celebrated the first Fourth of July. It was a much bigger town than today.

RW: You were how old?

FW: Well, I can remember when I was eight and a half and then celebrated when I was nine years old.

RW: That was your first one then, in 1909. What were those early Fourth of July's like?

FW: Just like later; horse racing, foot racing, ring shooting for money, and games for a prize. Four balls for ten cents and then you had some objects to hit. You got teddy bears and horses and stuff.

RW: Did they have any rides then or not?

FW: No, they didn't. They had all kerosene lights at that time.

RW: Did they have rides, like the Ferris wheel?

FW: No, not then.

RW: Then your dad moved right on that farm where Morris Slack lives today.

FW: Well, he started to build. There was not one building on there; we built everything.

RW: That land was sold to your dad. Who sold it and how much?

FW: I guess it was sixteen dollars an acre and it was Mike Gramble and Sam Clout and I think there was one more. The down payment was ten dollars.

RW: That was a lot of money to pay for land at that time.

FW: Fred Swigey said, he was our neighbor; who had land to sell too. He would have sold that land to my dad for nine dollars an acre. Then three fat cats charged my dad sixteen dollars an acre.

RW: I am sure they sold it to the railroad because the railroad owned all of that land.

FW: The railroad was started when we got here.

RW: I am sure that the railroad owned that land.

FW: They had plants out late all the way from Streeter to Steel. That Driver was on the road map several times. I still don't believe that that land didn't pay. There was only a thousand that everybody shipped. When the trucks came, there was so much that the trucks couldn't furnish enough cars. When they furnished three cars, they were loaded in three days. Even had loading equipment for the farmer to use

for the horses. Pete Hanson and Merle Swgert, they did it all by themselves. Hauled it in with their horses. In three days they delivered the car.

RW: That is just like what they did in the early days when they had stockyards. I still remember that stockyard in Streeter. Do you know who started that stockyard?

FW: Yes, they had to unload cattle and they were sent to Minneapolis.

RW: Who started that stockyard?

FW: I think that Redman and Comitan built it. Because it is their business today. I remember when they sold it. Everyone in town wanted it. It was Fredrick who got it.

RW: Yes, I bet it was. It was right next to the railroad tracks.

FW: There was groups in the feed and cattle and everything was made so strong that even the men could come up when he couldn't crawl up the sides.

RW: Everything is gone; there is not much left.

FW: I guess there are no more stockyards. Not around here.

RW: We have a stockyard in Sykstin; that's where the people go now; which is just a sales ring. It is really not a stockyard. There was an old stockyard by the railroad, but now the guy made a house out of the building where they sold the cattle. Did you drive any of your cattle into town and sell them to Minneapolis too?

FW: My dad always sold them to a cattle buyer. They had to sell them to a cattle buyer because he could load enough to get a full car. If you just wanted a half car you would have to pay for a full car and that was so expensive.

RW: Were the cattle buyers honest?

FW: There was honest cattle buyers and there was dishonest ones. The biggest cattle buyer has a grocery store. Them were the biggest cattle buyers. They sold them to the grocers on time to the farmer. Then when spring came; they asked for the money that the grocer owed. Those cattle, gained fast. There was good pasture those days. They had all the feed in that cattle and had all of the grain. Even the money we had for Andrews, was subtracted from the store. Then you pay as much as you think that your steer is worth. My mom and dad got so discussed once that they said they were going to keep those two steers and who knows how long. Then he could make a profit and the grocer said, then you could give me the money for my groceries. They were all crooked. Teddy had a week's stockyard done. He could use the stockyard if you pinch some flour in his kettle. If you drove into the stockyards; you would get locked in.

RW: You say that a lot of the grocery stores were crooked then.

FW: We had two Jewish grocery stores and they were all the same.

RW: Who owned the Jewish Grocery Stores?

FW: The Silverman Brothers.

RW: Silverman?

FW: We asked for the money and he hasn't; then he will take cattle on it. Long stock. Then they weighed it. In the springtime most of the cattle were pretty light because there was not sufficient food. When they came out of the grain pasture, those were worth the most money. I know that my folks had as high as two hundred dollar grocery bill charged.

RW: Was that the only business that did that, took cattle in trade for paying the bill?

FW: I think that most of the businesses did that, but the grocery store was the main thing. They took cattle in, and then when there was nothing left on the bill they would charge again.

RW: What do you think of Jews?

FW: A Jew is a natural born crook.

RW: Why do you say that?

FW: Because they are.

RW: What have they done so that you think that?

FW: A Jew can steal without you knowing it.

RW: You wouldn't trust any Jew?

FW: You couldn't. They did big business; there are a lot of them.

RW: Did you have a lot of Jews in Russia too?

FW: All Jews were business people. There was no Jewish farmer. Three of them own a grocery store, and drug store.

RW: So, they were the ones that had all of the money. Did the Russians like the Jews?

FW: I don't know. They had a Jewish leader. They caught him being very crooked and the Russian police watched him. One lady in town said that he was her cousin, and he wanted to move to Germany but they wouldn't take him. Then he came to the United States and the United States didn't want him. He thought that he would go far, far away the Russians wouldn't find him. Then he moved to Mexico. The place that he had rented in Mexico allowed him to stay. It didn't take long and he got shot in the back. Then his wife was so scared and she cried, and thought that she was next but they never shot her. Just like farmer Hal went clear down to Mexico and the police tracked him down.

RW: That's is different. It is funny how the Jews always got into these little towns and made the money.

FW: They were always pushed from one country to another because they crucified our Lord. It didn't matter who, never stayed to settle there. The Lord told him that they would be kicked from one place to another. It was true.

RW: Do you think that the counties should have given them a place where they could all live?

FW: Well, they did so much fighting, because of the county that was beside them, they took most of the county. They got a little land but not much.

RW: But the United States helps them out a lot. The U.S. gave them a lot of oil and that kind of stuff.

FW: Yes, they had to have some help. But they killed six million.

RW: So, I don't think that anyone in the world likes the Jews. The Russian don't and Hitler didn't.

FW: The only reason why they don't like them is that 293 always wanted to be a leader. The Russians had a lot of channels and he thought that he could handle better than 299. There was one little leak came out before 301 and then he was the greatest hero that I recall in general. He was called the True Barrow; which was his name. He called him once and he never heard of him. I never heard what happened to him. He would have liked to own a nation. At the end of that he would get board of supports and every thing. Had given in; then the church would have been in good shape. Russia, I think he is a good nation now.

RW: What do you think about Germany today? Do you think that it is good that East and West Germany are getting together?

FW: I couldn't say, because I do not know anything about that.

RW: How do you feel about young people today?

FW: They are always acting tough, those young kids, and they are still that way. In gangs, fights, and stuff like that. In our town there was gang fights.

RW: There were in Russia?

FW: They would get together and were fighting and wouldn't even know it. They fought really rough sometimes. There were fights going on in our 344.

RW: What did the parents do about it?

FW: They didn't do anything. If it was their kids it was better than if they lost. They couldn't do anything about it. I believe that it was most of God's. Then somebody took his 352 and found that guy then he became angry and the other guy got mad and then they fought. I saw that before I knew too much. It was right in our street. There was a guy that came running down that hill chasing that guy. He ran into their home that had one of those big bells, chain dogs they called it, and he quickly untied that and came out and stopped that guy. Then that guy saw the chain dog and he turned around and went back to his game. He could have run and he could have caught him with the run gun. He was a bigger guy and I saw that it was a gang fight. There was two boys that came running down and one big guy ran after him.

RW: What are some of the unusual thing that happened when you settled in Streeter? Do you remember?

FW: I don't know.