

Interview with Magdalena (Vetter) Gross (MG)

Conducted by Michael M. Miller

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Transcription by Dorothy Denis, Rebecca Pettit

MM: Good afternoon. It's December 27, 1993 and I'm at the Marillac Manor in Bismarck, North Dakota with Magdalena Vetter Gross. Magdalena, I wonder if you could tell us when you were born.

MG: September 27, 1902.

MM: You were born September 27, 1902 and do you remember, Magdalena, what was the name of your father?

MG: John. John Vetter.

MM: John Vetter.

MG: Yah.

MM: And your mother?

MG: Was Anna Marie Schmaltz.

MM: Schmaltz?

MG: Yah.

MM: Now your folks, they were born over in Russia right?

MG: Yah.

MM: Do you by chance remember the village?

MG: No.

MM: Don't remember the village at this time. But were your parents, when they came to America and to North Dakota, were they already married in Russia?

MG: No. No, my dad came over in 1888 with his parents.

MM: And his parents, what was their name?

MG: [12] and Francesca, Francesca was [12]

MM: [12]

MG: [12]

MM: And so they came over and your dad was how old? About how old was he?

- MG:** Well he was about 19 years old.
- MM:** Oh so he was a grown man already by then.
- MG:** He was a grown man. Yah.
- MM:** And how many other children came along?
- MG:** Well they all came along but I think one brother Anton he was came, he was married before and he came before.
- MM:** He came earlier?
- MG:** He came earlier, yah.
- MM:** And your ma, did she come with her parents too?
- MG:** She came with her parents, but I didn't have to write when they came over. It's written in the book, but I didn't look it up.
- MM:** Did your dad ever talk about how many children came along with the folks, your grandparents.
- MG:** Well there was, Yah he had three sisters and he had three brothers but one came over before and one brother was younger and I guess he came together I think so.
- MM:** Now that brother that came over earlier that was married, did he come and settle in Logan county too?
- MG:** No he, no not in Logan County around Hake.
- MM:** Oh he was down that way then in Emmons County.
- MG:** Yah in [24] county.
- MM:** So when your folks came over to America did they have some children over here too then?
- MG:** No, no my grandfather came over he brought his children along.
- MM:** Brought his whole family along.
- MG:** Yah, yah .
- MM:** Now as far as you know, Magdalena, did anybody stay over there in Russia?
- MG:** Not from my dad's. No they all came.
- MM:** From the Vetter's side?
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** What about your mother's side?
- MG:** I think they all came too.
- MM:** The Schmaltz's?
- MG:** Yah, the Schmaltz's came too.

- MM:** Now did those Schmaltz's settle where?
- MG:** Well they all settled around Hake there and then mother's brother Joe [32] to Canada took all, he had nine boys and one girl. Then he took them all to Canada around. [33].
- MM:** Now why did they all move to Canada?
- MG:** Well I suppose there was [34] there maybe was more land. There was not enough land around here I guess and he had so many boys and he always wanted to see to the family gets.
- MM:** Now they brought all those boys along over?
- MG:** Yah, they all came along yah.
- MM:** Did your folks ever talk about what it was like coming over on that ship?
- MG:** Yah, mother said they were on the ship 21 days and a lot of people were sick, a lot of them vomited and then it stank and it was, she didn't like it.
- MM:** And how old was she about? Was she a teenager too then?
- MG:** Yah, she must have been about 18, 17 or 18 years old about, it's written down but I didn't look it up.
- MM:** Now when they came over and of course they settled down there around the Hake area, and then they later on then of course they became farmers?
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** Now did you know your grandparents?
- MG:** The Schmaltz's, no. But the Vettters I lived on. My grandfather Vetter lived about not a half a block away from where I grew up. And I got married and they still lived there.
- MM:** Now, you grew up where, Magdalena?
- MG:** Down where the Vetter farm is.
- MM:** Now that's located where?
- MG:** Well it's between [49] and [49]. So they had about 18 miles to [50] and about 20 -25 to [50]. Before the highway was made.
- MM:** So you were out quite a ways.
- MG:** We were out in the middle of nowhere.
- MM:** It was difficult at times.
- MG:** There was Hake, there was Strasburg, and [52] and [52] and [53] and all those towns but I grew up in the middle.
- MM:** And what was the church you would go to?
- MG:** First, my first my folks went to Saint Alicia's [55], it was ten miles south from their place, and then in a, I think 1906 or 7 then they switched to Saint Anthony's but then we had 7 miles to Saint Anthony's.

- MM:** And how far was the school from your house?
- MG:** Well then, you didn't have school house those days and my grandfather, he wanted the kids to learn, so one winter we had school in grandfather's house but then they only had four, four children, but they had to have five to get a teacher. So they put me in, I was four years old. Then they had school at grandfather's house in the kitchen.
- MM:** And the teacher would come out?
- MG:** The teacher would stay there, I don't know if he stayed at my folk's place, this I can't...I think she stayed at my folk's place.
- MM:** Now when you had school it was of course in English?
- MG:** Then it was in English, yah.
- MM:** But could the children speak English?
- MG:** No, no they all spoke German but gradually they had to learn, they all had to learn English, yah, yah.
- MM:** Now this teacher, Magdalena, could the teacher speak in German?
- MG:** I wouldn't think so, this I can't remember, but usually they didn't speak German when they came those first years.
- MM:** So that wasn't always that easy for that teacher and the children.
- MG:** I know.
- MM:** You remember some of that of course.
- MG:** That was a problem. It was a lot of problem.
- MM:** Yes and so, but they would eventually would learn it right?
- MG:** Yes. Yes, my folks learned to talk English and I didn't think they wrote letters English, they read in English. I think my dad could write a little in English if he had to.
- MM:** Did the Vetter grandparents ever learn English?
- MG:** Well, I don't know.
- MM:** Not too much, huh?
- MG:** A not too much, no.
- MM:** But it was good, your grandpa Vetter wanted the people kids to have an education though.
- MG:** My grandfather wanted the kids to have an education. He was for education. I think he had a lot of folks and I always say I think he had like a those books that they have now, what do you call them?
- MM:** Encyclopedias?
- MG:** Encyclopedias. I think he, because they were all in German, but he had a lot of books I think that it what it was. Encyclopedia what we have now.

- MM:** So he brought those along from Russia then?
- MG:** He must've bring them along from Russia, yah.
- MM:** Do you ever remember as a child, Magdalena, or grandpa Vetter did they get a newspaper, a German newspaper?
- MG:** Yes and then we had mail, yah they had German newspaper. My dad had a German newspaper yah.
- MM:** What was the newspaper? Do you remember the name?
- MG:** Well there was this one from Dickinson.
- MM:** *North Dakota Herold?*
- MG:** The good *Herold* and there was [85]. I don't know where this one was printed.
- MM:** Now did you read those papers too I'll bet then, huh?
- MG:** Well yah after, you see I was young when English school started. So I didn't get any German schooling.
- MM:** Oh, you didn't.
- MG:** When we went a like Catechism, well then we went about two, two three weeks. But that's all we had in the Catechism there. And at that time it was German, but otherwise I didn't, we didn't have German schooling.
- MM:** So you didn't actually have formal German classes?
- MG:** No.
- MM:** Now where did you go for Catechism?
- MG:** When I went, we went to St. Anthony's. And it was seven miles and my older sister was supposed to a go for holy communion that year .So I had to walk with her, so we went in the morning we walked to St. Anthony's seven miles, and in the evening we walked back and we did that for two weeks. And then when I went a year later then some of my cousins and sometimes they had horses, then we went with the horses and sometimes we walked.
- MM:** Now would the sisters come out and teach the catechism, or who would be the teachers?
- MG:** No, when we walked to St. Anthony's there was an old priest Father Stephen Stanger [101], he wasn't so old but he looked kind of old yet such a [102] and all he would asked a few questions and then till noon then we walked home again. There wasn't much education, and later on when me and my cousins went then there was school downstairs St. Anthony's. And then they had a man teacher there, then we had more schooling, more education but not in, not much in German writing.
- MM:** So how many, how many months of the year did you go to school then?
- MG:** Oh just two weeks, just two or three weeks.
- MM:** for the Catechism?
- MG:** for the catechism.

- MM:** But what about the schooling? Was it about six months or nine months?
- MG:** No, I guess the schooling in the English it was about, maybe when it was the grandfather's house, maybe it was three months that we got the teacher out. Well then later, later years, a school house was built. It was about a mile and a half from our home. And then, then we got a teacher out maybe five months. but not seven months.
- MM:** Usually about five months?
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** And then you'd walk to school?
- MG:** Oh yah. yah. In the winter time but then we didn't have the over shoes like they have now, and not those, those clothing that they have now.
- MM:** When you were at school when you started going to the country school, how old were you then after , from when you went to school at grandpa's house?
- MG:** Well, I really can't recall when the schoolhouse was built. Well as long as we had, they had school there in the house, grandfather's house, well the next year I was 5. I don't know how many two three years I guess we had school and then they rotated to another family. [122] then there was a month at their house, and then maybe two three years then the schoolhouse was built. Then we went to the schoolhouse.
- MM:** So you started school early?
- MG:** Yah, but I think I didn't learn anything in those days.
- MM:** I see. Did you like to read? Did you learn to read, like to read books?
- MG:** Yah, I like to read books, I like to read.
- MM:** When you went to school, the country school, did the children have chores to do besides learning, they'd have chores?
- MG:** Yes. Yes, they all had to do chores in the morning before they went to school. We had to do the milking, after got, got over. Well I had older ones than I was and we had to do the milking in the morning, we had to fee chickens, cattle, well my older sister she never had seen a schoolhouse on the inside, she never came, she never get to go to school in English. But she could write English, and she could read English, she could read all the newspapers and everything she wanted to read. But she never got to go to school.
- MM:** Did she learn on her own?
- MG:** Well I guess when the other ones went to school, and they came home and my folks had a teacher to board, and I think that's where she learned then more talk English.
- MM:** Well that's wonderful. So they learned on their own too.
- MG:** Yah, yah.

- MM:** And then you went to school up through the 8th grade about, huh?
- MG:** I think that I went to the 5th grade.
- MM:** 5th grade?
- MG:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** Then you had to stay home and work on the farm?
- MG:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** How many were in your family, Magdalena? how many brothers and sisters did you have?
- MG:** That I had?
- MM:** Yes, in you family.
- MG:** I had two brothers and I had three sisters.
- MM:** Six all together in the family?
- MG:** Six all together, yah.
- MM:** And how many are in your family? How many sons and daughters did you have?
- MG:** Well I have ten boys and three girls living.
- MM:** You had thirteen children?
- MG:** I have thirteen living.
- MM:** And how many did you have all together?
- MG:** Three of them died in infant, but thirteen are living.
- MM:** So you had, you were, you had a total of sixteen children?
- MG:** I had sixteen children.
- MM:** And you married, what year?
- MG:** 1922.
- MM:** 1922, and your husband's name?
- MG:** Was John, John Gross.
- MM:** John Gross, ah huh.
- MG:** And then I, he there was a Church in Napoleon, then he said, now we were talking OK, we get married on the 13th of November and said that's an unlucky day. The 13th is unlucky. But we got married on the 13th and we have thirteen children alive, and they are all pretty well taken care of.
- MM:** So maybe it wasn't all that unlucky?

- MG:** So it wasn't unlucky.
- MM:** So you got married on the 13th of November of what years?
- MG:** 1922.
- MM:** 1922. But did you folks ever talk about the old country?
- MG:** Not too much. All mother would say like what it was the church was in one end of the village, and the schoolhouse and but not really, and they had that land out in the, they live in a Dorf and they had the land was out and they had to go out in the fields.
- MM:** Right. So when they came to, out here in Logan and Emmons Counties when they had to live way out there all alone, that was hard for them?
- MG:** It was hard for them, yah. That's what I always thought, we always talk about how that must have been when they got away from that village, from the Dorf where so many people were, and then lived out in the country no trees, no nothing they had an house, nice gardens there and when they came over, they came over in [165] my dad did. Then it was a drive, people were out digging rocks. Then the wintertime you would think that it's frozen but it hasn't rain for so long. And then my grandfather said about that it never rain in American, I think a he thinks it never rains. So that fall up there in Steele they had good harvest. So he walked to Steele to help the [171] I don't know if you know what [171] is. And then after that was all done he walked home again.
- MM:** That was a long way.
- MG:** Yah, down to Hake, it was four miles northeast of Hake, yah. Yah, then the next summer it didn't rain either. Then he walked up to Steele and he took the train to Portland, Oregon and there he started to pour the sidewalks with the wheelbarrow and then he helped, and that's what he did then over there in Portland, Oregon. And then it started to rain and then my grandfather I suppose they wrote him a letter whatever, so he came home again.
- MM:** And grandma stayed home.
- MG:** Well they wasn't married then.
- MM:** Oh I see he was a young boy yet.
- MG:** That was before they got married.
- MM:** Oh, I see. So he went out and worked in Portland for a while.
- MG:** Yah. For about, it would start raining North Dakota, and then he came back again and then when they want to get married there was no priest around. They had to go to Fort Yates.
- MM:** This was about what year? It was before 1900, I bet.
- MG:** Yah, Yah that was before...now I cannot tell you...
- MM:** We can find that in the book.
- MG:** Yah, it's in the book.

- MM:** Right. So they went over to Fort Yates, huh?
- MG:** But they had to wait until the river was frozen over.
- MM:** Yes.
- MG:** Cause they couldn't get over. So they had to wait until January the river was frozen before they could go and then of course they went over there one day, I think they took their attendants along, whatever it was they had to have, bridesmaid. The next day they got married and the next day they had their honeymoon, and that was their honeymoon.
- MM:** There wasn't too much of a honeymoon.
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** And so they raised six children?
- MG:** They had, they had more. Four of them died, two of them died in diphtheria that was in 1800 yes and later on after me there was two more that died. So there was ten of them.
- MM:** And six lived.
- MG:** Yah, and six lived.
- MM:** Did they ever get homesick? You think your mom got homesick for the old country?
- MG:** I suppose they got sick, homesick a lot of times, yah. But, but her parents came over and her sisters and brothers they came over. But then they moved to Canada then, they were not too long in North Dakota.
- MM:** You never got to know those Schmaltz's, huh?
- MG:** Yes, we get to know them, all of them. Mother's brother came down a few times and later years me and my husband drove to [208] and Calgary. I knew all the Schmaltz's then.
- MM:** Did your folks, when they came over to America, you know with their parents, did they learn Russian too, did they know Russian language already?
- MG:** Oh yah. Before they came over they knew.
- MM:** They could speak Russian, huh?
- MG:** Yah, yah. Yah.
- MM:** Did you ever hear them speak Russian?
- MG:** Well I didn't hear them when they talked together, then they talked German, but I suppose they could've talked.
- MM:** And of course when you were in the home, you always spoke German only, right?
- MG:** I always spoke German, yah.
- MM:** Your ma, was she a pretty good cook?
- MG:** Yes.

MM: Did you learn how to cook from your ma?

MG: Yah, Yah.

MM: She did a lot of cooking, a lot of canning?

MG: Well yah, those earlier there wasn't this canning done. Yah, later on yah. I did a lot of canning. Now in those days they didn't, those earlier years they didn't can because we didn't have those jars.

MM: What did they do in those early years, remember when you were a child, what did they do to keep things cold like a refrigerator, they didn't have refrigerators, what did they do for that? How did they keep things cold?

MG: Well, like the milk and the grain we put in the 3 gallon can and put a rope on those wells they had, they were duck wells then there was a box, and then the milk then we put, hang it with a rope, hang it down in the water, the water was cold.

MM: Yes way down.

MG: Way down, then we had to pull it up again.

MM: Did your folks have a wooden house?

MG: Yah.

MM: You remember? It was still a wood house, it wasn't a sod house.

MG: Yah, I don't remember the sod house. I can't remember the old, I just can't remember the sod house.

MM: But as far as you can remember, you always had a wood house?

MG: Yah.

MM: What about to keep that house warm, what did they use? Coal? Those early years.

MG: Yah, if you had coal, yah.

MM: And if they didn't then what?

MG: Well then we had manure.

MM: Do you remember making some of that manure, cow mist.

MG: Yah I remember that. I remember that real well when I was married. We still made those.

MM: You still made those?

MG: Oh yah.

MM: How did they make that? How did they, what was, how did they make it so that it was usable?

MG: Well in the wintertime, you had the horses and the cattle in the barn, and then you hauled it on a pile outside, and then in the springtime you spread it out maybe a foot and a half deep, then you ran it with the horses. You put some horses on and make them go around and around and so its, then after it was nice and tramped down hard and then you took your spade and you cut squares. About a foot. Then it

was set up in little piles and then later on after it was a little dry then you set down on bigger piles, when it was dry then you put it up on big stack. Until the time you had to carry it in.

MM: So they always would make sure that they had enough so that it would last for the winter?

MG: Yes, Yes.

MM: What about a summer kitchen? Did your folks have a summer kitchen?

MG: Yah, they had a summer kitchen, yah.

MM: And there was a lot of things done out there, they do the cooking out there in the summertime.

MG: In the summertime, yah. Then the house was nice and cool, yah.

MM: What about one of those root cellars? Did they have one of those root cellars? Do you remember those old root cellars they used to have? Where they'd put the meat and so forth in?

MG: Yah, they had yah. O.k. they had a root cellar and then later on they made ice. They dug out a bowl and because they'd just leave, leave beside the Beaver Creek and then in the winter time they made ice and put it in, in what they called the ice cellar. Put it in, put straw then we had ice also along.

MM: Oh, they'd put it way down below, they'd take it way down there so it would stay nice and cold?

MG: Yah, they made a hole. Beside the hill there was close, to our hill then they made the hole and then they put ice in and put straw on it. Then in the summertime we always had ice then.

MM: That would stay for a long time?

MG: Oh yah. If it was pat good it lasted till it froze again in the winter time.

MM: Is that right. So that must have pretty deep though?

MG: Well, yah.

MM: And your, did your folks do a lot of butchering too?

MG: Yes.

MM: Do you remember how, I suppose you had to help with that butchering too, didn't you?

MG: Well, the fall time, yah. They butchered the hogs and take a fifty gallon barrel and make a salt rind with the hams and everything in there and then when it's salt enough and then they smoked it and then it was hanged out in the shed. Then that last till everything was gone.

MM: There was always enough food at your house?

MG: There was always enough food, yah.

MM: There was never a shortage of food?

MG: No.

MM: And your ma did a lot of baking too?

- MG:** She did a lot of baking, yes.
- MM:** Your ma, do you think your ma had to work real hard in the house?
- MG:** Well yah, but she had to work outside too.
- MM:** She did?
- MG:** She did a lot of outside, yah.
- MM:** What kind of work did she have to do outside?
- MG:** Well, when it was harvest time, she had to go out inspect the heather. The grains stacks, when they had it. Yah, that's what she did.
- MM:** Did you go out and help too?
- MG:** Yes, I did a lot outside work. And they always planted so much corn, in the fall we had to go out and pick the corn but then we didn't have cloths to put them on or if we had a cloth they would tear so fast. Then in the evening we put it in a shed, all the corn picked in daytime at the evening we had to sit down and husk it. Then they had the barn which they just called for it was just for the corn. And it had to be carried out to the barn and the corn straw had to be carried out to the, for the cattle. We had a lot of corn, as long as I was home.
- MM:** And you of course, your ma would do a lot of baking and so forth besides all the housework and now with the Christmas Season, was Christmas a pretty big event at your house.
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** How did they celebrate Christmas, Magdalena, those early years? Do you remember that? What was Christmas like if you had to go back and think about Christmas way back when you were a child?
- MG:** Well, I can't remember much what we had, but I know there was always Christmas. There was always like candy and stuff like that, but now there's so much, so many varieties. Those days there were nuts and stuff like that and candy, but now there's...
- MM:** And did, would each child get a gift? A small little gift?
- MG:** I don't know, the gifts weren't too much when I was small. Well maybe a doll, a little doll or something like that.
- MM:** But then, but would Santa Claus come too then?
- MG:** [306] came
- MM:** [306] came
- MG:** [306]
- MM:** And who, and of course the kids would always wait for him?
- MG:** The kids always for [308] to come and they had to be good, or [309] doesn't bring anything.
- MM:** Course your remember that and then of course the angels would come too?

- MG:** No. There were no angels.
- MM:** No angels?
- MG:** No.
- MM:** And the [312] would come with the sleigh I suppose and the horses, huh?
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** And go from farm to farm.
- MG:** Yah, yah. That's what they did yah.
- MM:** And then was there, did you have a lot of singing too at Christmas time? Did you do a lot of singing in your house at home?
- MG:** No, not too much. Not too much.
- MM:** Not too much singing, huh? What about the church, did you learn how to sing in church, a lot of singing in church?
- MG:** Well, yah, we always had so far to go. Either go to St. Anthony's, that was seven miles and to St. Eloise you said was ten miles. So we always went to church, but now like Christmas night or something like that I know this wasn't done.
- MM:** What about New Year's? How did they celebrate New Years? Was it anything special for New Year's Eve?
- MG:** Well, yah New Year's Eve some of the men and boys went around with a sleigh from house to house and sang Happy New Year whatever, so they go the [327] and something to eat.
- MM:** They'd go knock on the door and greet everyone for a happy New Year?
- MG:** Yah, Yah.
- MM:** When you said [329], I wonder did your folks make some of that wedding whiskey and some of the, did they make their own wine or their whiskey or anything like that or beer?
- MG:** Well, later on beer was made, but not in my time. Later on after, after I was married then there was some, then when they started making beer. I think you know about, I think you remember that. I can't remember that. Well, they makes the brandy, but later on after I was married they started making this booze when they started making whiskey.
- MM:** When you got married, where did you get married, Magdalena? What church?
- MG:** [342] St. Joseph's church was built that was only half a mile from my folk's place, see and before St. Joseph's was built we had to go to St. Anthony's and that was seven miles, that were I walked and I went to first Holy Communion.
- MM:** So you got married at St. Anthony's?
- MG:** No, then I got married in St. Joseph's, see St. Joseph's was built in 16 and I got married '22.
- MM:** Now when you got married in 1922, did you have quite a big wedding?

- MG:** Now it was just in the house, my folk's house.
- MM:** Just a small little wedding.
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** What about dances when you were growing up as a teenager, for entertainment, was there much entertainment or was it pretty much staying home and working?
- MG:** I never went to, there was a lot of barn dances, but we never had to go to the barn dances. We never went, I mean, folks didn't want us to go and so, well we had entertainment.
- MM:** What did you do for entertainment, like or course they'd celebrate those names days right.
- MG:** Well, but as long as I was at home, I mean, I didn't join those names days.
- MM:** You were too young.
- MG:** Yah, then there was, then there was, well there was names days too. Those people didn't celebrate [369] they celebrated names days.
- MM:** Yes.
- MG:** Then after I was married then there was a lot of names days. Yah, a lot of them.
- MM:** So they celebrate those name days, they'd come out to the farm, for each holiday.
- MG:** For each names day, yah. Yah, like today St. John's, so the sisters counted all the Johns 'cause we always have coffee out here and toast in the morning or rolls. Then she counted all the Johns that are here and then she sang Happy Names Day to those Johns.
- MM:** Oh, that was nice. Because they don't celebrate those names like they used to, times have all changed.
- MG:** It's all gone.
- MM:** Now was Easter celebrated any special way?
- MG:** No I don't think so.
- MM:** Easter wasn't anything. In your home Magdalena, I have a feeling that the church and the religion was quite important.
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** So you had to have your prayers each evening?
- MG:** Yes, yah. Had to pray, before you go to bed, had to pray.
- MM:** And was the Bible important too?
- MG:** No not with us kids. No, well we had the Lord of the Catechism, see the catechism was the biggest Bible so the catechism, yah those prayers in there. There's a lot of them which I know now which ah, yah.
- MM:** Now when you were growing up, of course there was no electricity, so you had to use those kerosene lamps, right?

- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** You remember all that, taking care of those kerosene lamps?
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** And then of course there was no radio either, huh?
- MG:** No.
- MM:** Do you remember the first time you heard a radio? Were you married by then?
- MG:** Oh, yes.
- MM:** I bet that was interesting when they heard the first radio.
- MG:** Yep, at [410] has a radio.
- MM:** Who was that?
- MG:** Park Wilky.
- MM:** He had a radio?
- MG:** Yah, then word came out that Park Wilky has a radio, he can hear people, so a few men got together, I know my husband was along so they went to Park Wilky's to listen. Then they said somebody has phonograph or something. But they had to have those ear , those ear phones, they had to have, so they all couldn't hear at one time. Oh yah, that was something big, that radio.
- MM:** Now this Park Wilky , did he live on another farm? Nearby?
- MG:** Yah, it was about two miles from our place where we lived.
- MM:** This was in Logan County?
- MG:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** Near Napoleon?
- MG:** Well it was near to where St. Anthony's maybe, two miles from St. Anthony's west. Well yah, about to Napoleon it was about 18 miles I think yah.
- MM:** Well when he had this radio then, did the women go over too to hear what this was all about?
- MG:** No just the men went and wanted to listen if this is really something that you can hear all the people talk.
- MM:** And then what, what did they come home and say?
- MG:** Well, that was interesting but we couldn't, we didn't have radios then.
- MM:** So then fine you got one too in your house?
- MG:** Finally we got one with batteries. Till electric, but the electric didn't come till '49, 49-50.

- MM:** Was that late yes? [442]
- MG:** Yah, we didn't have electric lights or we had the kerosene light on the table. There was no radios, there was not TV, there was no telephone, there was there was no electric, there was not electric, we had to carry all the water in, and carry the slop out. And had to do the washing by hand and there was nothing.
- MM:** When you think back after all the conveniences, they have now?
- MG:** Oh my God.
- MM:** When you think of all those early days, huh?
- MG:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** It's hard to even, it's hard to even describe it right?
- MG:** Yes. Yes, we had, we had all those kids and a lot of time when the rain, we had a kerosene lamp standing on the table. That never anything happened, and we just had a small house, we had a two-room house. That's all we had.
- MM:** All you had, you mean your parent's you're talking about now?
- MG:** No, I'm talking about me.
- MM:** Oh your family, your own family.
- MG:** My own family.
- MM:** You only had a two-room house?
- MG:** Yeah, a little upstairs, that's all we had. Late on we build on, but that was only in, in '40 that we made two bedrooms. Before we didn't have bedrooms.
- MM:** Now did your children, some of your children go to country school?
- MG:** They all went to country school.
- MM:** They all went to country school?
- MG:** All went to country school.
- MM:** Now at the time when they started going to country school were there still just horses to then? Horse and buggy. Or did they walk to school or how did they get to school?
- MG:** When they started it was still, well they could, they could walk it was about a mile and a half when my kids started to go to school. But then, then it was the thirties, and then there was nothing, I mean they even didn't have shoes.
- MM:** You remember that?
- MG:** Why sure I remember that.
- MM:** Those though times in the thirties.
- MG:** Yes.

- MM:** And you had a number of children by then already.
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** Did you, how did you survive during that tough time? There was no crop no nothing, what did you do?
- MG:** Took, he took a load of grain over to [497] for flour, then we had a thousand pounds of flour. Then you bake bread three times a week, but not all then there was noodles. That's just about all there was. You didn't have much to eat, there wasn't all this varieties that they theses days.
- MM:** Was there, there wasn't enough meat around either?
- MG:** No. The butcher in the wintertime, but sometimes you didn't have, because you didn't feed to feed the hogs. So, yah.
- MM:** So those, those thirty, they call them the dirty thirties.
- MG:** The Dirty Thirties.
- MM:** But you survived them and you went on and made a better life for yourself right?
- MG:** Yes, yes.
- MM:** And when you think back to, when you think back to your folks coming over here, to this prairie land, and they broke the sod.
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** And of course they had, they had to use oxen.
- MG:** Yes, my dad had to haul the wheat to Eureka and he hauled it with oxen. Those first years when they came over and the oxen, they didn't have bridles, didn't have, he just said haw and chi. That's the way he told them to this way haw and that way chi. And they sat on the wagon and that's what they told me. And then he hauled wheat to Eureka, then he said in the evening he started because in the daytime then it was hot and when there was a water someplace and then the oxen would go into the water then he would sit on the wagon. so left in the evening and by morning he was down in Eureka then he fed them during the day and in the evening he went home again, because they knew the road going home.
- MM:** Of course, they'd go down to Eureka that was pretty important to got down to Eureka yeah, that's where they'd haul all that grain.
- MG:** Those days they'd haul the grain down there, yah. Those first years, yah.
- MM:** That's what your dad would tell you?
- MG:** Yah, yah.
- MM:** Course he was a young boy too, yeah? When he worked on his. ...
- MG:** Well he was married then.
- MM:** Oh he was married then.
- MG:** He was married then, yah. Yah.

- MM:** Do you remember when your were growing up, course by the time you married and so forth, do you ever remember going to those dances where Lawrence Welk would play?
- MG:** No. No. I didn't get to go there, but we had, when I was married we had a school mom to board, stayed at our place so Lawrence Welk would play a dance over in [568], so he came from Strasburg, and he stopped at our place and took that school mom along to [569]. And next time he took her along again.
- MM:** Who was that?
- MG:** Well, it was a school mom from St. Paul, but I can't recall her name.
- MM:** You called her school mom?
- MG:** That's what we called the school mom and then the next time we took her along then she found another guy over there, so she didn't go home with him anymore. So she married another guy then she, she was teaching school at our school hut she was staying at our place She hoarded at our place, and then in Christmas time she, she resigned. So she got married to that guy, but after she was married to that guy a few years then she divorced. Theo my husband said a lot of times, if she would've got married to Lawrence Welk, she probably...
- MM:** She would've been a lot better off.
- MM:** She probably would've been luckier.
- MM:** How old were you then, do you remember, when he would stop by the house?
- MG:** That was when I was married.
- MM:** Oh, when you were married
- MM:** When I was married
- MM:** So you remember that.
- MM:** Yeah, when I was married those things I can remember. Then Lawrence Welk would come from Strasburg and pick up the school mom and then over to [600].
- MM:** Well, what did he come, what kind of vehicle did he have at that time?
- MG:** Well I suppose he had the, what they called them one seated cars.
- End of side 1: counter 606 ---- Start side 2: reset counter to 000**
- MG:** Well, anyway he came and picked her up with an old car.
- MM:** But you can remember that yet?
- MG:** Well, yah, the school mom was staying at our place at my place, then he came and picked her up, yah.
- MM:** But you never went over to any of those dances, huh?
- MG:** No. No, we didn't, well then after we was married and then we had a family right away, there was, we didn't have time to got and we didn't have the money either.

- MM:** Yes, I'll bet. So you ah, then of course Lawrence left and went to South Dakota to WNEX, I suppose you could hear him on the radio once in a while.
- MG:** Well, later on. After we had radios and stuff like that, yah. But, after we were married we didn't any radio, no.
- MM:** I bet it was interesting too, the first time when the telephone came to the farm.
- MG:** Yeah.
- MM:** Remember that, when the first telephone.
- MG:** Yah, my dad, there's a lot of farmers down ther when they made a telephone on the fences. And then they could talk together, but after I was married we moved about two miles north of my folk's place then we didn't telephone until the right phone was set up. They had a telephone down there which they could talk together, but then when the fence torn down they had to go fix it again, but they used it.
- MM:** What about the TV, do you remember the first time TV came into your house?
- MG:** I remember that good, yah.
- MM:** Where was it? Were on the farm yet?
- MG:** Oh yah, oh yah, oh yah.
- MM:** What year was that about, Magdalena? When you had the first TV, in the fifties, middle fifties?
- MG:** Well, when the TV's come out?
- MM:** Well, the first TV was about 1953, and early '53 when TV came to North Dakota.
- MG:** See and the first one we didn't have.
- MM:** A little later, huh?
- MG:** Yah, we had it a little later, the first that they had, the neighbors had TV already before we had one.
- MM:** So you'd go over there and look once in while?
- MG:** Yah, yah. The kids would've liked it then OK then we drove to the neighbors we could see the wrestling or whatever and well then finally we bought one too but not the first ones, we didn't have the first ones.
- MM:** But I bet that was interesting too, first to look in that box and what was going on there, too.
- MG:** Yah, yah, that was interesting yah.
- MM:** What about movies? Did you ever get to the movies when you were a child?
- MG:** No. No.
- MM:** No movies?
- MG:** No. We were too far from town.
- MM:** You were too far from town, yes. What about later on then?

MG: No I never got to a movie.

MM: Never got to a movie.

MG: I never got to a movie. No.

MM: But you'd find, they'd find some entertainment even though they were way out in the country. Did you play a lot of cards?

MG: Yah, yah, we played a lot of cards or when we was younger we played baseball or my kids and the neighbor kids then they played baseball and in the summertime they went to the beaver creek and took baths, swim. Wintertime they went skating, they always were together, those cousins.

MM: Get together and make the best of it, right?

MG: Yes, summertime we had ice, then after I was married I mean, not in the thirties we didn't have any but later on. And we had ice and the neighbors had ice, and then they made ice cream in the summertime, and we made ice cream, that was made a lot of times.

MM: That was a special treat I bet.

MG: It was, yah.

MM: Yah, those early years, and then thinking that you were raising that family and in those thirties, that was tough.

MG: That was tough, yah. But we all survived so far.

MM: When you think back again to that time when you were growing up and of course you were with your grandpa going into that school, and the home in the school, what do you think about sometimes when you're alone, thinking about those early years?

MG: Yah, when grandfather, he had a big kitchen and then they made a curtain, they'd throw a curtain, and the table was this side. OK then we came, but then there were only five kids. But being there disturbed grandpa, see but he, he was for education, my grandpa was for education. And yah if you think back how what they went through yah, and all those kids come in with wet over shoes and grandma had to clean up after we were gone again I think.

MM: And then of course you went on and you made sure your children became educated, too.

MG: Yes, but that was a few of them like Matt didn't have high school, John didn't have high school, Elizabeth didn't have high school, and Andrew didn't have high school. And then Andy didn't have high school but I had five boys in the army. And then when they came back, then they went well John didn't, then they went, well Andrew didn't go to school then he didn't have high school. Then he went to Bismarck and he start working, then he took schooling [72] after he was married he had a good job, a government job then he moved to Atlanta, Georgia. He retired now.

MM: When did you leave the farm? What year did you leave the farm, Magdalena?

MG: In 1970.

MM: 1970. Did you move to Napoleon?

- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** Your husband of course was still living.
- MG:** Yah.
- MM:** And then you moved to Napoleon where there still any children at home yet then?
- MG:** Well 78 was home and he still home. He still alone.
- MM:** Is he on the farm?
- MG:** He's on the farm.
- MM:** He's on the farmstead. So it's been kept in the in the Gross family all these years?
- MG:** All those years, yah.
- MM:** So you moved to town to Napoleon in 1970, and then you left Napoleon in what year?
- MG:** In '90.
- MM:** 1990.
- MG:** January 1990, we went to Bismarck.
- MM:** You moved to Bismarck and here you are at the Marrilac Center.
- MG:** And I'm glad I moved, cause I don't have to go outside.
- MM:** Yes, the cold, especially on these cold winter days.
- MG:** I go to Mass every morning and I go to play cards every evening.
- MM:** You play cards in the evening.
- MG:** Every evening we go out there where those tables are.
- MM:** What cards do you play, what kind of card games?
- MG:** Well, usually pinochle.
- MM:** Oh, you're a pretty good pinochle player.
- MG:** I pretty good pinochle player.
- MM:** Are there some other good ones in here.
- MG:** Some of them are good, there's some of them are real good some of them are slower, but that o.k.
- MM:** Are there a lot of German Russian people, German people in here?
- MG:** There's quite a few, that Germans.
- MM:** Do they speak German?
- MG:** A lot of them speak German that are in here.

- MM:** Like when you're alone, Magdalena, do you speak as much German as English or more English out here?
- MG:** No, we speak German like my son was here, well we talk German.
- MM:** Oh yes, uh huh.
- MG:** All my children when they come then we talk German.
- MM:** Now your children can all speak German?
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** Oh that's wonderful. Can their, what about their, what about their children, your grandchildren?
- MG:** Oh, they, some understand, son try just for fun of it to say a word or two. But, uh, one of my eldest son, his oldest son he went to, he took up German, school. But then this is so different...
- MM:** Type of German.
- MG:** Yes then he doesn't understand what we have talked about.
- MM:** I see, yes.
- MG:** Then if he talks I don't understand him either. So he and my youngest son went to Germany so he got along real good with those Germans. See, some of Germany some speak the language as we have to may son Leo he got along with pretty good. But some don't speak it like we do then my grandson he got along with them, because he can talk German but it's a different.
- MM:** How many grandchildren do you have Magdalena?
- MG:** I have 56.
- MM:** 56 grandchildren and great-grandchildren?
- MG:** Well, there coming along I think there's about 84 now.
- MM:** Great grandchildren?
- MG:** Yeah.
- MM:** And are you a great-great grandmother?
- MG:** Yeah, I got one.
- MM:** One great-great grandmother.
- MG:** One great-great, then I said I'm glad maybe I have to die and didn't have the great-great now I have one.
- MM:** Wonderful, well I think it's so wonderful at your age that you're so sharp and remember all that cause you said "Well I'm not going to remember all those early years" but it comes back a little bit, those early school years and so forth.
- MG:** Yeah, but still there's a lot of things I do not remember, yah. Well before you ask if I were outside as long as I was at home.

- MM:** Yes.
- MG:** See, my dad had a dredge machine, the snow blower, the straw blower, it was a blower. See the straw blowers down, I don't know if you ever saw threshing.
- MM:** How did they do that? Tell me how that done in those early years.
- MG:** I mean, did you ever saw a thresh machine.
- MM:** Oh, yes, uh huh.
- MG:** OK then it was just a straw leather then the straw just fell down it didn't blow it out. Then when I was young then they put me in the straw pile. Those years they had to [132] the straw.
- MM:** It had to be stamped down.
- MG:** Yeah, then you had to be on them and make a stack to put the rakes over. Only my stick would have to move the thresh machine if he wouldn't make because it would get full and then you had to make, that's what they did with me we I was younger. Got in the straw pile.
- MM:** I forgot to ask you, did you, you know the town was far away, but once in a while you got to go to town? Did you get to go to town to take the grain into town?
- MG:** Yes, my mother usually hauled the grain and then once in a while, well then she had to go with two wagons, then they'd put me in one wagon, then I had one team and she had one team. My mother usually hauled the grain to Napoleon. That was, was about twenty-two miles.
- MM:** That was a long trip.
- MG:** Yah, a lot of times my mother went alone.
- MM:** Oh my.
- MG:** A lot of times I went along.
- MM:** Did she come back the same day too?
- MG:** Yes, we came back the same day, yah
- MM:** It got dark I bet sometimes.
- MG:** Sometimes, yah.
- MM:** Then they'd pick up some groceries and so forth?
- MG:** Yah. Eat something, yah.
- MM:** Did you remember like making your own soap?
- MG:** Yes, I made my own soap.
- MM:** How did you make that soap?
- MG:** Yes, I made my own soap.

- MM:** How did you make that soap?
- MG:** When I was married, but my mother made it too at home. We made soap.
- MM:** How would they make that soap?
- MG:** Well, you had some old grease or from the, if you put your [154] if you put your, then you saved every little bit of grease and had to put in it and made some soaps, was done.
- MM:** That was good soap too, wasn't it?
- MG:** It was strong.
- MM:** The clothes were real white with that soap.
- MG:** Yeah, but you had to stand there with a washboard, and wash it like that.
- MM:** Oh yes. But where did they get the water from?
- MG:** They had to carry it in.
- MM:** They had a well.
- MG:** Yeah, they had to carry it in from the well. Oh yeah, but as long as I was at home my mother didn't have the washing machine. After I left she didn't have the washing machine.
- MM:** It was all done by hand.
- MG:** It was all done by hand, and after I was married I didn't have the washing machine I think, [38] we bought a washing machine with a motor, electric, not need electric motor, it was a gas motor. Till, the electric came then we bought, no I didn't have an automatic no, when I moved to town I didn't have the automatic washer. We still had that gas motor machine.
- MM:** Until 1970?
- MG:** Yes.
- MM:** Course there was no electricity, so you had to use gas, those early years.
- MG:** Yeah, but those early years we didn't have, I wash it by hand. I wash all my wash by hand. And with all those kids I washed a lot, and had to carry the water in, there was no push button. There were no pampers like they have now.
- MM:** Oh I'm sure of that.
- MG:** No pampers, no push button.
- MM:** Did you ever celebrate the Fourth of July? I forgot to ask you that. Did they have a little Fourth of July celebration?
- MG:** Yeah, there was, well usually, I think that as long as I was at home we went to [183] with my brother, we went to [183] on the Fourth of July. And then after we were married, my sisters and my brothers they all lived so close, so we always got together for the Fourth of July, and after the kids got a little bigger then everybody bought something then went together and then we, didn't go to town with the kids.

- MM:** You stayed at home?
- MG:** We stayed at home, we went to one place, then each one bought something then we celebrated the Fourth of July at home.
- MM:** Were those church holidays pretty important, too? Some of those church holidays?
- MG:** Oh yah, oh yah, they were important, yah?
- MM:** What were some of those days, Magdalena?
- MG:** Well there was St. Anthony's that was the 13th of July, and then there was Strasburg, Peter and Paul was the 29th of August, then there was August 15th was St. Mary's [198].
- MM:** You'd go down to those different places then?
- MG:** Yah, if you knew, if you had friends there, and we went there to their friends, yah.
- MM:** Did you get down to Strasburg very often?
- MG:** Not too often.
- MM:** And of course you were raised in a big family too.
- MG:** Yeah.
- MM:** We're going to end our conversation today, it's the 27th December 1993 and it was a real pleasure, Magdalena, to visit with you, I think we had a wonderful conversation and would you like to share any final words with the people?
- MG:** Well, I know I don't have my English to be, then people laugh at me if I talk into the machine, but it's all I can say I mean I never learned it better .
- MM:** Well I think your English is very good and we'll, we're so grateful that you're family all the children can speak both languages English and German because that's very important for them to keep the German language in today's society.
- MG:** They all can do that, talk German, and now Father Richard had gone to Siberia a few years ago and he speaks some Russian now.
- MM:** Oh man.
- MG:** He learned some Russian.
- MM:** And Brother Placid was just gone too right?
- MG:** Yah, well this year he went to the Holy Land, to Jerusalem. But he was in Germany last year.
- MM:** And we're so pleased that the family has taken such an interest in preserving their heritage cause it's very important that the Gross family and other families help us in preserving this history and culture of the Germans from Russia and I want to thank you Magdalena and your children for helping us preserve this heritage for North Dakota and for all of us. So I'm going to close our conversation today on the 27th of December 1993. Thanks so much Magdalena.

MG: Well, thank you and today is St. John's Day, so it would've been John's names day.

MM: Yes your husband's names day and you would've had a big celebration I'm sure years ago.