

# NDSU GERMANS FROM RUSSIA HERITAGE COLLECTION

## Interview with Sister Alene Kuhn (AK)

Conducted by Betty and Chris Maier (BM & CM)

July 27, 1998

School Sisters of Notre Dame, Mankato, Minnesota

Transcription by Joy H. Stefan

Edited by Mary Lynn Axtman

**BM:** Today's date is July 27, 1998. I am Betty Maier, volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection at North Dakota State University Libraries in Fargo, North Dakota, and it is a pleasure to have with me Sister Alene Kuhn. We are in Mankato, Minnesota, at the Good Counsel, which is the School of the Sisters of Notre Dame. We are going to talk with Sister about being a Catholic Nun and we are also going to talk to her about being a German from Russia person. Her family came from Russia. I'm going to ask you some of the very simple questions first, Sister. What is your name?

**AK:** Sister Alene Kuhn, SSND [School Sisters of Notre Dame].

**BM:** Okay. Is that your name that you were born with?

**AK:** No. I was baptized Francis. I got the name of my mother who was also Francis, so my mother and I were always very close.

**BM:** What was the date of your birth?

**AK:** August 15, 1925.

**BM:** Oh, so you're going to have a birthday pretty soon.

**AK:** Yes I am.

**BM:** Were you born in a hospital or at home or...

**AK:** At home. With a midwife.

**BM:** At home with a midwife. Do you remember that midwife's name?

**AK:** I don't, I'm sorry.

[there are a couple of skips in the tape]

**BM:** Where were you born, what area?

**AK:** Hague, North Dakota.

**BM:** On a farm?

**AK:** No, we always lived close to the church, wherever we were. This church was called St. Aloysius. My dad...

[more skips in the tape]

**AK:** He was born in Russia, in the city of Strasburg, state of Odessa, and the country of course was Russia.

**BM:** What was your mother's name?

**AK:** Francis Stroh.

**BM:** And where was she born?

**AK:** She was born in Cando.

**BM:** Do you know what her father's name was?

**AK:** Yes, Martin Stroh.

**BM:** And do you know what her mother's name was?

**AK:** Magdalena.

**BM:** Do you know her mother's maiden name?

**AK:** It was Schmaltz.

**BM:** Oh. How many brothers and sisters did you have in your family?

**AK:** Ten.

**BM:** How many brothers?

**AK:** Three.

**BM:** And seven sisters then. What order of birth were you in your family?

**AK:** I was the tenth. I have one younger sister, Lucille.

**BM:** And were there other family members who joined the religious life?

**AK:** Yes. Yes, three of my older sisters were School Sisters of Notre Dame when I entered, and now Sister Mary Ann Wilder, who is my sister, is a Benedictine in Bismarck, North Dakota.

**BM:** Did your parents give you support in entering the sisterhood?

**AK:** Yes, they did. We were a family who prayed together a lot. We had a lot of fun too. But as long as I can remember, my mom and dad went to mass every day, and when we were old enough and we didn't have to go to school, we would tag along. Somehow we loved to pray. We prayed morning and evening prayers together. We always prayed at meals; during Advent and Lent we would pray the rosary together, and it was always a special time. And yes, they were proud of us. Although, when I entered, I was the forth one to become a School Sister of Notre Dame, I had received a scholarship and my dad thought I should accept that scholarship rather than enter the candidature at age 17. So he said to me,

"stay home and accept that scholarship. I'll buy you a piano." And I said, "that's okay, Dad. I don't really want a piano. I think I would rather enter." With all my friends and classmates... there were 23 of us that entered at the time I entered.

**BM:** So you had some influence then, into going into the religious life. Was the local church of any role in your going in?

**AK:** Yes, our pastors were always very, very nice. Very good friends of the family. I remember a Father Griederhold [063] who was just very, very nice. And my family talks about others that I really didn't know. They were all very wonderful. They would write us recommendations and...

**BM:** Did you go to a Catholic school?

**AK:** Well I went to public grade school, of course because there was no Catholic school where we grew up in North Dakota, but I went to Good Counsel Academy for my 4 years of high school, and then I went on to the diocent [070] and teachers college in St. Paul to get my teacher's certificate. Then I graduated from St. Catherines; I got my BA there. Then I went on to St. Thomas for my MA in administration, plus I became a principal then. I'm really fortunate; I'm very grateful to the Sisters of Notre Dame for my great education.

**BM:** I guess I didn't understand where you went to high school.

**AK:** Good Counsel Academy. That was right here [076].

**BM:** Oh, right here.

**AK:** We had this academy for many, many years, and many of us School Sisters of Notre Dame are graduates of Good Counsel. Everyone in this area knows about Good Counsel Academy. It is now Loyola High School, a coed school. It used to be just for girls when I went here. I graduated back in '43, so it's a long time ago.

**BM:** Well, it doesn't seem that long ago, I bet. When you were deciding on the religious life at an early age, did you ever consider some of the things you'd be leaving behind?

**AK:** Oh yes. I thought about it, but it didn't seem to matter that much. It seemed like from the time I can remember, I always wanted to be a Sister, regardless of what anybody else did. My younger sister, Lucille, and I were extremely close. People would ask us, what are you going to be when you grow up? I'd always say, "I'm going to be a nun," and my sister would always say, "I'm going to be a mommy." And she was.

**BM:** Three beautiful girls. What age did you enter the convent, then?

**AK:** I was 17. We entered the end of July and I turned 18 in August. So I was close to 18.

**BM:** So how far away from your parent's home were you?

**AK:** About 500 miles.

**BM:** Do you remember when you left your home and moved here?

**AK:** Very well. Yes, I remember it very well. I had, of course, been gone for the four years of high school, but we always got to go back home. So when I entered the candidature, as we called it then, it was kind of final, and I was extremely lonesome. But they called me and then Dad came with one of the families from Napoleon because they had a little boy 16 or so who had cancer and they didn't know just how to get to Rochester. So Dad came with them and drove them to Rochester and left them there, and then came on to Mankato to visit with me as postulant. That helped a lot to have him with me a couple of days. I had a picture of that. I should have brought that along.

**BM:** Were your other sisters here with you at any time?

**AK:** Yes, Sister Dora was up here in the laundry, and that helped a lot too. I could see her. She was here when I was here in high school, also. So that did help a lot. But still, you know we were kind of removed from the Sisters when we were in formation, so we didn't get to see them all the time because we were with our class. We had a good class. But it did help to have Sister Dora here. She was just a real sweetheart and always so kind and loving. We had, well we still do... we have a very loving family. We're very close. We still get together whenever we can.

**BM:** Did you experience any differences in cultures when you got here? For example, coming from a loving family, a family from Hague, North Dakota, to this environment?

**AK:** Actually I think while I was in high school, I probably noticed it more. Because in our public schools back home in North Dakota there were like all grades in one school, a one little schoolhouse. We had good teachers but it wasn't the same. I didn't feel bad, and my eight years of education were as good as some of my classmates. But somehow I caught up very quickly. I loved to go to school and I loved to study. God was good to me, so I didn't have a hard time, but I did notice it when I first came. They used to make remarks about North Dakota, but we'd laugh about it and I'd always say, "when you say North Dakota, you all have to bow," so we would laugh about it. But I think some of them kind of thought North Dakota was way out someplace. And they used to tease me about the one tree in the middle of North Dakota, and I'd say, "oh, but it's such a beautiful tree, and you get to see all the beautiful sunsets and sunrises." We used to just watch for those. We loved nature, because you were so close to nature in North Dakota.

**BM:** You get to appreciate it, don't you. What was a typical daily schedule at the convent when you entered?

**AK:** Okay. We'd always get up in the morning, rather early, about 6:00. Then we'd of course get ready and then we'd have what we called meditation. We'd pray, and somebody would read from some scripture book or scripture, and then we'd meditate and pray over that. Then we'd always have mass, of course, which has always been very important in my life. I still appreciate mass very, very much. It's the most important part of any day in my life. And then we'd go to school. When we were postulants, we had like our first year of college right here in the Mother House. We called it Mount Airy Extension, and then summers I would go to school in St. Paul to get my degrees and my teacher's certificate. We'd have, of course, our meals and many times in between our studies we would do manual work, like we'd go to the laundry and help with the clothes there... the mangling and the ironing and the folding. We'd go to the gardens and pick vegetables. We used to have large gardens. And we would do a lot of scrubbing. We didn't have any kind of lay help at that time as we do now. We would scrub floors, we would wash windows... but we always had a great time.

- BM:** So you learned how to keep house too, then.
- AK:** Well, actually, I learned that at home.
- BM:** Oh, did you.
- AK:** We didn't have a lot of money, but our home was always very clean. And Mom was an excellent cook. She taught all the girls how to cook, except I never learned too much about cooking. I guess I left too early or something, and I've never really had a chance to do a lot of cooking in the convent. But my sisters were all what we call House Sisters, so they were excellent cooks, all three of them.
- BM:** Were there things in the convent that you were encouraged to do? Were there some things that you were not encouraged to do?
- AK:** Well, we were encouraged to do, of course, the usual things that somebody who is aspiring to be a School Sister of Notre Dame... like our studies, our prayer life. We were encouraged to have recreation. What we called getting together, visiting, taking walks... we'd walk to the cemetery. We would walk downtown, down our 217 steps and back up. We were encouraged to do just the ordinary things that somebody would do that's aspiring to be a School Sister of Notre Dame. What we were not encouraged to do... let me think... I can't remember. I guess I always thought everything was going well, so I...
- BM:** So you saw no things that you weren't supposed to do.
- AK:** Well, actually, I used to behave quite well, so I never was corrected for a whole lot of things I was doing that I wasn't supposed to do. So I really don't know what we weren't supposed to do.
- BM:** Did you communicate with your family?
- AK:** Yes, we were able to write to them quite a bit, so that helped, and sometimes I'd be called.
- BM:** Any of your other friends back in Hague that you kept in touch with during that period?
- AK:** Well, yes, especially when we got to go home. We would see them too. See if they were married and see their families, which was exciting.
- BM:** Were you allowed time to go back for funerals or weddings?
- AK:** At first when we entered we were told we could only go home for Mom's funeral and Dad's funeral. But then things kept changing and pretty soon they said we could go every 10 years and then pretty soon it was every 5 years. And we made sure we always went. My brother was always very good to us. He would get us tickets to fly to Bismarck, and he would pick us up from there. My folks lived in Linton at that time. We never missed home visits when we could have them. Well, now we can go whenever we have a chance, but of course Mom and Dad are gone. But we still go to my brother's house a lot. He lives in the Cities. He and his wife said that we should make their home our home, so they invite us a lot. They go to Arizona for six months every year, right outside of Phoenix, so we did get to go and visit them for Thanksgiving. This past Thanksgiving we were down there and had a week down there with them. Now we're going to their home here in the Cities. They live right outside of Apple Valley. They have a lovely home there and always make us feel very welcome. Any of the others would love to have us come but we don't really have that many left. Sister Mary Ann is a nun now, and then Benita is the only one that was married. Her husband has died many years ago and she'd love to have us come, but she lives

up in East Grand Forks, so we don't get there a whole lot. And then Al is down in New Mexico, so those are the only ones that are living. The rest have all gone to Heaven, so Gabe and Laurie are the ones we visit most now.

- BM:** Let's go back to the training for religious life. Can you describe the steps and the length of time as a postulant?
- AK:** Yes, we were postulants two years and the first year we spent here in the Mother House. Second year we went out to teach. And we had what we called the cooperating Sister who would help us. I taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade down at Sts. Peter and Paul.
- BM:** Where is St. Peter and Paul?
- AK:** Right here in Mankato. Then we became novices and we were novices just one year. That year, of course, was very strict, but wonderful... it was one of the happiest years of my life.
- BM:** And where were you?
- AK:** Right here. We got all our training here at the Mother House.
- BM:** Describe the times during your training and studies when you decided to continue, or wasn't there any doubt? It doesn't sound like you had any doubt that you weren't going to continue.
- AK:** No, it seemed like it was the right thing and I felt God was calling me to be a Sister. I felt if He called me then He would take care of everything, so I just kind of let it up to Him. He's been pretty good, I mean He's taken very good care of me. I was always in wonderful places and always worked with great people. The Sisters I was with were always just wonderful, and the parents and the children. I loved teaching. I liked being principal.
- BM:** So when did you take your final vow, then?
- AK:** In '46.
- BM:** In 1946. So you were trained then to be a teacher and your first position then in a professional setting was where?
- AK:** After I became a nun?
- BM:** Yes.
- AK:** At Holy Rosary, right here in Mankato. I was there 5 years, and then I went to the Cities, and then I got to go out to North Dakota for 9 years in Dickinson. Mom and Dad were still living at the time; in fact they had died during the time when I was out in Dickinson.
- BM:** I think that you would have taught quite a few German Russian children there too.
- AK:** Some of them spoke German, yes, and I was always able to understand them. Most of them did not speak German. We had not just German Russians, but we had some Bohemians and some Czech, and even Irish. There were all kinds of them there in Dickinson. Those 9 years I was there I met up with all kinds of people and children and parents.
- BM:** So were you involved in the anti-garb experience?

- AK:** Not at all. No, I never went to Strasburg, so I never had to wear secular clothes, as they called them at that time.
- BM:** When did you change from the garb to...
- AK:** In '63 we changed to a kind of a more modified garb. It wasn't all that starch. And then in '69 we started wearing like suits and veils. Then after that we started just wearing our symbol, our Notre Dame symbol, which looks like this, and a ring if we wanted to, and we could wear the veil or not. But all the while I was out teaching and a principal, I always wore the veil. It seemed like the people liked us to do that. Even the very last place in Pocahontas, I still wore the veil. Then when I came up here, I thought, well, everybody knows we're the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and nobody seemed to put a whole lot of stock in whether you wore a veil or not, so I don't wear a veil. But I feel just as much a School Sister of Notre Dame without the veil. It really didn't matter whether I had it on or off, but I wore it because I felt it meant something to the people, and being as I was working with them and for them, I thought if they like it, then it's not going to bother me to wear it. So I did.
- BM:** Did the Vatican II, then, have an effect on the religious side?
- AK:** Very much so, yes.
- BM:** In what way... was that the style of dress part of it?
- AK:** That was a part of it, yes, and then our home visits... we could go home more often. We could go into people's homes. There were many things that were changed. But essentially, we're still the same. What's inside of us, God living in us, in our prayer life... probably that has grown since Vatican II. So there were some things that were kind of exterior, that perhaps not that important that changed, but as School Sisters of Notre Dame, as consecrated religious, we're still the very same. Possibly closer to God, more in union with Him. Our prayer life is wonderful. We all have time to pray, especially here at Good Counsel. We have time for our hour of prayer, we have rosary, we have mass, we have... it's just wonderful. We just really live close to the Lord.
- BM:** Are there any other things that you'd like to add about your religious training and experiences? Are there questions that I forgot to ask you that you'd like to discuss? Maybe you have some insights or observations that you'd like to share about your life.
- AK:** The part we haven't talked about yet is our annual retreats. Every year we are privileged to have a 6-day retreat and during that time we have silence, we have what we usually call a retreat master who gives us conferences, and we just spend the time with God. It's a beautiful time every year. I always look forward to that retreat time. We've done that ever since we were postulants, and I never get tired of it. I just look forward to that week. Also, during the summers when I was first professed, I'd always come to the Cities and go to school, and that was a very special time too. Because many of my classmates and friends would also be there. We would have fun besides studying hard. We'd have a lot of fun. And it was always wonderful to get our degree. When I got my MA at St. Thomas for administration, Lucille and her family came, because Lucille thought that was so special that I got an MA in administration. Her children are well educated, but our family... if we got through high school, that was about it. So it was kind of special for your family if one went on to school. And then I liked it.

- BM:** Thank you for sharing that. Now I want to switch back over to some of our German from Russia heritage. I guess I'd like to know more about your father and mother. I know we have recorded where he came from and where he died. Where is he buried?
- AK:** In Linton, and so is Mom.
- BM:** In the St. Anthony?
- AK:** Yes, in St. Anthony's.
- BM:** And your mom was there too. So they lived in Linton, then.
- AK:** Yes, yes they did.
- BM:** And where were they married?
- AK:** In Odessa.
- BM:** Oh, they were married in Odessa.
- AK:** They had two children when they came over here.
- BM:** And what year was that?
- AK:** In 1911.
- BM:** Oh, so they were quite late then. What did your dad do over there?
- AK:** He was a teacher. And in Russia they had this class system, and he was a very important person over there. Everybody was kind of honoring him and everybody loved him and respected him. When they came over here it was very hard on my dad. Of course I wasn't around then, but they used to tell us about it. Mom used to tell us how difficult it was for him. See, my mom's folks came over after she was married and they had 5 children. She was the one that was married. She was one of 6; she was the oldest. So with her there were 6 children. So they came over with the 5 children and her dad nearly died of lonesomeness from... he just couldn't see her over there, and with all the things that were happening over there, she just kept writing to dad and saying please bring the family over. So her dad did, and they settled out near Sheffield, North Dakota. We used to call it St. Pius. That's right outside of Dickinson. That's where my grandparents lived, so they were there for a little while, then Dad got different jobs, as an organist and as a teacher. So they moved wherever his jobs were and started raising a family.
- BM:** And when did they move to Hague, then?
- AK:** That was before my birth, so it had to be in the 1920s. They lived in Boniface, outside of Napoleon, St. Boniface. Then they lived in Napoleon and Hague, that was St. Aloysius, and then when they retired... Oh, the last place they lived, they lived was Napoleon [403]. That's where he was a storekeeper. They had the general store about 14 miles south of Napoleon [403]. And then they retired to Linton because that was close to the farm that they owned.
- BM:** I want to go back. You said that they were married in Russia, and do you know what his education was there, and what he worked at?

**AK:** I'm not sure what they called it there, but he was a very educated man, because he was a teacher, and they only allowed people who had a good education to become their teachers. So what they all called it, I don't think they called it college and university like we do here. I don't know what it was, but I know he was very well educated. And we spoke German at home; we spoke a dialect. But Dad knew High German; he knew the real German, because he taught that so he always was able to communicate with the people who knew the real German. My dad was a very respected person, both here and over there. More so over there because they had kind of a class system and here we were all kind of the same. I know it was extremely hard for him to come over here and leave his family. The only ones from his family who ever came over here were one sister and one brother, and he came from a large family too. His brother Frank became a priest over there, a diosician priest and died in a concentration camp, so that was extremely hard on him because he kept writing to Frank and he used to cry when he would hear what all was going on over there and how his family was suffering. Now all of our relatives that we know about are back in Germany. Somehow they all got out of Russia and are back in Germany. Some of them have come to see us here from Germany. Sister Mary Ann went over to visit them.

**BM:** Where abouts in Germany?

**AK:** Right near Frankfurt. They call it Dusseldorf. They live about 10 miles from Frankfurt... cousins, and then some live farther away too.

**BM:** You were mentioning that you had a relative who was a guard for Nicholas.

**AK:** That was my dad.

**BM:** That was your dad. Tell us a little bit about that.

**AK:** We have a picture of that. Well, we always felt it was great honor because only a certain type of young man could be a guard for the Czar, as they called him in those days. The fact that my dad was chosen was very special to all of us, and we used to look at that picture with reverence and awe. Every time we'd go to Jackie's house, where the picture now hangs in their family room, we all make sure that we look at that picture and see how handsome Dad was and how wonderful... he always walked very straight. He was a very stately man.

**BM:** Now let's identify that picture. It is with a niece?

**AK:** Yes.

**BM:** And that is Jackie...

**AK:** Krenic. Her name was Richter. She is Lucille's oldest girl.

**BM:** And where does Jackie live?

**AK:** She lives in Hudson, Wisconsin.

**BM:** We might like to have a photo of that picture. You'd likely be interested...

**AK:** Oh, it would... it's just absolutely beautiful.

**CM:** Going back into history on this just a little bit. During what time frame was your father a guard to Czar Nicholas II, did you say?

- AK:** Okay, that was in the early 1900s. Because they came over here in 11 and he was guard before he was married. I don't know how many years. We just know he was because we have the picture. He wasn't there when the Czar died, naturally, because he died in 1918.
- CM:** Yes, because they're just getting some of that family of the Czar's, the remains on it now, of the reburial of the remains.
- AK:** Because they were murdered, yes.
- CM:** Your father's education... do you have any idea as to where he attained that education?
- BM:** Was it in the German village or in the Russian system?
- AK:** In the German village, because when he taught, he taught the people of the Germans, not the Russians. They were very careful not to mix with the Russians. I feel the Russians are wonderful people, and why they had this feeling that they could not intermarry or they could not be with the Russians, I really don't know. But that was the way they lived in those days, I guess. When Mom and Dad came over here, my brother Pius, the oldest in the family, was just 3 years old. And when they got here, they of course went to Grandma and Grandpa out in North Dakota, and Grandma... either she was so happy, or I don't know why, but she was crying. And my brother, aged 3, went to her, and he said, "Grandma, why are you crying? Are the Russians coming?" Because I guess over there when the Russians were coming, that was kind of bad, so you weren't supposed to be associating with them at all. And Grandma said, "oh, my dear child, in German [521]." Here they think *we're* the Russians. And of course they knew they weren't the Russians, they knew they were Germans. But people who knew they immigrated from Russia thought they were Russians, so she said to this little guy, "here we are the Russians. So you don't have to cry because the Russians are coming." [laughter]
- BM:** Before I forget, Sister, would you say something in German? A prayer or a joke or whatever you'd like to say.
- AK:** Okay, I think I still remember the last part of the Hail Mary. I think I remember the Our Father too, but I'll just make it short. [? You know I don't do German! 535-538] Amen.
- BM:** Now that's the Hague dialect. [laughter] One of the things that I want to go back to... I'm going to have to limit the questions on here, but you said that your father played the organ. Tell us some about your family and fun and life that you were raised in as a German from Russia family. Was there music in your family?
- AK:** Oh, very much so. All of us loved music. My brother Pius played the organ in different churches where he lived. My brother Gabe is very good. He plays by ear, as they call it. He plays the guitar and the organ and the piano. I had several sisters who played the piano. Right now I'm in the bell choir here.
- BM:** You are?
- AK:** And so I enjoy that a lot. At home I don't remember any time growing up when we didn't have a lot of music in the family.
- BM:** Did you dance?

- AK:** Oh, we danced a lot. We loved to dance. We did the polka and the waltz. We still dance when we get together, and Dad also played violin, and he gave lessons on different kinds of instruments.
- BM:** So he read music.
- AK:** Oh yes, oh my yes. So did my brother Pius. Gabe can read music but he just loves to play by ear because it's just so much easier for him.
- BM:** What are some of the favorite songs? Do you remember some of them?
- AK:** Yes. [German again! 578]. And then we had [580]. And then we sang a lot of English songs too. We had that brown book that was called *Old Favorites* of something or other, and they had all kinds of music in there like *The Church in the Valley by the Wildwood*, all those old songs. We used to do those. Magdalen, who's now dead, she married an [588], she played and she'd play all these songs and we'd sing and dance. And then Dad would teach us different songs, and then when we'd get company, the younger ones of us, we would perform for them. We would all stand in a row and we would sing and have a great time. I can still see our organ. It was a tall thing, with all this stuff here, and we had pictures on these little shelves and on top of the organ. One of Dad's favorite games was to hide Lucille. Lucille was such a sweetheart. She had long curls, and she was just the prettiest little girl. He would take her and hide her, and then the rest of us would have to go find her. And I remember this one time, he had set her on one of these shelves up on the organ, and how she ever stayed up there, I don't know, but we were all running around trying to find Lucille, and then pretty soon she said, "Don't be idiots." So we all looked up and there she was sitting up there, because we were looking below and couldn't see her up there. So she was telling us where to find her. We had a very, very happy family. I remember our meals were just delightful because Mother would always make all these good things like Cheese Buttons and she'd have [620] or whatever that was called. And she'd have homemade noodles and I still just love homemade noodles, and she'd make the best chicken noodle soup you ever ate. When we'd come home, she'd always have chicken noodle soup because she knew that I loved chicken noodle soup. She baked all kinds of things. When they retired they used to work together, Mom and Dad cooked together, and they'd make all these pies and put in their freezer for when the Sisters would come home. That was always very special when the four Sisters would come home. Then Mom was still living when Mary Ann became a nun. And that was so special. She got to come for that reception and confession.
- BM:** How old was Mary Ann when she joined?
- AK:** 53. She's already had her silver jubilee, 25 years. In fact her daughter had her silver jubilee before. See, her daughter was [642] professed when [642].
- BM:** Isn't that interesting.
- AK:** Yes. And she was in her daughter's choir because her daughter is a musician there, you know. And she just quit that choir some time ago.
- CM:** What was your Sunday morning tradition when you were youngsters?
- AK:** Okay. We would get up and it was always very special because we'd get ready to go to mass. And for a while, you know you couldn't eat from midnight on, so we'd go to mass and all of us girls were in Dad's choir, so it was most special. Because we would dress up and then we would go up in the choir because we'd sing... one would be in the alto section and I was in the soprano section... all the girls were in Dad's

choir. He also taught all of us religion, religious classes so we all learned about first communion, first confession, confirmation... he instructed all of us in that and he was always our favorite teacher of all.[laughter] He was a very good teacher. I remember after he quit teaching, of course, after he was older and retired at Linton, these men would come and they would just be so excited. They would say, "your dad was my teacher at such-and-such a time. And, "oh, he was so good."

**CM:** Then when the family would go to church and after mass, then what happened?

**AK:** Then we'd come home. Mother would have the soup on. She'd put it on low, and we'd always have chicken soup on Sunday. Then she'd have this chicken that she had boiled for the soup and then she'd put it in some kind of cream or whatever... sauce... oh, it was the most delicious! I have never eaten anything like it in my entire life.

**BM:** I can't say it, because I'm not raised in this community, but Chris can say what kind of chicken that is.

**CM:** [? 691]

**AK:** Yes, oh, it was so good.

**CM:** With a cream sauce.

**AK:** Yes. Well, then of course we would have pie or whatever would go with it. Very frequently we would have visitors. My dad was a very social person and people just loved to come and visit. They would play cards, and then the girls... mostly the older girls... they would make supper. Then these people would all stay for supper. It was so exciting to grow up in my family because there were just things happening all the time. We didn't have TV of course. We did have a radio. We'd listen to Monsignor Fulton Sheen, or whoever that was, but we never ran out of fun things to do, or just visiting or just being with each other. We were never bored like people are now days with all the things they have to do. And we were home. Mom wasn't out working someplace. We were a great family.

**BM:** You always had somebody to talk to at home.

**AK:** It was wonderful growing up in my family.

**CM:** What kind of games did you play when you were a youngster?

**AK:** Okay, we played cards, we played outside when it was nice... we played baseball and just catch, throwing the ball to each other. In the house, my sister Benita loved to do these cartwheels. She was really good at it. We'd all watch and try to do it to and fall over. Oh, we did just all kinds of things.

**BM:** Which family member do you remember the best?

**AK:** Lucille. I wept and wept and wept when she died. Yes, I was very close to Lucille. I have a card that she sent me and I received it after her death. I was the last one she wrote to in the family, and it is so beautiful. I still can't read it without crying. She and I were extremely close.

**BM:** Who do you look up to and admire as a portrait of life's very best qualities?

**AK:** Sister Mary George. She's the oldest and she's up here. I've often always told her that she's my model. She's a big, sweet, loving...

**BM:** She's your mentor or something?

**AK:** Yes, sort of... Dora was also just a wonderful person.

**[end of side 1] [ reset counter at 000 for side 2]**

**BM:** One of the questions I'd like to add on here is what language was the mass or church catechisms and your training early... what language was that in?

**AK:** The mass was in Latin and the early training I got, especially from my dad, we studied all of that in German. We had these German catechisms and we memorized the questions and answers.

**BM:** When did that switch for you?

**AK:** Well, of course, when I went to Good Counsel to the academy when I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, my high school, then there was no more German and I never took German classes either. I took Latin classes, but not German. When we first entered, we said our [014] in Latin too. And then that changed maybe 10 years after I was confessed, or so.

**BM:** What language was spoken in the home?

**AK:** German. It was a German dialect.

**BM:** Even after you went back home to visit, was it still spoken?

**AK:** Sometimes we'd still speak German, but most of the time we didn't. But Mom kind of liked it when we'd speak German so we would try to speak German. It was funny, after about the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, it came back and it was like you had never stopped speaking it.

**CM:** Do you recall where your great ancestry came from in Germany?

**AK:** No. I'm sorry I don't really know. They always talked about Strasburg. Now I don't know if there was a Strasburg in Germany.

**BM:** There is a Strasbourg.

**AK:** Okay, it had to be close to there then, because they talked about that a lot. When I went over to visit in '87, we all got to go over for our jubilee, we went over to Rome first and then we went to Germany. I remember getting off the train... we were on the train when we got to Germany, because I said, "here I have to walk on this sidewalk because I just know some of my ancestors walked right here," and saw that church, and so it was so special. I think that's where it was, although I'm not real positive.

**BM:** Thank you so much, Sister. This has been most interesting.

**AK:** Well, I wanted to thank both of you, Betty and Chris, for taking your time to interview me. You know, don't tell the others that, but I was kind of hoping last night that you would be my interviewers.

**CM:** Something clicked. [laughter]