

## Interview with Celestina Metz (CM)

Some comments by Anton (Tony) Metz (AM)

Conducted by Brother Placid Gross (BG)

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Dickinson, North Dakota

Transcription by Margaret Templin

- BG:** Today is January 20, 1998 and I am Brother Placid Gross a volunteer interviewer for the Germans from Russia Heritage Society. The person we are talking today with Mrs. Celestina Wolff married to Tony Metz. The interview is taking place in Dickinson, North Dakota. Do you know when your family came to North America?
- CM:** They left Russia in 1911 and came to America in November, 1912.
- BG:** It looks like they were on the road a long time.
- CM:** Yes, I heard they were. My brother John could tell you more.
- BG:** When they came over here where did they settle?
- CM:** I think northwest of town. I have an uncle, my dad's sister's husband, living out there now, northwest of Dickinson.
- BG:** I am suppose to ask your name for the recorder. Your name is?
- CM:** Celestina Wolff.
- BG:** When were you born?
- CM:** September 26, 1916.
- BG:** Do you know when your father died?
- CM:** Yes, he died in January 1917.
- BG:** Where is he buried?
- CM:** St. Joseph's Cemetery in Dickinson.
- BG:** Do you know when your mother died?
- CM:** Yes, she died in April 1953.
- BG:** Where is she buried?
- CM:** Also in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Dickinson.
- BG:** Were they married in Russia?
- CM:** Yes, they had four children before they came over here.

- BG:** So, your oldest brothers and sisters were born in Russia?
- CM:** Yes. I've only got one brother left that can tell you something. His name is John. He lives in town here. I've only got two brothers left.
- BG:** How many were there in the family and can you give their names?
- CM:** There were nine. Frank, Anton, John, and Anna, who was married to a Metz. Then he died, then she married again to another man and he died, and got married to another. But she is dead now. Then there was Frances, she was married to a Muth. Then Joe, and then Jack, he is still alive, and me, and Mike Wanner that was after my mom's second marriage. They just had one boy.
- BG:** Your dad died and then your mother married a Wanner. How old were you when your dad died?
- CM:** Four months.
- BG:** So you don't remember very much about him. So, you had step-brothers and step-sisters?
- CM:** Oh yes. Lets see now there were: Eleanor, George, Jack, Margaret, Nick, Philip and Chris. They were all step-brothers and step-sisters.
- BG:** This Bertha Biel, is she related to you?
- CM:** She would have been related to my brother-in-law. She was a cousin of my brother-in-law. One of my step-brothers was married to her sister. Jack Wanner was married to Ida, her sister.
- BG:** I knew Ida. Do you remember anything that your mother talked about Russia?
- CM:** She said they lived close to the Black Sea and raised a lot of grapes. They raised fruit over there because when she came over here she said, "I can never get a decent apricot like we had over there." She said they had a fruit garden.
- BG:** What did they do with their fruit? Were they able to can at that time?
- CM:** I don't remember. She never said anything about canning.
- BG:** She probably dried it.
- CM:** Probably because she dried some corn after I was old enough to help her. She dried it instead of canning it.
- BG:** Do you remember how she dried it?
- CM:** Well, we steamed it and cut it off the cob. Then we laid it on a clean sheet, laid it on top of the roof and covered it with another sheet. Every now and then we would have to go up and stir it until it was real dry. That was the way we kept it for the winter. Of course, it took it quite a while to cook it then.
- BG:** You had steamed it already so it was cooked a little bit.
- CM:** We had steamed it enough to cut it off the cob.
- BG:** Then when you wanted to eat it, you cooked it. How long did it take to dry, weeks?

- CM:** If it was nice and sunny out, I don't remember how long it would take. If it rained we couldn't put it out there. We brought it in at night, we didn't leave it out over night. If a strong wind came, it would blow it away from you.
- BG:** What else did you dry? Do you remember anything else?
- CM:** None that I can remember. I just remember the corn. We canned rhubarb and sauerkraut.
- BG:** Did you have a stone to hold it down, when you made the sauerkraut? If you didn't have the right size it wouldn't work.
- CM:** Yes, we used a rock. You had to have the weight on so heavy. We put it in the barrel and had to tramp it down with our bare feet!
- BG:** Did you ever do that with your bare feet?
- CM:** Oh yes, I did.
- BG:** You had to wash your feet first?
- CM:** Yes. You didn't dare to step on the floor. You washed your feet, was lifted into the barrel, and you stayed in there until it was done.
- BG:** Did you pickle the watermelons?
- CM:** Yes. We had a big barrel. We used to have a barrel of cucumbers and a barrel of watermelons for the winter.
- BG:** How did you do the cucumbers. Was it the same as the watermelons?
- CM:** Yes, we just place a lot of dill on top of it.
- BG:** You didn't put a cover on it, or seal it did you?
- CM:** No. You just put something heavy on top of them to keep them covered, watermelons were done the same way.
- BG:** My great grandpa put them into a barrel, put the cover on the barrel and then sealed it with wax. It was like being canned. It would keep a long time that way.
- CM:** We didn't seal it. We could go any day and pick some out.
- BG:** Did you bury the watermelons in the oats?
- CM:** To ripen in the fall, when the frost came, we did that.
- BG:** Why did you have to bury them in the oats? I never could figure that out.
- CM:** I don't know why they did it, but I guess they kept better in feed than they would on the floor.
- BG:** They just always buried them and I don't know why.
- CM:** Yes, we did too. And pumpkins too, we just laid them on top of the grain until they were ripe.
- BG:** Maybe it had something to do with the air, so the air wouldn't get to them so much if they were buried.

- CM:** Yes, but they just laid them [the pumpkins] on top of the grain so they weren't on top of each other.
- BG:** When you were small did you have jars for canning some things?
- CM:** Yes. We had some jars because my mother always canned some meat, vegetables, and fruit.
- BG:** So you canned the meat, too?
- CM:** I always did when we were first married before we got the freezer, I always had to can meat. Father Aloysius Bittman used to come by and stop. He knew I had sausage and he would stop about meal time because he just loved that country style sausage.
- BG:** What kind of meat did you can - beef, pork or ... everything?
- CM:** Yes. I've canned hamburger, beef cubes, pork, and chicken.
- BG:** So your mother always had a big garden?
- CM:** Oh, yes.
- BG:** Did you have fruit? No, I guess not. Once in a while you would find some wild choke cherries?
- CM:** Wild fruit, yes, blueberries or chokecherries. Those we always picked and made into jelly.
- BG:** Your step-father, he was a Wanner, did he also come from Russia?
- CM:** Yes.
- BG:** Did he talk about the old country?
- CM:** He very seldom talked to us. I couldn't visit with him when I was small.
- BG:** You don't remember anything else your mother talked about. What about the church life they had over there?
- CM:** No, I don't remember. I know she used to do singing. She had a beautiful voice.
- BG:** She sang German songs. Did she have it memorized, or did she know it by heart?
- CM:** She had a nice German song book, but I didn't get a hold of it once she died. Of course, I couldn't read it.
- BG:** Did they ever wish they were back in Russia?
- CM:** I don't remember her ever saying that.
- BG:** Did they get homesick?
- CM:** Oh, I imagine they did because Mother didn't have anybody over here on her side of the family. Dad's family was here but Mother's family wasn't.
- BG:** Your mother was a Knoll and her brothers and sisters all stayed over there?
- CM:** As far as I know, they never heard about any that came over.
- BG:** So you would have first cousins over there, if they had children?

- CM:** Yes. This letter here is from a first cousin of mine through my dad.
- BG:** Some day your kids will go over there and find their relatives.
- CM:** Yes, and they can't talk to each other. Leo Vetter said if anybody ever get a chance to come over they should be sure to look them up.
- BG:** Did your mother get letters from the old country?
- CM:** Oh yes, Mother wrote and got letters.
- BG:** Did you save any of those letters?
- CM:** No, I didn't.
- BG:** Now we wish we had saved that stuff.
- CM:** Well yes, but still I couldn't read the writing. My oldest sister used to write for Mother. She could write German. Towards the last Mother couldn't.
- BG:** I'm sure they were always waiting for letters from Russia.
- CM:** I think they didn't dare write there for sometime because, I know, this letter said that there was some time that they didn't dare get any letters.
- BG:** When did your mother die?
- CM:** She died in 1953.
- BG:** In 1953, so during the war they were not allowed to get letters?
- CM:** I know Mother used to send money over there when I was younger, that I remember.
- BG:** So, her parents and her brothers and sisters all stayed over there? She must have been homesick.
- CM:** I'm sure she was. It didn't do any good.
- BG:** Did your dad died over here?
- CM:** They weren't here very long. Let's see, he died in 1917 and they came over in 1912, so they weren't here long. He died in January 21, 1917. Tomorrow will be his anniversary. What a coincidence, my step-dad died on the 21<sup>st</sup> and so did my dad, January 21.
- BG:** Since your dad died so young you don't know much about the Wolffs either do you?
- CM:** Well, most of the Wolffs came over. Let's see one of his uncles lived in Montana, and his sister was married to Lawrence Wock. They lived here in town.
- BG:** That was your dad's sister who got married to who?
- CM:** Lawrence Wock, W-O-C-K.
- BG:** And your dad's uncle who lived in Montana?
- CM:** His brother, lived here first but he moved to Montana after his wife died. His name was Anton.

- BG:** Do you know where he lived in Montana?
- CM:** I think they lived in Belfry. We went to visit some cousins after we had moved to town, actually no we were still on the farm when we went to see them. One of his sisters was in Canada and was married to a Wock there. She got killed in a disk accident.
- BG:** Do you know where is Canada?
- CM:** It was north around Estevan, Saskatchewan, I'm not sure. We went to see those cousins of ours up there, there are a couple of the children still living.
- BG:** So your dad's brother and sister were married to a Wock. Were they brother and sister?
- CM:** I don't know if they were or not, I couldn't tell you.
- BG:** What are some of the childhood chores that you enjoyed doing?
- CM:** How do kids enjoy chores!?!
- BG:** What are some of the chores that you didn't like to do?
- CM:** We had to milk, feed pigs, and go out shocking. We had to hoe. We had great big fields of potatoes and melons, and had to hoe them all the time.
- BG:** Did you have a bastant?
- CM:** Oh, yes. The melon and potato patches were called bastant.
- BG:** That was away from the farm?
- CM:** Yes, out in the fields which was too big to have in the garden. Well, there were lots of melons in the fall, and more potatoes than we needed.
- BG:** Did you have Kach melane and citron?
- CM:** Yes, I remember that. After we were married a person just lost track of those things. Nobody had seeds, and nobody grew them anymore. But we had them at home.
- BG:** Did you have to pick...
- CM:** We had to snap corn in the fall of the season. If the weather looked nasty we just went out and picked it and put it in the shed. Then in the evening after our supper, that was our evening homework to sit out there and barscht [husk] the corn. That was something we hated!
- BG:** When you picked the corn did you drive along with the hay rack?
- CM:** Yes, with the double wagon box. Each one with his row or two rows or whatever. You had to be careful that you didn't stay behind too far because you would have to carry it too far.
- BG:** So, some went along and some went faster? Sometimes some didn't do a good job of picking because they didn't see it.
- CM:** We always raised a lot of potatoes, wagon boxes full of them.

- BG:** Then all winter, every meal you had potatoes?
- CM:** Yes. Even for breakfast.
- BG:** Really. How did you make them for breakfast, fried potatoes?
- CM:** Yes. We usually boiled them with the jackets and then fried them for breakfast. When you have a big family like that you have to find something. And the folks weren't well to do, they were poor.
- BG:** Everyone was poor then. Did you have to pick the insects off the potatoes?
- CM:** Oh yes, potato bugs. Then they crawled out of the buckets so we would put a little kerosene or gasoline in the bottom so they would die when you threw them in. We had to pick them a lot of times.
- BG:** There was just one kind of potato bug?
- CM:** There were two. The red ones and then those striped ones. The striped ones weren't so bad but the red ones were so big. The striped ones would jump away if you didn't catch them quick, but the red ones didn't jump.
- BG:** I remember that a little bit, picking those.
- CM:** Yes. We had to do that a lot.
- BG:** Did you wear pants when you worked out in the fields?
- CM:** No. There wasn't such a thing as women wearing pants then. We wore skirts.
- BG:** So even when you worked in the field you had to wear skirts?
- CM:** Oh yes. We didn't do much field work other than shocking and picking corn. After I got married I wore pants. I did most any kind of work.
- BG:** So, when you shocked you wore dresses? It wasn't so hot?
- CM:** Yes, but those poor legs were sore. Then you would wash them and they burned.
- BG:** They would get sore from the stubbles?
- CM:** Yes.
- BG:** I remember that burn when you washed them.
- CM:** We used to milk quite a few cows and all by hand, there was no such thing as a milking machine.
- BG:** Then you sold cream? Did the cream get sour sometimes?
- CM:** Yes, because we did not have refrigeration. We put the cream in the root cellar, but that still didn't keep it.
- BG:** But you were still able to sell it?
- CM:** Yes. They bought sour cream at that time. They even had two creameries in town.
- BG:** Did you make butter and keep it?

- CM:** Yes. We used to fry it for the winter.
- BG:** How did you do that?
- CM:** You make your butter and then you fried it until all the milk and water was boiled out of it.
- BG:** When you fried it, did it still look like butter? Was it soft like butter?
- CM:** Yes, it was still butter and looked like butter. It was used like margarine for baking or schmelzing [glaze]..
- BG:** Did you have to add salt to it?
- CM:** No, we didn't add salt.
- BG:** I don't remember that at all.
- CM:** We had a big butter churn which stood up about that high with a crank on the side. We had a little one too for everyday use. The big one was used for frying butter. We always fried quite a bit of butter for winter use because in the winter time we didn't milk that many cows. They didn't give that much milk anyhow. They were not taken of like they do now.
- BG:** They didn't have that good alfalfa like now? You had straw and rye. At one point I heard, [GERMAN DIALOGUE - a German poem was said here] 388. What else can you say about work or chores? Did you have to clean the barn too?
- CM:** No. That was something the boys did, the girls didn't have to.
- BG:** Did you know how to harness up the horses?
- CM:** No, I wouldn't know. I didn't then. After we were married I hooked them up to the wagon or trailer but I didn't have to harness them. Tony harnessed them up. But I cleaned manured barns after we were married.
- BG:** How many years did you go to school?
- CM:** I went through the eighth grade.
- BG:** How many months of school did you have?
- CM:** We had nine months of school.
- BG:** Did you have good teachers?
- CM:** I think so.
- BG:** How many kids were sometimes in the school?
- CM:** We had up to twenty-six in all eight grades, and just one teacher.
- BG:** Where did the teachers come from?
- CM:** They were from different places. They were strangers.
- BG:** They weren't German-Russians, though?



- CM:** Some of them weren't but I remember one of them was..... I don't remember where he came from but, I know he didn't come from around here.
- BG:** Did you have to talk English in school?
- CM:** Oh yes.
- BG:** Were you punished if you didn't? How did they punish you?
- CM:** Yes. We very seldom got punished because we knew we had to mind.
- BG:** Did you have to write, "I will not talk German" or something?
- CM:** I don't remember if I had to write it or maybe stay in during recess.
- BG:** Did you have to write 500 times, "I will not talk German"?
- CM:** I don't remember that I was ever punished for it but I knew that we weren't supposed to [talk German].
- BG:** Did you have any play ground equipment, swings or slides?
- CM:** Towards the last we did. From the beginning we had our own balls and played ball. We played "Anty Hi Over," over the school.
- BG:** When you played ball did you break the windows?
- CM:** No. We had to be careful.
- BG:** We played it over the school barn. Not over the school, the school was too tall.
- CM:** We played "Fox and Goose". Towards the last we use to play "Kitten Ball".
- BG:** How far did you live from the church?
- CM:** We lived about ten miles southeast of town after I grew older, so that I knew what was what. Of course, when my dad was alive we lived farther out yet.
- BG:** So you always went to church at St. Joseph's?
- CM:** No, we used to go to Gladstone. We were closer to Gladstone.
- BG:** So church was always very important?
- CM:** Oh, yes.
- BG:** Church was in German when you were a girl?
- CM:** In German and Latin. I didn't understand either one of them.
- BG:** Do you still know any prayers in German?
- CM:** I think I could tell you the "Apostle's Creed," the "Our Father," and maybe the "Ten Commandments", I'm not sure.

- BG:** So would you pray the "Our Father" for us, so we could get your dialect, we'll see what your German dialect sounds like.
- CM:** [GERMAN DIALOGUE of the "Our Father"] I guess I'm stuck.
- BG:** Do you remember when they switched to English in the church. When they started preaching in English?
- CM:** No, I can't tell you that.
- BG:** So there was no problem for your parents because you don't remember them?
- CM:** Monsignor was there at that time and he always had one German Mass even after the English started. There was one Mass in German so that was the Mass the folks went to.
- BG:** Wasn't that when the kids were small? It was the 10:00 Mass that was in German?
- CM:** Yes that was a long time ago. I think as long as Monsignor Aberle was here we always had a German Mass. When he left he went to Hague, North Dakota. I don't remember when he went down there, but he always said a German mass until he left.
- BG:** That is the area where I grew up. So he always had one Mass in German so that would tell us about when the German ended. When somebody died in the family, do you remember when they had the coffins in the house?
- CM:** Yes. My step-grandmother I remember very well. They kept her in the house. That is about the only one I can remember. Usually the folks didn't take us along to something like that. But when my step-dad's mother died I went.
- BG:** Did they embalm them in those days?
- CM:** I know they kept them several days but I don't know if they embalmed them or not. They didn't keep them at a funeral home.
- BG:** Did they stay up with them all night?
- CM:** All night long.
- BG:** Why did they stay up all night?
- CM:** Well. Every half hour or so they would pray the rosary. Even when Uncle Martin died, I guess dad said that they had him on the farm, in the house, and that was in 1931.
- BG:** You don't remember any special German songs that they sang at the funerals do you?
- CM:** I couldn't tell you right off hand. I know that there was one that they always sang and everybody cried when they sang it.
- BG:** Was that when they let the coffin down?
- CM:** No. When they took them out of church.
- BG:** When they sang what they called the "Schicksal"?

- CM:** Yes, but I don't remember the song.
- BG:** "Schicksal" means your fate, departure or journey.
- CM:** I know they always sang one song when they took the coffin out of the church. Of course, I didn't understand it so....
- BG:** Did you have those iron crosses, those old time, homemade iron crosses on any of your relative's graves?
- CM:** Tony's brother has one. The cemetery is way out north. The cemetery is on the Roshau farm. There are so many in that cemetery, so we are not even sure which grave he is in, because there are no names on the graves. They put no names on the graves and the crosses are made the same.
- BG:** Some of the graves have names on the crosses, but maybe in this cemetery there are no names?
- CM:** After Dad got old enough to realize, his folks didn't go out there anymore. We went there one time to look for it but there was nobody with us so we didn't find it.
- BG:** You don't know who made those crosses, do you?
- CM:** Dad told me who made them but I don't remember who he said made them.
- BG:** When you say Dad you mean, Tony, your husband? Maybe he would still know?
- CM:** Yes. He would probably know.
- BG:** We could get the name. There is a book out about the iron crosses with pictures from all over North Dakota where they have those home made iron crosses.
- CM:** Did you see it? Because this cemetery is northwest of where we lived. We went out to see it one time. If you know where the St. Anthony's Church was located. We used to go to that church when we were first married. This cemetery was northwest of there.
- BG:** The cemetery wasn't right by the church?
- CM:** There was one there but where his brother is buried, that was farther northwest.
- BG:** I wonder why there was two of them.
- CM:** That was probably before they started the one at the church. It was on the family farm.
- BG:** Do you know if there are any heirlooms, any old relics from Russia? I know Tony showed me that table you have.
- CM:** That doesn't come from Russia though. My folks bought that after they came here.
- BG:** You don't have anything from your family?
- CM:** Not, that I know of.
- BG:** A shawl maybe?

- CM:** I've got an old shawl of Ma's but she bought that after she was married the second time. I remember she had a shawl, but I don't know what happened to it.
- BG:** What about holidays? How did you celebrate Christmas when you were a child?
- CM:** We had the Belzenickel, and Das Christkindel.
- BG:** The Belzenickel came and scared you?
- CM:** Right. We usually got some peanuts and candy, not very many but a few. We didn't get many gifts, but we always had some Christmas Eve doings.
- BG:** You probably didn't get any gifts at all maybe?
- CM:** No, not very many. We got a little rubber ball or a pencil, that was about it. The Belzenickel and Das Christkindel always came every year.
- BG:** What did the Belzenickel look like?
- CM:** He was on all fours and wore a big fur coat over him, or whatever it was. He drug a long chain along. If you weren't good then he would grab you. We had a bench behind the table and always sat on that bench with our feet up on top of the bench. He was going to take us along if we weren't good. We had to pray for him.
- BG:** He scared the kids so they were good.
- CM:** Yes. Do you remember when we had school out there and one of the Soldoski girls taught? Vernon will tell you. They called him the devil at that time. He came and grabbed Vernon because Vernon wasn't scared. When he grabbed Vernon, Vernon screamed, "Ma, Ma." He didn't holler for dad's help but for ma's.
- BG:** How did Das Christkindel dress?
- CM:** Always had a white dress on, lots of lace. Her face covered with a veil so that you couldn't tell who it was. She always had a little stick. She would hold out some candy for you and then slap you on the hand. We didn't like her. She was mean, and would hit you with that little wreath she had. She was supposed to be an angel, I guess.
- BG:** Did you have baskets? Did you get a basket?
- CM:** A little paper bag with a few candies. She would hold it up and if you would reach for it she would hit you with that stick. So would you like her?
- BG:** So you didn't have big baskets. Was there a donkey along too?
- CM:** One year I remember there was a donkey along with a long peaked nose and he dug into everybody's bag. Of course, we kids were scared that he would take some candy out of there.
- BG:** The donkey was separate from Das Christkindel. He walked beside Das Christkindel. Did you get an orange?

**CM:** Not every year but once in a while! An apple once in a while too. About the only time we got an orange was for Christmas. It was special when we got an orange.

**BG:** It was a big deal. You were already grown up in the 1930's so you weren't too poor. Sometimes in the 1930s they didn't have any Christmas at all.

**CM:** Oh, yes. We had Christmas every year. I had a brother who was seven years younger than I and we still had Santa Claus come.

**BG:** How did you celebrate Easter? Did you have Easter eggs?

**CM:** Oh yes, we always had a lot of Easter eggs.

**BG:** Did the Easter Rabbit come? Did you think the Easter Rabbit brought the eggs?

**CM:** As long as we were small we thought the Easter Rabbit brought the eggs. Of course, after we got older we helped dye the eggs, then we knew better.

**BG:** Where did you get the dye? Did you make the dye or did you buy it?

#### **INTERRUPTION IN DIALOGUE**

**BG:** Let's talk about weddings. When you got married did you have a white dress?

**CM:** Yes.

**BG:** Flowers?

**CM:** Yes. I still have my flowers too. I had the artificial ones. I put the bouquet together myself and, put it in a glass frame.

**BG:** Did you make your wedding dress?

**CM:** No. I bought that.

**BG:** Did you had enough money to go to town and buy it?

**CM:** Oh yes. It cost me \$6.98 and my veil cost me \$2.98 or was it \$1.98, that was a high priced wedding. I bought it in Dickinson.

**BG:** Did Tony get a new suit?

**CM:** Yes. I think so.

**BG:** Did you have a three day wedding?

**CM:** No, it was one day. We had our Mass at ten o'clock in the morning. Then we had dinner and supper. We had it at Tony's folks' place at the farm. The wedding dance was out there, in the barn upstairs.

**BG:** Was it a new barn and was it clean enough?

**CM:** It wasn't so new but it was clean. They had it cleaned nice.

**BG:** Wasn't it too dusty with the dust coming up through the boards?

**CM:** We didn't dance that hard!

**BG:** Did you have a band?

**CM:** Yes. We had the Red Jackets.

**BG:** That was a high class band.

**CM:** They were not as high priced at that time, as they are now.

**BG:** How many people played? There was the accordion, organ and the drum?

**CM:** I think there was three of them, maybe.

**BG:** What did you have for the meal?

**CM:** Oh, they had chicken noodle soup, chicken, mashed potatoes and all the trimmings. I baked my own wedding cake.

**BREAK IN DIALOGUE - ANTON (TONY) METZ ENTERS THE ROOM AND INTERVIEW.**

**BG:** Do you remember the iron crosses on the graves, like the one on your brother's grave? Do you remember who made them?

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

**CM:** I thought one time you said it was Karl Boshau.

**AM:** He was dead before I ever grew up. His son left on, it was Karl's folks that made them.

**BG:** So it was Karl Roshau's dad?

**AM:** Yes.

**CM:** Tony, the Red Jackets were at our wedding. There were three of them wasn't there?

**AM:** One played the accordion, drum and...

**CM:** Didn't one play a saxophone?

**AM:** I believe so.

**CM:** Wasn't it the Harlinger boys and Harry Cook?

**AM:** I think so.

**BG:** What kind of music did they play?

**AM:** They had old-time music. There was waltzes, polkas.

**CM:** That was about all they had danced at that time.

**BG:** They didn't do a lot of two steps?

**CM:** No, and they didn't do fox trots either.

- BG:** Did they have a "money dance" where they gave money to the bride?
- CM:** We didn't.
- BG:** Did the wedding guests get together and sing German songs?
- AM:** No. They didn't sing any German songs.
- BG:** Did they make their own whiskey?
- AM:** No. We didn't, I know.
- CM:** Not for our wedding.
- BG:** Did they buy some?
- AM:** They bought some, I don't know if it was homemade whiskey or not.
- CM:** We had a four gallon keg of beer that Dad bought. My step-dad bought a four gallon keg of beer for my wedding. He was my God father also.
- BG:** So they were neighbors already by then?
- CM:** Yes.
- BG:** Did you have a wedding kuchen? Was there a special kuchen?
- CM:** Oh yes, sugar kuchen.
- BG:** Who helped make the food for the wedding?
- CM:** The mothers and the sisters.
- BG:** What about the bridesmaids. Did they buy their dresses or did they make them?
- CM:** I think they made them, I know Carolyn did. I don't remember if Molly did but my sister-in-law, Carolyn, made hers.
- BG:** Who were the bridesmaids?
- CM:** My brother John's wife and his cousin Nellie Haag. My brother and his wife were my attendants. They were married six months before we were.
- AM:** On my side it was my brother Steve and Nellie [my cousin Nellie Haag]. We lived about as far from the Haags as from here to the K. C. Hall [ about two blocks].
- BG:** Were you able to take wedding pictures?
- CM:** Well we had them taken at the studio. At that time it was \$2.50 a dozen for postcard size photos.
- BG:** Who had the studio there in Dickinson?
- CM:** Osborne.

- BG:** Then after you were married you still did a lot of outside work too, such as gardening, milking, and poultry.
- CM:** And I worked in the fields. I drove the horses with the disk and the plow. I think I drilled once too. All I didn't do was rake hay. I cut hay but I didn't rake it.
- BG:** You did all this with the horses?
- AM:** Yes.
- BG:** It worked okay, if the knives were sharp.
- AM:** I sharpened the knives.
- BG:** Did your mother give you some cows when you got married? How many cows did you milk?
- CM:** My mother didn't own anything She couldn't give me anything. He had a couple of cows. Didn't you have one and we bought one?
- AM:** When I was sixteen years old I got a calf. I had a cow and a yearling heifer.
- CM:** I didn't get any cows.
- BG:** So when you were first married you didn't milk many cows either?
- CM:** We never did milk very many. I think twelve was the most we ever milked.
- BG:** In the 1930's you couldn't have many cows.
- CM:** Was it in 1935 when the government bought the cattle because there was no feed?
- AM:** We got twenty dollars a cow, eight dollars for a calf and sixteen dollars for a yearling. No matter how nice they were.
- BG:** Did they ship them away?
- CM:** Yes.
- AM:** We had to help chase them up to Belfield.
- BG:** I know in some places they shot the cows.
- AM:** Belfield was thirty miles. We had to ride the saddle horse and chase the cows.
- BG:** When you chased them, did you go all that way in one day?
- AM:** Yes. Of course we left early in the morning and we had to let them graze on the way. At that time when you moved the cattle if you found some nice grass you let them graze for a while. We kept them at the other place a lot, almost twenty miles farther north.

When we lived out at the old place I went out into the pasture and got two cows and a calf. I tried to chase them home. We had two places. One place was six miles north of New Hradec and the other was six miles southeast of New Hradec.



I chased a cow with a calf and one other cow from out there by foot and then they run away from me. They wouldn't go over the bridge and they got away from me. They had run back a whole mile before I got them stopped. Then I chased them in. That was in one day. A lot of walking!

**BG:** What about superstitions? Did your parents or you scare each other with some superstitious stories? Did you believe in ghosts?

**CM:** No.

**AM:** No.

**BG:** What about "Brauche"?

**CM:** I have heard about them but I never took any of my kids to any of those old women. His mother always said, "I can do that myself."

**BG:** Did she?

**CM:** If my kids weren't feeling good she would help them.

**BG:** Do you remember what she said or what she did?

**AM:** No. She said some prayer over them.

**CM:** I remember that she told me she said, but I can't remember it.

**BG:** Brauche is something that people are very interested in now days. They want to know. There is a professor in Fargo that is writing a book about that.

**CM:** GERMAN DIALOGUE 954 [Celestina remembers only parts of the prayer that Tony's mother used when doing the faith healing.] That's all I knew. Then she would rub their chest.

**AM:** Well, those old people those old ladies, all had their own ideas. You know Richard was so sick one night. He was sick when he came home from school and he still had a side ache when he went to bed. The next day he woke and went to school the next couple of days. One night he woke me up around midnight and couldn't straighten up. We were sure it was his appendix. So I went and got the car ready and she wrapped him up. I took him in the car and we went into town.

Dr. Roger was the doctor at that time and he said, "It isn't his appendix, I'm sure. There is an old women's recipe. Give him as glass of soda water followed by a glass of milk. It's an old women's recipe, but sometimes that is better than what we know."

Then he said, "How long did it take you to go to town?"

I said, "I don't know. It's twenty miles but I know it didn't take me half an hour." It was about fifteen to twenty-five minutes.

"Well, if you can make it in that time," he said, "take him home. If the cop comes and wants to stop you, roll down the window and put out a white hankie. He'll pass you and take you right to the hospital."

**BG:** What did the doctor say to Richard?

**AM:** A glass of soda water followed by a glass of milk.

- BG:** Did it help?
- AM:** Yes. He got over it and was never sick since. The next day he was fine.
- CM:** It wasn't his appendix, it was something lodged in his tubes or something that wouldn't. The milk and soda would make it move.
- BG:** Were there other home remedies? Did you use Vicks Vapor Rub?
- CM:** Yes, and we also put mustard plasters on their chest.
- BG:** How do you make a mustard plaster?
- CM:** You use dried mustard, but I forgot already. I think you had to take a little flour, mix it with water and then put it on the chest, and cover it up with a cloth. That's about all that I remember we used to use.
- BG:** Did you get German newspapers?
- CM:** No we didn't. My folks did, but we didn't.
- BG:** Was it the "North Dakota Herold"?
- AM:** Yes, I loved to trade young horses and break them.
- CM:** I saved one of the newspapers. I don't remember if Mother's funeral was in it, but I saved one and I still have it.
- BG:** Do you remember when your folks got their first car? Let's say when you were small, did your folks always have a car?
- CM:** Yes. As far back as I can remember they had one of those Model T Fords. Then after that they got a Model A, I remember that.
- AM:** My folks had a Model T, but they didn't have that when they first started because I remember seeing them with the horses. When I was born they said that if they drove in water I would scream. I was always afraid of water.
- BG:** Do you remember when you got the first telephone? Did you always have a telephone?
- CM:** No, we didn't have a telephone until we were married for a long time.
- AM:** A couple of years before we got married we built telephone lines from where the folks lived about six or seven miles northwest of Dickinson, and we had a couple of neighbors to the north and we built it over to the main line.
- CM:** I remember when I made my First Communion. We drove to Gladstone with horse and buggy. It was muddy and Dad was afraid we would get stuck if we took the car so we drove with horse and buggy.
- BG:** So you drove the horse instead of the car?
- CM:** Well, there was four of us making our First Holy Communion at the same time.
- BG:** From the same family, brothers and sisters?

- CM:** Yes. I had a step-brother who was six months younger than I was, a brother who was a year and a half older, a step-brother about the same age. So we all made our Communion together.
- BG:** Did you wear a nice white dress for your First Communion?
- CM:** Yes. My mother made it. I don't remember if she made the veil but she made the dress.
- BG:** Did your mother make other clothes also?
- CM:** Oh yes. My mother was a good seamstress. She made all her own clothes and ours as we grew up.
- BG:** Did she had a sewing machine?
- CM:** Yes.
- BG:** Where did she buy the cloth?
- CM:** The stores in town. There was a Schwartz at that time.
- BG:** Did you use flour sacks?
- CM:** For some of them.
- BG:** Then later on did you have the nice flowers on the flour sacks?
- CM:** Yes. We still got them when we were first married which had those prints on the flour sack. I used to use twelve one-hundred pound sacks of flour a year. So I had a lot offlour sacks.
- BG:** That is a lot.
- AM:** For two old people I bet we use a lot more flour than the average family nowadays. All the kids like the dough food. When she makes strudels, kase knephla, or something and the kids found out, they came over.
- BG:** When you are gone, how would you like your grandchildren to remember you?
- CM:** I hope they remember the good things. We used to always have Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter at our house until this last year. They were all here.
- BG:** Did your parents teach you how to raise children?
- CM:** No. They never told us much.
- BG:** They didn't interfere.
- CM:** No, I guess they thought if you are old enough to get married you should know how.
- BG:** How were children punished when you were a child?
- CM:** With a strap.
- AM:** I never used a strap on any of my children. My dad never used it on any on his.
- BG:** Did they show signs of affection? They didn't hug or give you a lot of hugs either did they?

- AM:** No. When my dad said something everybody listened. And when I said something they listened. My son, Anthony, had two girls and he claimed he never spanked either one of them. Then I or my dad said something, you knew you didn't have to ask twice.
- BG:** Did your parents get old and need special care when they got old? Did you have to put them in a nursing home?
- CM:** My Mom died when she was nearly 72. At that time there were no nursing homes yet. She was kind of down.
- BG:** Did anyone take care of them at home?
- CM:** No. They could take care of themselves. When she was very sick someone was expected to stay. They always seemed to take care of themselves.
- AM:** How long was mother in a wheelchair?
- CM:** Twelve years. Dad took care of her but she could do everything in the wheelchair.
- AM:** She made bread, and cooked meals.
- CM:** The only thing she couldn't do, I guess, was make a bed.
- BG:** Who made the decision in your family and in your parents family, regarding how to spend money?
- CM:** That I can't tell you. There was very little communication between the family and the folks.
- AM:** When I first went to her folks to eat a meal, it was quiet. You heard the clock tick on the wall.
- CM:** We were scared of our step-dad.
- AM:** At home we always discussed what we were going to do while we had a meal. We always ate together at the same table. She had to eat downstairs and her folks ate upstairs when she lived at home before we were married.
- BG:** When you were young did people make fun of you because you were German?
- CM:** No, all the neighbors were German. So it didn't matter.
- AM:** Now out here there were a lot of Bohemians, but when they talked to us they would talk German. However, when a Bohemian came by they would talk Bohemian.
- BG:** You learned to talk English in school, did your parents want you to talk German at home?
- CM:** We always talked German at home with the folks.
- AM:** And my dad talked English, but my mother if someone asked her something in English, would answer in German. She always talked German.
- BG:** So your dad didn't say you were to talk in German at home?
- CM:** Dad could talk English. Mom did too, she kept the teachers a lot so she had to learn the English language.

- BG:** So she kept the teachers. Did you have room for the teachers?
- CM:** Yes. We had an extra bedroom.
- BG:** Were you able to walk to school?
- CM:** Yes, we walked all the time except when it was terribly stormy. But otherwise we always walked.
- BG:** Did you know what the teacher paid for room and board?
- CM:** I think it was \$45.00 a month, I'm not sure though.
- BG:** Maybe not that much.
- CM:** Maybe it was only \$25.00 because I think they only got \$45.00 a month for teaching.
- AM:** I think my sister Margaret boarded teachers too and it was \$25.00.
- BG:** After you got older, did some people laugh at you because you couldn't talk English well?
- CM:** We could talk it good because we started school when we were six. And we always had to talk English in school. All the neighbors were of the same nationality. When we all got together we always talked English.
- BG:** If you would have had the chance to go to high school do you think you would be doing something different? What would you have done if you had gotten an education?
- CM:** When I started school the fall of the year I was in the eighth grade. My mother told me before I started, "This is your last year. If you make it fine if you don't that's it. That is the end." There was no such thing as thinking of high school.
- AM:** And when I got older, in the fall and spring, I always had to stay home and help, so I never did have much schooling.
- BG:** When you think back now would you want to do something different?
- CM:** I don't think it would have made any difference. I am satisfied.
- AM:** I loved horses too much.
- BG:** Do you remember when there was no alcohol, when there was prohibition?
- CM:** When they used to have black-market? They had it [alcohol] when it wasn't suppose to be in public.
- BG:** So they still made it?
- CM:** Oh yes. There were bootleggers at that time. They were always scared they would get caught.
- BG:** Did your parents vote or were they interested in politics?
- CM:** That I couldn't tell you. I don't know if they ever went to an election. If they did, they didn't tell us where they were going.
- BG:** You always had close neighbors so that you could visit? Were there plenty of people around?

- CM:** Yes.
- BG:** Did you have any favorite neighbors?
- CM:** Not really. They were all acquaintances.
- BG:** When you were a teenager were there places you could go to for parties?
- CM:** Saturday night dances.
- BG:** Where did you go?
- CM:** Well, they had barn dances at the neighbors.
- AM:** When I was still single we stayed out at the old place. A bunch of us young guys got together and we would pay a dollar or a dollar and a half just so we could dance.
- BG:** A dollar and a half to do what?
- CM:** So he would play all night.
- AM:** Some times we only gave a dollar.
- BG:** Did he play an accordion?
- AM:** An old button accordion.
- BG:** Did they play with a comb and a cigarette paper?
- AM:** No.
- CM:** He had a violin too, didn't he?
- AM:** Yes, later on.
- CM:** We used to have school dances and basket socials.
- BG:** Who made the baskets or who brought baskets?
- CM:** The women folks were suppose to make the baskets. Then the men had to buy them. They would auction them off to make money for the school.
- BG:** If a married woman brought a basket could someone else bid on the basket?
- CM:** Well the highest bidder gets it.
- BG:** The husbands would get jealous then wouldn't they?
- CM:** There were quite a few single, grown up girls that usually brought baskets. Then if the married women brought a basket her husband usually bought it. They ate with whoever bought the basket.
- BG:** Did everyone want to buy the school teacher's basket?
- CM:** There were some of them.
- AM:** Sometimes the school teacher's basket went quite high.

- BG:** Do you know if your parents got homestead land?
- CM:** Yes.
- AM:** Yes.
- BG:** They were still able to get homestead land?
- CM:** My folks lived on a homestead southeast of town that was homesteaded.
- AM:** My folks had a homestead north of New Hradic. They bought a farm then another farm then here.
- CM:** I think my step-dad's folks had homesteaded on the place where my step-dad had lived, as far as I know.
- BG:** You just got one-quarter then for homesteading?
- AM:** I remember when I was a kid we used to herd cattle on section seventeen, nobody had ever owned it.
- BG:** So it was free?
- AM:** I guess. They didn't have to pay rent or nothing.
- BG:** Did you have fences, when you were young?
- AM:** Yes.
- BG:** Sometimes in the fall of the year you would have to sit out there and watch the cows?
- CM:** Yes put them out in the fields and watched them so they wouldn't get into the neighbors fields. After harvest they would go out and we had to watch them because those fields were not fenced.
- BG:** Did you have a wooden house or a dirt house when you were a child?
- CM:** A dirt house when I first remember being at my step-dad's. When I grew up they built a wooden house in the twenties.
- AM:** My folks built a wooden house with shiplap on the outside and filled it with mud, then they plastered the inside with mud.
- BG:** Did they put wallpaper on it then?
- AM:** Yes, sometimes.
- CM:** Calcimine paint was used on the inside. It was a powder that you mixed with water. I know because after we were married I tried it. Wet spots would come through and I thought I was going to have to put some wallpaper on to cover it. The paper wouldn't stick because of the calcimine.
- I wall papered a whole day with the help of my neighbor. The next morning all of the paper came away from the wall.
- BG:** What was behind the calcimine, dirt? [type of white wash]
- CM:** Yes. You mixed the mud with the plaster.

**AM:** That was what they called lamah [clay in English]. They mixed it with horse manure, straw and then you would have a horse come in and trample it or they would do it with their feet to tramp it. This mixed it all up. Then they plastered the barn.

My folks had rock buildings a lot, they didn't put concrete between the rocks, they used what you call plaster, mud. They then put mud on the outside to make it smooth.

**BG:** I didn't know they used calcimine on the inside.

**CM:** Yes they used calcimine on the inside and on the outside they had kalk [lime]. That was white.

**BG:** Kalk was different from calcimine?

**CM:** Calcimine was bought in a small box. It was a five pound box about this high. I bought some after we were married.

**BG:** What was kalk?

**CM:** It was a white powder you mixed with water and then you put it on with a brush.

**AM:** Out there were some hills where we dug it up.

**BG:** So you could make your own kalk?

**CM:** My folks bought it at the lumber yard.

**AM:** My folks got it up there.

**CM:** But that wasn't white.

**AM:** It was beige or white from those white clay hills, you know.

**BG:** Do you remember mischt? Did you have to make "mischt" for burning?

**CM:** Yes, I remember after we were married I picked some.

**BG:** You just went and picked up dried cow chips? You didn't make the blocks?

**CM:** No.

**AM:** We didn't need it, but I remember it.

**CM:** We had to pick up enough cow chips incase it would rain.

**AM:** We didn't have to do it as much as other people did. We had the badlands with old dry wood, so we went out with the wagon and picked up a load of dry wood from the badlands and took it home.

**BG:** You had more fire wood.

**CM:** At that time you didn't have kerosene stove or anything to cook with. So every time you wanted to build a fire you picked cow chips, but the manure wouldn't last that long.

**BG:** Do you remember making blocks?

**CM:** No, I don't.



- AM:** You picked corn in the fall and you would bring it in. The pigs ate the corn off. The corn cobs and husks were dried and used for kindling. They burn fast and don't keep heat long.
- BG:** Did you learn to pluck geese?
- CM:** I did that after we were married. I had ducks and geese and plucked them.
- BG:** How often did you pluck them?
- CM:** I only plucked them once a year during the summer.
- BG:** Did you know when it was time to do it?
- CM:** When it got pretty warm in the summer time before they started shedding their feathers. Then you plucked them.
- BG:** Does it hurt the geese when you do that?
- CM:** Yes. They bite if you don't hold their heads. I kept the feathers for pillows.
- BG:** Did you sell the feathers?
- CM:** No, I never sold feathers.
- BG:** Did your mother have a spinning wheel? Did she make her own wool yarn?
- CM:** No she didn't.
- BG:** Did you take wheat to town to be ground or did you buy your flour?
- CM:** I remember they took the wheat in one year and had it ground.
- CM:** After the mill closed we took it down to Richardton, I think.
- BG:** Then there was a flour mill in Richardton?

**END OF TAPE**