PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Rosalyn L. Bone for the Oral History Office on July 27, 1975. Rosalyn Bone transcribed the tapes and edited the transcript. Mrs. Anna Williams reviewed the transcript.

Anna M. Williams was born in Bath, Illinois on December 10, 1895. She has lived on a farm most of her life. In her memoir she discusses farm life, attending an one-room school, foodstuff, home crafts and many other interesting topics. She enjoys cooking and is employed by a cafe. She is a member of Kiwanis Club and Girls of Yesterday. She also gardens and makes her own clothes. Mrs. Williams is an active member in church work and enjoys helping people.

Readers of this oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Anna M. Williams, July 27, 1975, Oakford, Illinois.
Rosalyn L. Bone, Interviewer.

A. I was born in 1895, at Bath, Illinois. That's where I was born. That's where my mom and dad lived at that time. Then we moved closer to Havana, Illinois when I was three. Well, it's about three miles out of Havana. Then from there I never moved anywhere else. My parents never moved anywhere else. I attended Bowman's School. That was my first school, Bowman's School, and I was six years old. I went the first three years, every day, without missing.

Q. Really?

A. (laughs) Yes, first three years. I was six when I started. I went six, seven and eight. I went three years without missing, and when I was ten years old I read library books and I got seals on library books for reading library books. From then on I finished until the eighth grade. I finished eighth grade right there at that school. Then I went to the German Lutheran School for three years, at Matanza. We were still living outside of Havana, Illinois; we were still living there. From there on I learned to help others. You know, doing things for others and getting a little spending money at that time.

Well then, from then on I went to work for my grandma. I went to work for my grandma at fifty cents a week. My grandma lived at--well, I don't know what you would call it, but it's Quiver. It's by the Quiver Beach. I went over there and went, you know from . . . Mom and Dad would bring me down and then I would stay all week and then all week and then maybe Grandma would say, "Well, you'd better stay another week. I got something else I want you to help me with." And I made fifty cents a week. From then on I come back home and helped Dad in the field.

My first experience was raising ducks. That was my first experience of the money that I made from scratch. You know, Dad would give me some ears of corn or whatever it was. I raised five, I had six, but I raised five ducklings and I sold them for a dollar each, for I wanted a five-dollar bill. (laughter) I did. (laughs) I said to myself, Boy, I was rich. And every time I see a five-dollar bill I think, "Well, wonder if that is the one I got from my ducks." (laughter)

From then on I went to working for a neighbor--right there close to home--because Mom really didn't need me and Daddy didn't need me. I worked for my neighbor and I took care of the babies. You know, the little folks; played with them. That was [for] Mr. and Mrs. Herman Koke. Yes, that was Mr. and Mrs. Herman Koke. Well then, from then on I come back home then and then I went to--I was up in bigger ages--and then I went to helping

this one and that one and this one and that one; you know, helping. "Well, you can come over and help," and, "You can come over and help," so then I went that way.

When I got married at the age of nineteen years, me and Mr. Williams settled down on the Williams homestead; that's where we settled down, on the Williams homestead. That was just, well, I don't know how many miles from Kilbourne, [Illinois] but anyway, that's where we settled down at. Then from the Williams homestead we went to . . . well, we farmed. We went to Easton. We moved to a farm up in Easton, Illinois. I cannot tell you the name of the owner of the farm, but anyway, we farmed it. We went to a farm in Easton. Then from there on--from the farm in Easton--we went back to our other farm. That was the Scheller Place and from there on we come back up here [Oakford]. We had our public sale, and then we come back and moved in 1945. . . . Yes, in 1948 was when he passed away. It was in 1945 when we bought this place. Yes, 1945. Yes, that's when we moved here. We bought it and we moved here in 1945. I've been here ever since.

Then, of course, my hobby--as they all call it--I like cooking, kitchen work, you know, or cafe. I work in cafes. That's the reason I been working in cafes. I worked here [in Oakford]. I worked here two years and I worked in there [Petersburg]; now it'll be going on two years in September I worked over there. I really enjoy my life. I want to make use of it. I just don't want to sit around. I want to be busy at something. Yes.

I got Howard and Julius and Harry and Carl, four sons. And they were born four years apart. Carl is the one that lives at Creve Coeur and he's got a family, and Harry lives at Pekin and he's got a family, and Howard lives over there by Kilbourne and he's got a family.

Q. What about your school days; what kind of games did you play?

A. Oh, we played (laughs) all the old-fashioned games. Ring-around-the-rosie and drop-the-handkerchief and hide-and-go-seek. (laughs) I don't know what all we played, I can't remember them all, but I do remember some of them.

I joined the New Lebanon Baptist Church. I was a Lutheran, but then I joined--when I gor married I joined, we all did--my family--we all joined the New Lebanon Baptist Church. I go to church and Sunday school over here, but I don't belong over here, but then I'm acceptable because I'm in the city limits and I got no way of going, you know, to New Lebanon. You know where New Lebanon Baptist Church is?

Q. Yes.

A. Well, I got no way unless Mr. and Mrs. Thomas goes, and so I just go to Sunday school and church over here [in Oakford]. That's where I'm welcome to come. And I like church work. I like to help in church. Yes, I like to work with church people. I was with Kiwanis Club and I had

Girls of Yesterday. I belong to a Girls of Yesterday Club and the WSCS of Oakford.

Q. What's WSCS?

A. That's women's . . . well, women's social work is what they call it. And then the Girls of Yesterday is a club that we have the birthdays and anniversaries and get-togethers is what we call them. That's what we call the Girls of Yesterday. (laughs) See, if we met today, then tomorrow, then she'd have it, and we'd be yesterday; but we always aim to have one member out of that club to entertain us once a week. If you entertained this week, well, then I'm one of the club and then I'm the yesterday, well, then I'll entertain you next week. That's the way we have it.

Q. Getting back to your school days, what did your school look like?

A. It was just a four-wall square building. And it was the Bowman's School that I went to up to the eighth grade. And then when I went to the Lutheran school that was at Matanza, that was at the church basement. That's where we had them. I only went to one school, is all I went. I went to a Lutheran school and it was a wooden . . . it was just a square wooden building. There were sixteen in my confirmation class. Sixteen in my confirmation class and when I graduated from the eighth grade there was twelve. When I graduated from the eighth grade there was twelve in that graduation and there was sixteen in my confirmation class.

Q. What kind of subjects did you have?

A. We had reading and writing and arithmetic and geography and history. That's what we had. And in the German school we had nothing but the catechism. You know, the Bible and the catechism. The catechism come from the Bible. The Bible is the one that the Lord Jesus advented and made.

Q. What about your teachers? Were they men or women?

A. No. I had only one [man] teacher out of my eight years of school. I only had one man teacher and that was John Iaman. John Iaman. And my first teacher was Edith Boring. Edith Boring was my first teacher when I started going to school at the age of six.

Q. At your German Lutheran school, did the preacher teach you?

A. Yes, the minister. Yes, the minister taught that school.

Q. Do you remember any mischievous things or something funny . . .

A. Yes. I got out of one and got into another. (laughter) What I liked I always aimed to try to get away with, but it didn't work. But then anyway, as my mother taught me, she says, "Keep your fingers to yourself." (laughter)

I was a lover of playing with girls with dolls. I had one great big doll and I didn't want you to touch it. And then I'd get in trouble for slapping you or pinching you for bothering my doll. (laughter) If I liked your pencil, I'd put it in my desk. And then the next morning when you come, well, you didn't have no lead pencil and I had a new pencil. Oh, I was tricky on them deals. Yes. Wasn't you?

Q. I imagine. (laughter)

A. Well, we didn't know any better but we soon learned different. Yes, we did.

Q. Do you remember anything else that happened maybe to some of the others?

A. Yes. When I was in Havana at the age of sixteen--me and my brother--and we had a buggy and Mom and Dad was there, too, but I went with Mother and Brother went with Daddy. Well, we was sent to the buggy to put something in the buggy or to get something and I left my little pocketbook in the buggy. And when I come back I didn't have it. It was my neighbor girl [that] took it out of there--was going to play a trick on me--and she took it and she give it to me at Sunday school. (laughs) I left it. It had a dollar bill in it. I can remember that just as well as not. Just was a little bitty square pocketbook--one of them snapping kind--and it had a dollar bill in it. Oh, I was so proud of that dollar bill.

We always went to a butcher shop. Every time we'd come to Havana--that was our home town--why, me and brother Ed, we'd go to the butcher shop. Well, he'd say, "Well now, what are you kids up to now?" Well, we wouldn't tell him what we was up to; but that there cheese, oh, it had such a pretty cover on it and I'd say, "Well now, we got bread at home but we'd like to have a slice of cheese for a sandwich." He said, "I don't feed hungry boys and girls." (laughter) See, that was in the showcase, you know, and, oh, it had a pretty wrapper on and we said, well, we were hungry and that cheese was so pretty, we had bread at home and he could give us some cheese; we wanted a sandwich. (laughs)

And at the grocery store them old-fashioned peanuts. They was in kind of a round keg. Well, they were roasted and I'd say, "Well, now . . ." He said, "If you got a nickel I'll get you a sack full, but if you ain't got no nickel, you have to leave them alone." (laughs) I remember that very well, going to the store. (laughs)

But I never will forget that when I laid my little purse, my little pocketbook--had a little chain on it--I laid it in the seat of the buggy and my neighbor girl seen it--and that was on Saturday afternoon--and she'd picked it up. She thought that I had forgotten it or something or when I got out I forgot it--my little pocketbook--and she give it to me at Sunday school. I remember that. But them tricks, we had all sorts of tricks.

I remember that I was suppose to spell some kind of word, and Mom said never to keep her over because walking to school was a long ways and she always liked to have me come home before dark. Well, then I missed some

words in spelling and I had to write that so many times and I had to spell that so many times and stand right there by the teacher's desk. The rest of them was all gone. I just cried, but I had to spell the words just the same. (laughs) That was my school days. (laughter) Yes, them was my school days.

Q. What kind of desk did you have?

A. We had wooden desks with iron braces underneath. We had a square desk like this [a table] and then we could put our books here [underneath] and then they had iron legs. It was a square desk just like if I put that [notebook] on top here [on the table] and then one underneath and then had iron legs. That's what we had for our desk. Then in the German school was benches. They were just a bench and then a board like this was the bench where we wrote on and here was a board. Why, we sat on just like picnic tables, you know, right along the side. Of course, they were partitioned off, everyone sat to theirself. Then it was just one long board and then this long bench, then you had yours and this [one] and that [one]. That's the way we had them in the German school. In the Bowman's School was just an iron leg like that and then a square top. That's all there was to it to them school desks. That's the only school I ever went to and then the Lutheran school. Them was the only two schools I went to.

My brother went to Havana school. He went to Havana Lutheran school but he went to the same school where I went [Bowman's School]. And I always had to take him by the hand to get him started, after I got ready to go to school with him. I'd always have to take him by the hand because Momma thought that he'd poke along and he'd never get there, and if I'd take care of him and take him by the hand when he was starting to school and . . .

He finished in the same school where he started. He started at the age of seven because he had a sickness and he couldn't start at the age of six. And he started at the age of seven and he went from the age of seven and he didn't . . . no, he didn't go to the eighth grade. No. There was something happened to him that he had to quit. He couldn't go to school every day. He went to school, I think maybe, a lot of times, he went to school about Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and sometimes he wouldn't even make it till Thursday. Then maybe he'd miss a day or maybe he'd miss two days out of his first school term.

I got a picture of myself when I started to school.

Q. Do you?

A. Yes. (Mrs. Williams goes to get her picture and returns with a number of pictures) My brother's picture. Now there's when I was eighteen. That's what I was confirmed in. . . . There's my and my husband. . . . Here's my first picture. And here's my baby picture. . . . Here's my mom and dad. I still have her wedding dress.

Q. You do?

A. I have my mother's wedding dress and she was. . . .

Q. What color was it?

A. Blue. Blue silk. Yes.

Q. It was pretty.

A. Yes. Here's my brother's baby picture. I still got my school pictures.

Q. Do you still have your wedding dress?

A. No. No. . . . Now I was going to tell you . . . Well, I guess I must have the wrong box. Here's my grandma. That's what I was looking for. I got my confirmation picture, too. (laughs) Yes. I've got my confirmation picture. . . . See, there's the minister and that was the first one that died in my confirmation class. This was the first one that died and this was the last one that got married in my confirmation class. Now that one's gone, that one's gone and that one's gone, that one's gone, that one's gone, this one's gone, there's only . . . this one, she's gone, too. There's only me and her and her and her out of the whole bunch that's left. You got your confirmation picture?

Q. Yes.

A. I wouldn't part with it for nothing.

Q. Was this considered as a large class?

A. Yes. How many was with you?

A. I think we had thirty-two. But that was the largest it had been in a long time. It's usually smaller than that. The confirmation class.

A. Yes. I had sixteen in with me. . . . There's my grandmother's Bible.

Q. Does it have all the dates in it and everything?

A. Yes.

Q. My goodness, how old is it?

A. I don't know how old it is. That's the Holy Bible. I've been so careful with it that none of the leaves gets lost. See, it has the gold edge on it. That's my grandmother's Bible. I wouldn't part with it for nothing.

Q. No, I wouldn't either.

A. I very seldom keep it outside. I was trying to find . . . Carl's wedding picture. There's George. . . . I think their pictures are in

here. If I can find it pretty soon. . . . Now see here's my other school picture. Right there. And I have followed . . . Here's Howard's boy, George when he was in service. I don't know if he still is or not. Here's Carl, my youngest boy, his wedding picture. That's when he was in service. See, there. Everybody says, "Well, you can still follow Annie and Brother . . ." Right there, there's my brother's picture.

Here's my teacher. But I can't remember if all these are still here or not but here's a boy that went to service then. He's the one that got killed out of this class, this one is the only one that I can remember of. And this little boy was the one that got crippled. His head didn't develop and his whole body . . . something happened to him when he was going to school. He was part of the time there, and part of the time not. But anyway, he developed some kind of ailment and he didn't get grown up at all. . . .

Now here's my mother's sister's family from California. Them's my mother's sister's children. She's the nurse and that one's a doctor and this one's a doctor and that one's got a different job and that one's got a different job. But these two are doctors and she's a nurse but this one I can't remember what he turned out and that one. But she was the only girl and four boys, but she turned out to be a nurse and these two turned out to be doctors, in California. Me and her started to school at the same age, but they didn't live in California then. But me and her started to school at the same age.

My grandma gave her a doll for Christmas and I got a doll for Christmas. My doll was a china-faced doll and her's was a different kind of face and she said, "If I ever get a chance at Annie's doll I'll smash it." Whenever they'd come down and we'd get together we'd have our dolls and because mine was a china-face and her's was a different kind she was jealous of me, of Grandma giving me that kind and the same Grandma gave her a different kind.

Now her name is Marie Kathryn. That's her name because she was named after her mom and her mom's husband's mom. But anyway, that's Marie Kathryn. And I'm Anna Marie. See. But her doll head wasn't like mine and she said, "If I ever get a hold of Annie's [doll] I'm going to smash it." (laughter) But she never got no chance at it because I didn't give her no chance.

See, I got the prize at the Kilbourne Centennial, you know, that time for the oldest dress.

Q. Oh, yes.

A. It's here somewhere. I got it. . . . Now here's Carl, Jr. and family. (referring to pictures)

Q. Do you remember anything about the town of Kilbourne?

A. Well, it wasn't . . . Well, when we come into the community of Kilbourne, well, I can remember Craggs and Craggs store. I can remember Miller's Ice

Cream Parlor and I can remember the shoe shop and I can remember--what was that man's name? Shults? Yes, Shults. He was the one that was selling plants at that time when I can remember because my mom and dad got plants from him.

My dad took grain to Kilbourne at that time when we lived on this other place, not this last one but the other one. He took grain to the elevator and it was between two great big rolling stones. The man would let the grain run out of the sack into this thing and it would run in; then it would be mashed with two stones, just like that (rubs two hands together). I can remember that because my dad, once in a great while, he'd take Brother along, but no very often because he didn't want, you know, the kids to be bothering the kid over there [at the elevator].

Q. Could I . . .

A. I can remember . . . What were you going to say?

Q. Could I take a couple of those pictures and have copies made off of them?

A. I don't care. Now what is it you want?

Q. I want the picture of you.

A. Oh, me?

Q. Yes.

A. This one?[1]

Q. Yes, I want that one.

A. Here's my brother.[2]

Q. Yes, I'll take him, too. He's talked about.

A. Do I get the picture back?

Q. Yes. You'll get these back. I'll have a copy made and then you'll get these back.

A. Now what else do you want? My mom and dad?[3]

Q. Yes, I'll take them. I'll take any of them that you're willing to . . .

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[1]Mrs. Williams' confirmation photograph in collateral material.

[2]Photograph of Mrs. Williams' brother Ed in collateral material.

[3]Photograph of Mrs. Williams' parents' wedding in collateral material.

A. What I mean is what you would find out in the group.

Q. Yes. See, I'll have these copied and then they'll . . .

A. There's my wedding picture.[4]

Q. Yes. I want that one, too. Okay.

A. Well now, that's it. Here's my baby picture[5] and there's brother Eddie. (laughs) Now you have followed my picture from the time I had my picture taken, if you noticed it . . .

Q. I'll take that one if it's all right.

A. Yes.

Q. Yes, I've seen you all the way through. What about your farm life? Did you have animals?

A. Oh, yes. My first experience was--I had a calf. I took care of a calf and fed it and took care of it from the time it left its' mommy. I sold it and what money I got off of it I went and bought me some chickens, baby chickens, with the money that I got from the calf. I turned around and bought me some baby chickens. Well, I raised the baby chickens. After I sold the baby chickens I, yes, I got the baby pig. . . . I had the baby calf; that was my first one--that was little Reddy--and then I had my baby chickens and they were White Rocks. Then, no, I didn't get no more chances to have anything I called my own. Only, no, because brother Eddie had the little pony. He's the one that had the little pony, brother Eddie did. He didn't finish his job up with the little pig that . . . I can't remember that much about back where he got that pig from but somebody give him a pig and that was all his and he was to take care of it until he [the pig] got big. Then that money--when he got it--he was suppose to buy himself a suit. That was his. That was his experience. But I didn't have anything else, only the calf and the chickens that I had and made my own money.

Then after that, why, after I got through school I worked, helped out to different ones, and then my spare time I was learning to, you know, to sew at home. Mom learned me and then different ones that showed me, and then from on out . . . But anyway, I only had them two experiences that I had to take care of and call my own.

Q. Did your father have any animals?

A. Oh, yes. Pop had sheep. My dad had sheep and he had hogs, and you know, cattle. Yes, because I always got . . . When my dad had the sheep, why, the man would come and shear them.

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[4]Mrs. Williams' wedding photograph in collateral material.

[5]Photograph of Mrs. Williams at age six in collateral material.

Q. Did you watch them shear the sheep?

A. Yes.

Q. Was it fun to watch?

A. Yes. Because that fuzz, that wool, and then them little scraps, I'd always pick them up. I remember making . . . I had one little bitty bunch--it had the skin off--and I thought that little sheep that they had cut his flesh, but it wasn't. It was just shaved real close. I made a pincushion out of it. Out of that little bitty, just a little bitty piece of sheep wool; I made a pincushion out of that.

Then my dad raised colts. He had mother horses and he raised colts. Then me and brother Eddie, he was (telephone rings) . . . Somebody's wanting something. (tape turned off and on again)

Q. Did you make your own clothes?

A. Yes. I still make my own aprons and dresses. I still do my own sewing. There's my sewing machine.

Q. Are those horses out here yours?

A. No, they are not mine. No.

Q. You don't have any animals then?

A. No. I can't take care of them because I'm gone all of the time.

Q. Did you do your own butchering?

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. How did you do that?

A. Well the men, they killed the hogs. My dad and the neighbors, they killed the hog and then they scrapped it. I was out there a lot of times and I'd take a butcher knife and I'd pedal around, too. After they had the hogs killed, they'd hang them up and wash them off on the outside. Then they'd take the insides all out. Then we prepared our own meat for winter and summer. And we butchered the beef, too, at home. My dad and my mother and after I got married me and my husband and the neighbors got together. We still butchered our meat. Yes.

Q. Did you make head cheese and . . .

A. Yes, and blood pudding and crackle and all of that. Just like your grandmother did.

END OF SIDE ONE

Q. How did your dad farm? With horses?

A. Yes, horses and mules. I plowed with two wheels and three horses, my first experience was when I helped my dad. I had a two-wheeled plow and three horses hitched to it. Plowed. Plowed the ground. And I planted potatoes and bugged potatoes.

Q. Bugged potatoes?

A. I bugged them. Yes, I bugged them. I picked the bugs off by buckets. Just pick them all off and put them in a bucket and take them and put them in a paper sack and burn them; when I was a kid. (laughter) And tomato worms the same way.

Q. Did you have a big farm?

A. No. One hundred sixty acres. That's what my dad and mom had, and that's what I was raised on, one hundred sixty acres. I didn't learn no language--all German--until I got to school; then I had trouble because I couldn't talk nothing else but low German. See, I could not talk nothing but German. I couldn't; every time I'd say Danke schön, Gutten Tag, everything was low German. Then when I went to school it was just as easy as pie, but when I started: "That little ole Dutch girl, that little ole Dutch head." And boy, they'd just tease me and stick me in the corner and push me around. I couldn't begin to think of one word that I had to say in English and I really had a tough time learning English. I did now. There was no two ways about it.

I never will forget it. Mom would try to tell me something and I'd say, "No, the teacher said not that," and of course, I was German and I said, "No, no, that won't work." And then I learned high German. Well, then I learned low German, high German and American. I went at it backwards. Started at it backwards. I never will forget that either.

They got honey, a bunch of honey and he didn't know how to strain it. (referring to telephone call)

Q. How do you strain it?

A. Warm it and melt it, and then that beeswax will all come to the top and the honey will go through. That's the way to fix it.

Q. Have you ever worked with beeswax? Made candles or anything out of it?

A. No. I know how to render lard, and I know how to stuff sausage, and I know how to do all of that, that's for sure. Because I was made to do it whether I wanted to or not. Yes, I learned all of that. I had to whether I wanted to or not.

I used to knit my own stockings. My grandma showed me how to knit my own stockings. Start at the top and put the knitting . . . I believe if I just get myself calmed down, I believe I could go it yet. But I wouldn't promise what it would turn out because that was when I was eight years old

when my grandma taught me how to knit my own mittens and my own stockings. You get the yarn and steel needles, knitting needles. Then you take it off of one and put it on the other, take off of one and put on another, and pretty soon you'd have a great big long stocking. I learned that. After that I couldn't get myself to do no fancy work, no embroidery work, no stitching like that. No. And yet to this day I can . . . I piece quilts. That's my lover's job, piecing quilts. I like to piece quilts. Take quilt patterns and make something out of them, make quilt tops. I still do that in the wintertime.

Q. Your mom and dad just spoke German?

A. Yes.

Q. Did they come from Germany to America?

A. No, Grandma and Grandpa did. And that's where they got their low German and the high German. My mom talked high German and my dad talked high German; their mom and dad taught them. Then when Mom and Dad got married, why then, they both went to the low German. See, that's where I got the low German and the high German mixed in, with Grandma and Grandpa and Mom and Dad. I had quite a time of it but, boy! Every once in a while I run across Harmon Sebade and there was Mrs. Dick Van Horn, every chance me and her get together we start back on our old route. Does Grandma still talk it? Very much?

Q. Not very much.

A. But I bet she ain't forgot how.

Q. No, she hasn't.

A. How old it Grandma now? I'm 79 and she's?

Q. Seventy-seven.

A. I knew there wasn't much difference between your grandma and me. Mrs. Dick Van Horn, I met her, oh, there the other time down at the fish fry, corn boil. We had quite a talk. And Harmon Sebade, me and him, of course, we were related, and then Frieda and Wilhelmina Hahn. See, they are related to us, too.

Q. Oh, they are?

A. Yes, on my husband's side. See my mother-in-law was high German and low German and she come from the old country. She learned her low German in here. That was Augusta Shults; that was my mother-in-law, Augusta Shults. And then Aunt Mary Hahn--she was an aunt to me--they all came from the old country. Gertrude's mother came from the old country, too. Her mother; Gertrude's did.

Q. Did they ever talk about the old country?

A. Well, they did. They explained things, how they had to live when they was young people: what they had to do and what they had to live with and what they had to put up with. They was really in an awful shape from what they had to work with. Because they cradled. Instead of having sickles and scythes they had to cradle. They had a wooden handle, something like this, and then a cradle with a wooden bar and then they take it like that and then they'd rake the wheat together and the rye and then take some of that rye straw and tie it around it; made a bundle out of it.

I never did learn that. But anyway, I could imagine from the way they were telling that that's the way that it had to be done. They had to take it in one hand and [kind of scoop the grain into the cradle] and then they'd put that all like that and then put it in a pile. Then they'd get a straw of what they had and tie it up with and then set it up like shocks.

I heard Grandma and Grandpa tell that, but I don't know how it's done. But anyway, just by their expression is what I had to go by. Because, see, I wasn't old enough to . . . Then they never come over here until my mom and her . . . Let's see, there was Annie and Sophie and Lizzie and . . . See, Mom had four sisters. And when their parents come from Germany they all came and settled. They settled by . . . it was up on the other side of Matanza church, up in there. And there was a great big pond and a great big lake. They raised geese and ducks and turkeys. Then they'd have them out in big ponds.

I was down to Grandma and Grandpa's house once or twice that I can remember when they lived there. Because them ducks and them geese and them turkeys always had--them turkeys--nests up along the lake like in that big tall grass. Then they'd always drive the turkeys up to the house. There'd be one of the gobblers or one of the hens they'd pick out and then they'd take some kind of rag Mom said and then they'd shake that rag, they'd call them. Them turkeys would follow them up to the house just like you see a string of cattle, you know, going down the path. I can remember that but I never . . . You know, I wasn't old enough to realize, but my mom told me afterwards how she had to lead the geese and the ducks and the turkeys from the water pond and from that slough and then carry it up to . . . It was pretty near like Nigger Lake is now. I can remember that much. It was just like Nigger Lake. It was a slough or a pond and there were fish in it, too. Yes, I can remember that very well, how they had to handle their livestock, Grandma and Grandpa.

Q. Do you remember Nigger Lake being there before?

A. Yes. Yes, I remember that very well. My dad and my mom used to have to drive through there with the water coming up to the wagon wheels; coming way up there. Oh, it was deep. Yes, it was and the horses, my mom and dad would have to whip them when we was in the buggy to make them come through for they was afraid, you know, that it was too deep, but they did. They had them.

We had a two-seated carriage and we had a little place in the back to put the groceries and there were two small seats. One was a front seat and then a back seat. Me and brother Ed had to ride in the back seat, and we had our knees next to the front seat, and then behind us was a space to put the groceries. And them horses would splash through the water clear up to above their knees. It was pitiful. But we made it. Now they're having fish in it. They're fishing now. They're in Nigger Lake now; they're fishing.

Q. Were there fish in Nigger Lake before?

A. No, no.... Nigger Ben is the one that I can remember. He'd always tell the people when the water was getting up. He'd always stand there with this kind of a blinker and then Mom and Dad would have to drive straight towards him, you know, guiding. I can remember that. They called him Nigger Ben at that time. That's all I ever knew [about] it. And he'd say this way. He'd stand there and the water, you know, keeps coming up. And then when they didn't have a light to guide they closed the road. Then you'd have to either go way on around, you know, for the fields where you could get through. I can remember that.

When I use to go to town with Mom and Dad and Brother we'd always have to hold something. Mom would have to hold maybe the flour or the sugar or something that would melt, you know, when the water come into the wagon. Mom would never let us have our shoes on while we was coming through because of wet feet. Mom didn't want our shoes to be wet and we'd sit there with our bare feet and then when we got through the water and then when we got uptown, then we'd put our shoes on. I remember that. Me and Brother would be sitting there splashing water on our feet. (laughter) Yes. I remember that very well; old Nigger Lake. Yes.

Q. Did Nigger Ben live around there or something?

A. Yes. He was an old man who had a cabin. He had it built like this [steeped on top]. It was a long narrow cabin just on the west side of the road right there by that great big tree. And he had a dog. Oh, he was a great big old black dog. And that dog could swim. When he [Ben] went to town he had a--well, I'd call it a mule but it had a different shape than a mule--and he had a two-wheeled cart and this old mule--it wasn't a mule it had a different name. He had that cabin and had it over there and the water kept bothering him and--you know, where they used to have them races over there by Umlands. Well, then that house right there is where they had them [the races; horse shows], well, whatever you call them. That ain't rodeo, but anyway, there's where he built another small house. Then he had just a two-wheeled cart and--it was a different name besides a donkey or mule--and when he'd hitch [the animal up] he had just a collar and a bridle and just two lines. He'd come to the farmers--when the water went down--he'd come to the farmers to get something to feed his mule or buy something like out of the garden or something.

I remember him one time coming up to my mom and dad--I didn't know him and I was always kind of afraid of him and everything--and he always wanted

to pick my brother up and give him a ride on that two-wheeled cart. And I was always afraid that he'd never bring my brother back. I remember that very well, just as if it had been yesterday.

Q. Did he live there long?

A. Oh, yes. I don't know how long, but he lived there a long, long time that I can remember. Because from that place on to up to there, my mom and dad never moved anymore after that. I finished up there and I spent all my days right up there with them until I got married. But anyway, then that man, he lived there I don't know how long. I don't remember how long he lived there beforehand.

But anyway, the neighbor that lived, you know, where that house is up there from that side [west] of Nigger Lake. You know, there's a house, well, it's a better place, now. There was a man that had cows, this old man would come with his cart and a bucket that had a lid on it and he'd always get milk from that place; from them people that lived up there. Yes, I remember that because a lot of times we'd see him coming from there of an evening or afternoon, why, he'd come from there and got his milk. He had a great big old long can with a handle on it and he had them wheels--they were big high wheels--and he had a seat, you know, like a pony cart, now. And then he'd have that milk can setting in front of him and that donkey--as I call it. He'd go walking along and he'd sling his great big old ears like he was wore out. He'd come along with him. (laughs)

How many times did he come after my brother and wanted to take him to town and get him some bean candy or soda pop or something and I'd always say, "Now, you going to bring him back? You going to bring him back?" (laughter) Yes. Yes, I can remember them days real well from then on; them days.

Our first Sunday school picnic that we had was over there. Well, I don't know whatever become of it, but anyway, our first Sunday school picnic and our family picnic and our fish fry picnic was over there by . . . up there in that community. Do you know where the Sherman Valley school center is?

Q. No.

A. It was up in there where we first . . . Sherman Valley [approximately two miles west of Easton, Illinois]. It was a schoolhouse or a hall, or whatever it was. I can remember us different families going together and having a picnic there; Sunday school picnic. And this old man [Nigger Ben] was always in some crowd. They would say, "Well, come on, you can join in. You're there by yourself, come on in." They always, different ones, you know, always invited him to be with the crowd. And could he ever play that violin and then them old-fashioned songs. He'd always like . . . well, I can't get it hanging but anyway them old-fashioned songs: "The Red River Valley" and I don't know what all but anyway, "The Swanee River" and then that one German song. But anyway, he could really sing and play. He had a little violin.

That's where one time, I don't know how many of us, about fifteen or twenty, had got the chiggers or jiggers up there. (laughter) Beggar's-lice[6], or whatever it was. Boy, our clothes was just in a bunch. They were little, hard . . . They weren't bugs but they were just things that you gather and it stuck to your clothes. Boy, we were in the timber there and we got chiggers and (laughter) and it wasn't no mosquito bites it was something else that the weeds that we went through, they just clung on to our clothes. We wasn't the only ones. Everybody that was there. Went out through the timber or along the road where you were visiting, why, pretty soon you'd walk along there and you wouldn't realize what you were getting into. Boy, they was something. I can remember that very well. That was when we all got our young generation and school children, mothers and fathers and, you know, how a group will get together. That's where we all went down there and had our Sunday school picnic.

Our threshing crew, well, you know, all the neighbors, the threshing crew, everyone that was in that territory, well, you had your threshing crew. That crew [went] from one place to another. We had our threshing crew and we brought basket dinners. Well, threshed and, oh, about six or seven different families all united together and we'd all bring a basket dinner and that was the threshing crew. Then we'd have, as we say, just like a family reunion. That was up there [at Sherman Valley]. That was when I was older. I can remember that because Mom and Dad and Brother, we all went up there and had a good time, social. Yes.

Q. Did you or your father shuck corn by hand?

A. Yes. Yes, we had corn. I shucked many [ears] of it. I know. White frost clear up till here and shuck, bang, boom, mittens all wet and gloves was all wet and ears all cold. (laughs) That was the hard time, that was. That wasn't no easy time, no.

Q. Describe the house you lived in. How many rooms was in it?

A. Well, we had four rooms. I had a room, Brother had a room and Mom and Dad had a room. Well, then that was what was built on last as we got older. But when we were small we slept in one room and Mom would have a . . . well, I could just remember a curtain or a shade and I slept in that till, oh, I guess I was twelve years old--because Brother's four years younger than I am--and then Mom and Dad decided to build on and so then they built on one big square room. Just one square room with a little . . . because we had a window on that end [south] and a window on the east side and a window on the west side and a door on the north side and it was connected, you know, to the other part of the house. That was one room and they divided it off into two rooms. So then we called it two bedrooms and Mom's room and the kitchen and a front room. You can just say five rooms because, see, this big one was made into two and then we had four other rooms. And the place, if you could remember where Wayne Vanderveen lives.

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[6] Prickly fruits or seeds of various plants that cling to clothing or fur. [Ed.]

Q. Yes.

A. Well, that was the home place. That was the Bontjes home place. My mom's and dad's home place. That's where I stayed until I got married, just right up there on that one farm. Perrimans bought the place from my mom and dad. Perrimans did. They bought the place and Mom and Dad, they passed away, well, just one at a time but anyway because Dad died last and he said, "Well, I'm going to sell the farm." So he sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Perriman and they are both dead, too. See, my mom died when she was 57. And my dad, I think Dad died at age 67. My mom died with bronchial pneumonia. My dad died with, oh, he had leg trouble. It's bad legs and the word that it is now is phlebitis set in because he wasn't taking care of his health like he should have.

Q. How did you heat the home?

A. Wood and coal.

Q. Wood and coal?

A. Yes, wood and coal. As long as I was at home with my mom and dad we had to cut wood out of the timber and my dad went to Havana and bought coal. That's the way that was all put up.

Q. Do you remember how much coal cost?

A. Yes, twelve cents a bushel. Twelve cents a bushel. I remember that just as well as if that was yesterday. Yes. Of course, we had our own timber and we got the wood out of it. But that was twelve cents a bushel.

Mom made butter and churned it. Mom sold cottage cheese, clabbered milk, you know, cottage cheese. Mom made butter in squares or round ones and sold it and we sold hogs for five cents a pound. The hog meat was five cents a pound--what they sold at that time. Sold the shoulders and the hams. The hams is what we kept but the shoulders and the bacon my mom and dad sold that, you know, to get the money to transfer into groceries for what we had.

Q. Did you smoke some of your meat?

A. Oh, yes. We sugar-cured it with smoke.

Q. How did you do that?

A. Well, we had sawdust and hickory, and little chips of hickory--that was in the timber--from the wood that we cut; we kept them chips and sawdust. Made a smothering fire just like you would in a stove when you shut the damper off, just the smoke from that. That's the way we cured our meat.

Q. How long did it take to cure it?

A. Three weeks.

Q. Three weeks?

A. Yes. Then after my dad put that in there and started the smoke on it, three weeks from the time then we put [on] that white paraffin wax. My mom would melt that and put that all around there and that would preserve it. Then we'd put it in one of them German brown, real brown paper sacks and then we'd hang it up in the smokehouse.

Q. Did you have any trouble with animals trying to get in the smokehouse?

A. Yes. A lot of times if you didn't watch it'd be a cat; your own cats. You know they'd find a hole. The dog never did bother us, but the cats you had to watch out that everything was tight around the bottom so the cats couldn't get in. They'd get into the meat. We had that trouble, just our own cats, not somebody else's cats but our own. Our own dog. But we kept our dog tied up every night because my dad didn't believe on having my dog bothering somebody else. He never believed in that. He said, "That dog belongs here and he's going to have to stay here." He tied him up on a great big long chain.

Q. Did you have any trouble with skunks or raccoons or anything getting into the chicken yard?

A. Yes, in the chicken house. They bothered chickens. A weasel would cut a hole in the throat and suck the blood. Foxes took pigs. Little pigs and a big fox. Now it's deer running. But there's still a lot of varmints around yet. Yes, a lot of them.

Q. Did you make your own molasses?

A. Oh, yes, yes. That was a good hot job right out in the open. No shade whatsoever, you could just stand there and keep on stirring and feed that molasses cane . . . grow your own cane. You can see it yet down there by Quiver school. He's got a great big field over there by Atwaters, but they're going to take it to the Pekin . . . someplace. I forget now, but it's right there by McHarry's mill right . . . Atwaters, they got it and they got, oh, a great big long field of it. Then you got to take the strips. . . .

First you got to take care of it, cultivate it, do like you do anything else, then you got to go along over the whole darn field and take all the blades off on both sides of that stalk of molasses cane. Then when you get that done you pick up the leaves--that's cow feed--and when you get that done, well then, you got to go--if you're little it's a harder job but if you're a little bit taller--you got to take a knife and cut the tops off. The seeds, you know, the cane seed tops because they don't go in there. And then you take and cut it off at the ground and load it up all straight on the wagon and then take it to this here mill and the roller that rolls them stalks--just like rolled in rolls--and then there's where your juice comes out. Well, then when it gets to that pan over [there]--there's heat underneath that--and your molasses juice is running in that. You got to cook it six hours before it turns into molasses. That's the way to make molasses.

I don't want to have anymore of that six hours of cooking molasses. You got to stir that; it's a paddle, this is the handle of it and then this [the handle] sticks up. You just got to keep apushing, pushing, and pushing and pushing and pushing and then you'd have to go on that side and pushing and pushing and pushing and pushing and pretty soon you'd have a great, oh, a great big kettle--a cooper [kettle]--great big about twenty-gallon and then your molasses. Well, then you got to put a screen over that and then you got to cover it up. Then when it gets cold, you can stick a knife--I call it a knife but it wasn't a knife--and then Dad would stick that clear down to the bottom and then when it come up it drip, drip, drip, drip, drip and then you know, the thickness, you know, just like syrup is now. The thickness of it. Well, then it was done.

Well, then you got to--whether it's daylight or dark--you got to get busy before that sets--just like your jelly before it gets too thick. Then you got to get your buckets or your containers or your jugs and you got to start [putting] that [molasses] in. You can just figure three months from the time you start with that. You can just figure there's three months time before you can wash your kettle and said, "It's all done." See, it takes so long cooking--to thicken it. It's just like now you got Certo to make jelly. It ain't no fun at all to make jelly now with all this Certo and Sure-Jell. Just put it in there, (laughs) you got a nice kettle of jelly. But them days, oh.

Then when you make apple butter go and get you 25 pounds of sugar and your big old copper kettle and start your fire--don't start too heavy, just a little at a time, make a little bit bigger and a little bit bigger and then dump your 25 pounds of sugar in there and then all your peeled apples, sliced apples and cut up all the time. Then you can start making your apple butter. Then you go this way and this way and that way and this way and that way with [the paddle used to stir] that old apple butter kettle. And then put it in fruit jars. Then put your sealing wax instead of paraffin wax. You put your sealing wax around it to seal it because you didn't put no lids on it. That was fun too. That was a sticky mess. I went all through them processes. I don't want anymore of it.

And don't forget your soap cooking. Make your own homemade soap. Oh, that's worse than ever. (laughter) You got to cut all of that heavy fat up. Cut that heavy piece of fat all up--all that fat just like bacon--cut all that up in little squares and then render that out of it. Then get you a bucket of wood ashes and put some water on it and let that drip through until you got a bucket full of that wood ash--or what you took out of the stove--and water and when you get that bucket full, well, then set that bucket aside and go get you some more of them ashes from out of the barrel, them dry ashes, start putting some more water on until you get two big milk buckets full of water--I call it ashes water--and then put it in there. Then get your can of Louis Lye--but it wasn't Louis Lye, that had a different name then--and then put that in there and let that set overnight. Well, it'd be just like, you know, like your fruit salad. It would just start to get thick, you know. Well, then you'd have to leave it in that kettle and then start your fire in the morning again. Then don't stir it too much, just a little now and then; just not and go forget about it, stir it again and pretty soon your soap--you can cut clear down

there just like fruit salad--it's set clear down. Then you just go ahead and take you a big corn knife or a big knife of some kind and start cutting your soap. Would be just as white as snow. That part's easy made, but then you got to cut it and then you got to watch it. Then your water that runs out of that soap, that lye, you have to leave that on a board and then when you feel your soap after you got them bars and squares all cut. Then if it ain't sticky any more then you can put it in a box. Store it for your laundry.

Then when you want to wash, you boil clothes in a wash boiler. Take--my mom always took about that big [two inch chunk] a little square chunk to put in a boiler in the wash water. You put that much soap in there and then it'll make a suds and you put your white clothes in there. That's the way you bleached your clothes in them days. With what soap you had made. It would make it nice. Make it nice and white. Your pillow slips and your bed sheets and you slips, your white blouses or whatever you had. It made them nice. Because it was just enough of that there ashes water was just strong enough then with your other wash water and then old gold dust, you know, you could use that a lot of time. Then if you wanted to have a smell to it, you'd go and get a, oh, a limb off of a peach tree, off of a young peach tree. Oh, get a pretty good size limb about this [three inches round] and saw that all up in there and put that in your soap. That would be your scent, you know, to make a perfume. It kind of smelled kind of peachy.

Q. Did it?

A. Yes. Yes, you could do it.

Q. Smelled good then?

A. Yes. I can remember that very well. That's the reason I said every time I see, you know, the deodorizers, you know, what you spray in the homes, you know, to have a different smell. Now, you could take a peach limb and some of that ash water and put it together and it smells just like when you're coming to a peach tree. You know, when you can smell there's peaches around here and that's just the way your soap smells. But I never knew of Mom using anything else but homemade soap, and then for the smell of it she'd take that peach for a different smell. And it really made clothes nice and white. It really did.

When it come towards winter that was the time to pick your ducks. Take them poor old ducks, take them and put their head through a little hole in a coop, and then start picking their feathers off for your feather pillows. That was fun, though. Yes, a lot of times you'd get a little pinch too from the duck. But that's when we had our feather pillows. That was a good time though, to pick them. And that's the same way with the geese and the feather pillows. You can't find a decent feather pillow now. No, they don't use them anymore. They're using all this foam. Very seldom you get a hold of . . . unless somebody's aselling from way back that still had feather pillows. And that's the same way with feather beds. And that's the same way with sheep wool blankets or quilts. Very same way. You don't very seldom. . . .

I went to a sale about two weeks ago in Petersburg--well, there's more than I--and we went there and you know, $21 for one of them quilts. Sheep. It had a piece top and had a plain blanket, a plain white blanket on there and there was a layer of sheep wool about as thick as my hand and that bought $21. That sheep, they call that a blanket, a quilt.

Q. Were the feather mattresses and pillows warm?

A. Very warm. Yes.

Q. Did you sleep on them in the summer?

A. No, just in the wintertime. Just cold weather. And then we just had a cot of shucks off of the corn; the corn shucks. Go get your ticking and get your corn shucks. Go in the stock field and fix your shucks and make you a shuck mattress. Instead of having any other kind of stuff you'd take shucks. Make you a shuck mattress and make it. Boy, that was fun. Going in the corn field and picking shucks, you know, for the mattress. You didn't take the outside ones, you see, when you shuck corn, you know, you take the inside, them soft ones. Yes. In the stock field, where you shuck corn you take the inside and not what come off the ear on the outside. They was too hard. You take them soft ones on the inside and then when you'd get a great big, oh, a great big bag full, all you could carry--they were heavy after you'd get your big bag full--and that would be enough for one bed for one mattress. And then you'd put your ticking, sew your ticking on both sides on that end and then from this end put all your shucks in there until you got them pretty near as thick as this [about six inches]. Just about as thick as that. Mom always made them about that thick. I don't know, but anyway, that would be the thickness of it and then we'd have maybe a blanket over the top, or a quilt. That's what we had in the summertime. And then if you wanted to make something heavier you'd take shucks or real fuzzy straw and put that under your rag carpet to walk on.

Q. Yes?

A. Yes. Yes, my grandma showed me that. We'd have our carpet; tear up carpet rags and then sew them together all in long ends and then make carpet balls. Then you'd go and have them weaved into a carpet. Well, when you'd get that done, then you'd have a nice level floor, and then you'd go ahead and get you that [straw] and put that right underneath your carpet. Right on that bare floor and lay your carpet right down on it, and then stretch it with a pitch fork real tight and then tack it. Then you'd walk on that in the wintertime. We'd have that in our bedrooms. Yes, we had that in our bedrooms. Yes.

END OF TAPE

A. We'd have, you know, those old-fashioned curtains. And you take a curtain like that and then put the two together, and then put that long

coarse straw like that rye straw, that long coarse heavy straw, and with that you'd make pillows. Instead of that we had them pillows. See, the feathers wouldn't be so hot in the summertime, you know. See the feathers are hot and we'd make pillows out of that and then they'd be cool.

Q. Were they comfortable?

A. Oh, yes. I slept on many of them. Yes, I slept on many of them.

Q. Did you ever have square dances?

A. Oh, yes, I loved that. I went at sixteen, no, I was fifteen, or sixteen. I went on a boat when I was sixteen. I went clear from Havana, Illinois with a bunch of boys and girls. We danced on that boat and had music and had good times on that boat from Havana to Peoria, Illinois. Then we'd come back from Peoria to Havana, and that would be about four o'clock in the morning, and just change your clothes and get to work.

Q. What boat was this?

A. It was Star something. Star Valley or . . . the first name of it was the Star and it was two other names to it. And it would leave Havana about maybe six o'clock in the morning and it would probably . . . time it'd get down there . . . Well, we could have all our entertainments all the way up there and we'd have lunches: popcorn and cracker jack and soda pop and stuff like that; ice cream cones. Then we'd come back, oh, probably about sundown, just starting, you'd have to have a light on the boat. We'd get back to Havana. Yes.

I made one trip to California--I don't want to forget that--made one trip to California and I made one trip to Kentucky. I got out of Illinois two times.

Q. Were they vacations?

A. No, I went with a lady that was going to California and she wanted company. That was in 1947. The time--I can't remember what year that was, though--but I was to California and I was to Kentucky. I was two times out of Illinois. I can remember that. Yes.

Q. Did you have what they called barn-raisings? Where your neighbors and everybody got together and built a barn in a day?

A. Oh, yes. Building committees. Building groups, whatever you called them. Yes, yes, we had a lot of them. My dad was in . . . He helped, I don't know how many of them, helped him when they was building barns and sheds. Yes, I remember that. My dad and my brother; maybe this time I'd help you and then I'd help you two days and then you come back and help me two days. Well, then I'll help you and you help me. You know, you just help one and another. That's the same way with threshing. Threshing crews it's the same way. Yes.

Q. Did you have a big party afterwards?

A. Oh, yes. They called it a family gathering at that time. A family gathering at that time. Yes.

Q. Did you have school picnics?

A. Yes. Yes, we had school picnics, too. But just the teacher and the pupils went.

Q. No parents?

A. No. No. Because we never went too far away, probably. I can remember we went down to the Lawford Theater in Havana, that little Lawford Theater and we was down to Quiver Beach one time, just the teacher and the pupils. The teacher would see that maybe one of the parents would furnish transportation or maybe two of them and then she'd stay with us. Then our parents--whoever went with us--now like you furnish somebody and you furnish somebody and they'd come back and get us. We'd leave in the morning and then we'd be back home at four o'clock. Yes, that was just us and the teachers. Then we'd have to bring a sack lunch. You know, just a little lunch. And then she would take us around down there by Quiver Beach. She would take us around and show us different things of the nature of this and the nature of that.

Then when she took us to the Lawford Theater in Havana, you know, you'd see the pictures and then everybody had to have a quarter. You know, that would be your fees. She'd see that every child, or otherwise she'd count it all up and then she'd pay for the whole works, and then our parents had to pay her back.

Q. What time did school pick up and let out?

A. Well, school picked up at eight o'clock in the morning. Every morning at eight o'clock and then we'd get off at 3:00 p.m.

Q: Three o'clock?

A. Yes, we'd get off at 3:00 p.m. Instead of now they're getting off at 4:00 p.m. or 3:30 p.m. But that's the way we had it. We'd get off at three o'clock.

Q. How many months did you go to school?

A. We started in September and we ended on Decoration Day. Yes, we ended on Decoration Day. We started in September, just the first day of September we'd start unless it was on Sunday. Then from the first day of September then we'd go till Decoration Day. Because we always, I can remember when we had our last day of school because the teacher would see that some of the bigger parents would go with us, and then we'd have one of them little bitty flags and a little slip of flowers. We'd take the flowers and the flags and let the little flags go on to the river, right down to the river. Then we

sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and then there was another song that we sung as we threw those little flowers and them little flags in the edge of the water. That was for Decoration Day, for that. Decoration Day.

Q. Did you have school programs like . . .

A. Yes, Christmas programs and Easter programs. We had them right there at our school. Just our parents would come and then we would have recitations and then songs. Just like they have in dialogue. Then of course, we'd have to dress with different costumes--you know, what we'd get from home. Now the angels, they had a white bed sheet and so many girls were the angels. Just like it comes out now pretty near like the Lutherans have in the picture on the outside, that's the way. I was an angel and my mom had that old, I don't know, old piece of pasteboard the shape of a, well you know, like that to represent the wings. Then some tinsel around that, and then I was me and so-and-so, and now the boys was so-and-so, and then we had a Christmas program.

That's the same way when us older ones, when we got up to over fourteen, well, then we'd have box suppers at our school. We'd get a pasteboard shoebox or any kind of a box and we'd put maybe some popcorn in it, some cracker jack, maybe, and put in an apple, or orange, or banana or something. Then one of the big men would go up there and start with this box; how much it is. Then us girls would have a hard time keeping our secret; what one is my box and your box and find out which is yours, which is yours, is that yours? And then is that yours?

I remember one time I made one in the shape of a bucket. It was a great big bucket and round pasteboard; I sewed it together--I had a heck of a time. Then that was one there that I had to piece pasteboard in there, and then I made another one just a little bit littler, and a little bit littler, and a little bit littler, until I got just one little bitty one way at the top, you know. I sewed pasteboard together with shoestring and I had one banana in the bottom one, had an apple in the next one, had an orange in the other one. When it come to the last one I had two sticks of peppermint candy. I can't remember, and I was so confound mad that he was the one that got my box. Oh, I was mad. I was mad for a week. When we come back to school again the boys all teased us, "Your fellow; did your fellow get your box. Yes, you got fooled. Did your fellow get your box; you got fooled." That was our school days; we had box suppers.

Yes, then we took April Fool plays. Now you wasn't suppose to go but just so far with your April Fool tricks in the school; just the school together and the teacher. Then I'll play a trick on you and then somebody else will play a trick on me. But there wasn't suppose to be no money involved; it was a trick or something like that. No money was suppose to be involved, just a trick played, a trick on you and somebody else play a trick, and then we all played a trick together. Then she'd says, "Well, what was your trick? What did you do?" Well, I'd say what ever I done. I done so-and-so to him or her. Well, then she'd go on and, "Well, what trick was it that you done?" "Well, I took Annie's mittens away from her and put them in her shoes." That was my trick. Somebody took my mittens away and put them in my overshoes. (laughter) Well, that was nice days. Yes, I can remember them school days.

Q. I heard that at one time some people burned corn instead of coal. Did you ever burn corn?

A. Oh, yes. Yes. Yes, ear corn. Yes, out of the field.

Q. Did it burn good?

A. Oh, burn, yes. Burned. That made a hot fire, yes. And the only thing that we disinfected with when we had any animals that was sick or something was sulfur.

Q. Sulfur?

A. Yes, regular sulfur that you get from a drugstore. Sulfur. That was to disinfect. Now if we had any ailments, like if we had the croup or the whooping cough or the measles or anything, we'd have to . . . The doctor would say, well, now you're not suppose to go anywhere. You're suppose to put a piece of paper out and tell the neighbor or somebody that comes by what you want on that piece of paper, but he's not suppose to pick it up or touch it. He's suppose to copy off it off on [something] and then bring back the stuff what you had on that piece of paper.

Then Mom would get a little bunch of coals, live coals out of the cook stove or heating stove and then put a tablespoon of sulfur on it, and then we'd go out of the house. Maybe we'd go to the shed of some kind and Mom would have that smoke come all around good in the house, and then Mom would shut the doors and the windows. Then Mom would go back and have something tied over her mouth, and then she'd open up the doors and then she'd go in there—she couldn't stand it very long--and then she'd go in there and then get all the windows and doors open. Then we aired them all out and then our germs would be killed. Then we would be safe to go back to school or whatever. We could go then to neighbors. Our germs would be killed. Yes, that's the way we fumigated with sulfur for our ailments.

Q. When you burned ears of corn did it smell?

A. Yes. Smelled just like when you're scorching popcorn.

Q. Oh, really?

A. Yes. Yes, just like when you're scorching popcorn. Yes.

Q. Do you remember the Depression days?

A. Oh, yes. When we wanted something we had to take cornmeal or graham flour or rice to get what we wanted. I can remember them. We had to substitute. Yes, we had to buy a substitute. Then we had ration books. You get five pounds and I get five pounds and she'd get five pounds and we'd just get an equal amount all the way around. You'd get five pounds of sugar and I'd get five pounds and she didn't get more than I did; I didn't get more than she did. Then with the flour was ten pound bags. Then of course, we had coffee. Well, we had a great big bucket of Wishbone coffee. Well, you

was only allowed one bucket and that would have to last you until you could see the bottom.

Then there'd be a little ration book that you'd get. He'd mark you got five pounds of flour, five pounds of sugar and coffee and rice, and he'd have that in his book. Then he'd put that in your book and then you couldn't come back from that day in here and get some more. That was your share you had to get along with that when you had five pounds of sugar and ten pounds of flour.

Because on account of we made biscuits, that's the reason you got ten pounds of flour and five pounds of sugar and then just one of them Wishbone. You've seen them square lard buckets that we got now on the market, well, that's the size of coffee bucket you got of ground coffee. Then you'd put it in your coffee pot, your open coffee pot, and cook it. Then you made your own biscuits. If you wanted to bake bread and you could bake bread, why, then you'd have to sign for baking bread, and then Mom would get twenty pounds of flour to make a little batch of bread. See, it was all rationed. I remember that too.

Q. Everything was rationed?

A. Yes. Everything what you had in the store was rationed. Yes, I remember my mom only getting one spool of thread.

Q. Only one?

A. Only one spool of thread and you didn't get none until . . . You had to be careful with that and use little bitty ends. Mom had to do all our mending, our patching. Oh, boy, yes, one spool of thread. Then when we'd got so that we could get that carpet yarn, you know, well, we'd get one spool of that. Well, we used a lot of that for heavier stuff and saved our sewing thread back. See, that's the way we done that.

And whenever you . . . Like Fleischmann's yeast or Red Star yeast, you know, where you make your starter for your bread. Well, we'd get one package. Mom would get one package. Well, then she'd mix that up and we'd put it in a quart fruit jar, and every other day we'd stir it and put two tablespoons full of warm water in that, and then just add it. Then Mom would maybe bake three loaves today; most generally we washed on Mondays and baked bread on Tuesdays. Well, then Mom would bake bread on Tuesdays and then on Fridays. See, that would be our supply of bread that week. And we'd get one little small package of that Red Star yeast like you buy mix and eat breakfast food in now.

Our first breakfast food was corn flakes. That was our first fancy breakfast food we had. Otherwise, it was eggs and meat and pancakes at home. I remember that very well, too. Because Mom and Dad, they had to scimp and scimp and scimp to get by.

If Mom really had to have something that was really expensive, why, Mom would buy it this time and the next time my dad would buy something. I

remember one time when Dad bought his first wagon. Well, he said, "I got a wagon now to haul in." But he said, "It sure cost me a lot of money." Then he had to cover that wagon up until finally he built a log shed. Went to the timber, put logs on top of logs, slabbed them off on one side so they would lay flat, and then made a shed for his wagon. Yes. Then Dad had to take good care of that wagon because that would have to last him a long time before he could afford to buy another one.

Q. How long was the groceries and things suppose to last?

A. Five years. You mean the length of the . . .

Q. Before you could get more.

A. They limited you to months. You could get some anytime from this month to the next month, but you couldn't get in between the two months. But you still had your limit. Now if I went to the store this month, well, and I needed some thing I really needed, I could go back and get some the first of the next month. I could get from the first to the last, and from the last to the first I could go get some. It wouldn't bother me. They wouldn't say nothing. You could get your living but you couldn't get a big quantity. Yes.

Q. Did you ever have a car?

A. No, Daddy never owned a car. All we had for transportation was horses and buggies, wagons. No. No. Brother Eddie got a Model T Ford, but I couldn't tell you what year that was when he got that. Oh, he was twenty-two He was twenty-two or twenty-three when he got it. Pop didn't turn him loose with it because Pop used it when we had to go to a funeral or something, and then we'd all go together. But otherwise, before brother Eddie got to use that Model T Ford he was twenty-five years old.

The first time that he [Eddie] drove it was with one of the neighbor boys, but I don't remember who the neighbor boy was. Pop said it and I said it and Mom said it, "Now don't hit anything. Don't break the lights out." "No, no, we won't drive . . . no, no. We ain't going very far and we ain't going . . . we'll be right back." Well, they come back, brother Ed, he was afraid to say something and the neighbor boy was too--they broke one front light on it. They hit something going this way or that way or something but anyway, the one front light was broken. Oh, the racket was going on after that. So then Pop never let him have that anymore for, oh, almost a year. He said, "I don't care." He said, "You ain't tearing it up. I told you if you want to go anywhere you go with somebody else and see how you get there and see how you get back. That car stays right in the shed." Well, that went on and that went on. Finally he got working around and working around [and] he [Ed] got him a horse. Well, then he rode the horse. "Well, stick your car in the shed and leave it there and shut the door. I got me a horse now." Well, all right. That was all right with Dad. Dad used the horse and brother Ed had it to go horseback riding.

Well then, he got the horse Well, then somehow or another, him and another boy got a top buggy, an old-fashioned top buggy. Well, they hitched the horse

up to the top buggy, and then you go and I go with you, and you go with me. And they had a top buggy. Then they went bumming around as Dad said, "Now you're bumming again." But anyway, he had that top buggy, that horse and buggy for a long, long time. He took good care of it. Yes. But Pop after that, why, he just told him and he said no that was it. "If you want to go, you go with somebody else and then see how you get back." That car stayed in the shed.

Q. Do you remember what you were doing when you heard Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

A. . . . We was working at something. . . . We was awful busy I know. Oh, there was a lot of us, but I can't remember what we was doing; something. We just dropped everything and we come to the house. We didn't do nothing anymore and we was all . . . we just kind of like we was all stunned, but I don't remember what kind of work we was doing when we got the alarm. I can't remember that. But we were busy I know.

Q. Did your brother . . .

A. Yes, my brother Ed went one year and he was one year in service. Brother Ed, that's all. That's all he signed. That's all at that time he signed up for. I had one son and that's Carl—the one that lives at Creve Coeur—he was in service but he served for four years. And the other one just got in there and he was gone three months and he come back. That was my third son, Harry. The one that lives at Pekin. He come in, but he was only gone I think three . . . He wasn't gone six months and then he come back because he didn't pass any further or they couldn't send him on any further. But the youngest one went four years. He got his four years in service.

Q. Do you remember how you felt when you heard Franklin Roosevelt had died?

A. Yes, I was sick. That really . . . I was just a nervous wreck. That's the same way when President Kennedy . . . Oh well, it didn't affect me too much with Pearl Harbor, but when the President . . . I was a long time getting situated. I was just shocked.

Q. How did other people react? Do you remember?

A. Well, in our neighborhood that time they was all just about, "What are we going to do? What are we going to get into next?" And, "What are we going to have next?" and, "Are we going to have war?" "What are we going to do now?" Everyone that I can remember was pretty well upset and worried, and didn't know what was coming next. That was a tough time.

Q. Do you remember anything about World War I?

A. Not very much because I can't get that . . . I know it was hard times and that and they didn't have what they could have had with living and clothing and food. I can remember my grandma, my great-grandma saying that was hard times when that was. Because Mom said a lot of time they done well if they had bread and water or crackers and water if you only eat it. I can

remember that they had very hard times of living and in the buildings they weren't--Grandma said they weren't too good--the buildings, you know, where they had to live in, they weren't too good. They had to live the best they could and bunch together. I can remember that, my Grandma saying that. How they ever made it and how my grandma and grandpa made it, and then went to my dad and mom--before I came. Them years must have been awful from the way Mom said the Depression. . . . She said we was satisfied with what we had and made the best of it.

Q. What month were you born?

A. December 10, 1895. That's what my medicare. . . . My medicare, you know, my social security. See, I'm under medicare. Then, of course, the money that I get from my pay, see, I get that a little extra. See, I get social security and medicare in one. I don't get social security in a check by itself. They added that to my medicare. And I got my hospital insurance and see, they go so far with that insurance, and then I pay the balance or the burial or the funeral expenses. Well, it's left up to the ones, like the boys, that's the way it's fixed. If they want to take care of the bill, why, then, they [medicare] go so far and give their share and then you have to finish it. Boys have to finish it out. But when I go to the hospital now, they take care of that and all my medicine. Or if I have an accident that don't require no hospital, why, they take care of all of it. They go up to one thousand dollars. That's their share now if I get burned or get a toe bruised or something.

Im insured by the Oat and Eva's Cafe, see, then if I get hurt over there on their grounds, why, they have to foot the bill and the medicare ain't got nothing to do with it. But if I get hurt over here [home], or if like I am walking downtown or walking and get hurt in their hands, well, see, then they take care of me. But if I get hurt or have an accident while I'm there, why, then they got to foot the bill. See and I've been under medicare . . . see, they didn't count 48 and 49, they waited until I was 52 in that December. Then I got on their list for, see, I was disabled. See, I could work but I couldn't work like you should, you know, heavy work or anything. They put me on a disabled list and then when I got better and that then they put me right on through.

See, I've never been in a hospital. Never. As long as I can remember I've never been in the hospital. I went to a hospital doctor there, Frank Morrill, Dr. Morrill, in Havana when I had that blood poisoning in my foot when I stepped on a nail. But I didn't stay in no hospital. I never was in the hospital.

So I'm lucky so far. Ain't very many of them that . . . and just yet to this day I'm careful. I don't climb and I don't do things that I think I ought to not do. I don't do things when I'm here by myself I don't do things what I think I shouldn't do. I've only had one accident and that was last winter when I fell. It was slick ice and I had put salt on it and it thawed. Well, it froze again and I come around to get a bucket of water. I spilled some water on that ice and I just went this way and I hurt my hip on the edge of the steps. Otherwise, I never had no accident or fire or any accidents that I couldn't control myself. So I'm doing pretty good over

there in the corner, (laughter) on the outskirts of Oakford on the city limit. I'm the last house out and the first house in.

Q. That's right! Were all of your children born at home?

A. Yes. Yes, all of mine was born at home. All four boys was born at home. I never was in no hospital.

Q. Can you think of any other stories or happenings that you think would be interesting?

A. I know one time that was right after my, no, my husband was still alive. He come home from the hospital and my neighbors--but I can't tell you who it was at that time--that lived there and their house caught on fire. I took the children over to my home, and the mother, and I kept them six weeks. That's the only thing that I can remember I helped somebody real deeply in need; that they had an excitment. I told them to come and stay and we'd manage.

They went to school because it happened during school season, and she'd come over there and then she'd go back to what she could do and then come back. They stayed with me and my husband and my children and we managed it till they found a shelter. That's the only deed that I done for somebody else in real bad trouble. I sheltered them when their home was destroyed by fire. That was when I lived over on the Williams homestead over there by the Baker's schoolhouse and it was in the neighborhood. That's the only time that I helped anybody out in a bad condition. I remember that.

We were awful crowded but we bunked them together. We put the boys all together and we put the girls together, and then the mother slept . . . whatever we had to help out with. But anyway, we managed. I helped out. That's the only time that I ever was really helping out, doing a good deed for others. And I always like to help others. Don't make no difference, night or day. I'll still do it. If they're in need of help, why, I always like to lend a helping hand.

END OF TAPE