

+Recollections by Ernest, Herman & Nathan Kellenberger
Recorded by Wanda (Metzger) Messner with her mother Alice (Kellenberger) Metzger
Zapata, TX, January 1981
Transcribed by Stan Kellenberger
[WORDS IN BRACKETS ARE MINE OR FROM EUGENE'S 1968 COMPILATION]
Appleton, WI, December 2012-January 2013 [IT WAS HARD]

Wanda: Tillie & Ernest & we are going to reminisce some. Ernest: About the olden days you mean? W: yes. E: Go back a really long ways? W: Yep, a real long time.

E: Youngest years, earliest thing I can remember in Ft. Scott, KS, I can remember a park that was down to, what they called a sunken park and I can remember the trip up to our new home in Sabetha, KS a long trip & we stopped to change trains at a ... [ACCIDENTALLY ERASED, SORRY – SAME TRIP MAY BE DESCRIBED BY HERMAN BELOW]

...I took a look down an elevator shaft. They only had a grill to close the door to the elevator, so my little eyes just could look down the great big dark hole and it never left me, I was so scared. I don't remember the rest of the trip. But, the Bern I do remember that we lived on the Frank Stove farm 4 miles east of the hospital & its still there as far as I know, the farm home.

And my dear Sister Martha gave me a beautiful present; it still stands way out in my memory, a coaster wagon, I think for my birthday. And I coasted down the road made a turn and down hill all the way. And I coasted and I coasted and I coasted until I got sick to my stomach and I vomited.

Well, that's not all let's go back a minute. Aunt Martha, again, for Christmas gave Herman and I a nice train. I think Herman got a streetcar or something on that order and I got a locomotive. And they were big, quite big. And oh how we played with them on Christmas night, you know. Oh those were such enjoyable times.

And then I started school while we lived on that farm. And we went to the IXL School, country school, it's no longer there. And I can remember playing Pom-Pom Pull Away and oh-boy were those games fun. And I think I had just learned how to talk English fairly good, but naturally I had to learn more in school, so. But I forgot myself; I got so excited about playing Pom-Pom Pull Away that I started talking Swiss. And all the kids looked up at me and stared at me and oh-my, what a, what a time.

But anyhow, then later on we moved to the farm at Bern, just east of Bern about a mile and a half. It was kind of a hilly farm but I can remember that quite well. Skated to school all the way because ice had formed on top the snow and we slid down the hills and I learned/oh I can remember so well and my father come to me and he said, "Ernest you're old enough now you can learn to plow corn." oh I hated to leave my nice sandbox under the big cotton wood tree that used to be there.

W: How old were you.

E: I suppose 7 or 8, something like that. But I got out there and they put me on the riding cultivator, the only riding cultivator we had the others were all walking plows. I made it; I learned how to plow corn.

And then we built a silo. We built a wooden silo. And when it was empty I learned that it was a lot of fun to run on the inside of the foundation. It was a wooden one, a wooden silo and when I ran fast enough I wouldn't fall down in the pit. So I ran on that until I got good and tired. When I slowed down I'd have to jump down.

Now at the Bern school; we started at Bern school the old wooden school that used to be there. I remember that I did something wrong because I was sent up to the Principal and oh boy that scared me.

One time I opened my lunch pail or I probably was a little careless and the lunch pail fell and broke open. And it had some pork or (say what do you call it?) head cheese isn't, yeah head cheese yeah. I had a head cheese sandwich. And the head teacher came in and evidently he didn't know what head cheese was and he said, "Do you want that?" I must have told him yes because I like it, it was soured a little bit and I liked it. Why to this day I like it.

W: What other things did you have for lunch?

E: Jam and butter and things like that. I think a lot of jam and butter & sometimes cheese things like that. We used to make home made cheese. We had home made cheese.

W: Syrup?

E: Yea. What do you call that syrup that you make out of ... Sorghum. Yea we had a lot of sorghum we had quite a bit of sorghum. I still kind of liked it a lot.

I have to go back and tell a story. This involves Herman. He of course could play baseball but I was too little to play baseball so I can remember when he threw the ball it usually wouldn't go where he wanted it to go and they started calling him Glass-arm Kelley so I thought that was pretty funny.

W: When you were in school did you talk English and at home you had to talk Swiss?

E: Yes, we learned Swiss from childhood first & we gradually learned English afterward. But sometimes I got myself twisted up and forgot when I should have been talking English to the kids once in a while I'd slip in a word of Swiss and then they'd laugh at me.

W: At school then they didn't know any Swiss. They were all English.

E: Yes, the kids all spoke English at school. However there were some of our people there and they could have talked Swiss.

W: Did your parents learn English?

E: Oh yes, my father could talk English almost without any dialect, without any accent I mean. Mother could talk real good English but you could tell she was raised under another language. [LEFT OUT THE ATTEMPTS BY UNCLE ERNEST TO MAKE SWISS-GERMAN SOUNDS] The real test if you can talk Swiss is to say cow, calf and toad. If you can say this so someone can understand than you can talk Swiss.

Well, then we can talk about moving to Iowa on the train because I do remember I will never forget it. It was in the wintertime of course. I think March possibly or earlier than March. We got to Omaha and the reason I remember it is it seemed sooo long, the train moved slower ,of course, but the lights of Omaha went by just so slow it seemed like that city must be terribly big. [HERMAN SHARES THIS IN MORE DETAIL BELOW]

W: How old were you?

E: I think I was, let's see it was 1917, I was eleven... I was eleven years old then. And, of course then when we moved, we moved on what is now the Jake Wolf Farm. They used to call it the Davenport Farm years ago because Mr. Davenport, the banker owned it. At that time, my father rented it from him.

The family, mother of course, wanted me to go to the country school. But I had been used to town school & I kind-a, I didn't want to go to the country school at all. I wanted to go to the town school. But anyhow they gave in. I don't remember how much I coaxed but I got to go to the town school. Because they didn't hardly have a teacher there whatever, they would have had to hire a teacher, there really weren't many students going there. So I got to go to the old wood school in Lester. Now some of you Lester folk can remember the old wooden school and then later on they built the brick school I think on the same site unless my memory fails me on that. I'm pretty sure.

That was the way it was, I think I was in the fifth grade, one thing comes to mind, I think it must have embarrassed me. I had to wear Herman's old pants one time, maybe more than once maybe several times. I happened to have my hands in my pockets and I pulled my pants up and the kids were laughing, looking at me and staring with their eyes open and my pants came up to my knees. The pants were too big for me.

I can remember that I thought Lester was an awfully cold country because when we got into the depot and got off, the wind was blowing hard from the north, the northerly direction and it was awfully cold. And I know, we rode out to the farm, two miles probably, on a wagon, horses. And the wind was so cold. But we learned to like living there. We lived on the Davenport farm 2 or 3 years we learned to like it real well.

It was a half-section farm we raised grain, corn, barley and oats. We had milk cows and we had pigs. We had to farm with horses. And later on my brother Dave I guess bought a tractor, a Mogul. Any of you old timers remember the old Mogul? It had only one cylinder. And we started plowing with that that was quite a thing to be plowing with a tractor. And one time we plowed one field in a circle because it was square. We started in the middle. And I guess brother David heard about it, read about it. And we started plowing in a circle and it causes the tractor would put the front wheel into the furrow and it would plow by itself. And that was quite an innovation.

W: Do you remember your brothers and sisters leaving home?

E: Yes, I can remember that quite well. Henry and Nathan both had to go into the army. Henry was in more than a year considerably more I don't remember for sure how long now. Nathan was in about three months and then the Armistice

was declared and so, then they got out. Henry was in France oh quite a long time and he was up near the front. Then we had to farm it alone.

Then father got, father and mother, mother wanted to go visit her sister in Rockville, Connecticut, the Luginbuhl family. And I can remember taking a load of wheat to town to help pay for the trip. And I can still remember them leaving. I can remember taking them to the train and leaving them there. But then father got sick at Niagara Falls. He wanted to see (and I'll say this in Swiss) he wanted to see Gottus Wunder and that was the big Niagara Falls that was well known. And they stopped there and he got feeling bad there. Because, he went, used to go at this time of year, every year for hay fever and asthma which he had pretty bad.

But they went from Niagara Falls to Rockville, Connecticut where we of course have a big church. There he got pleurisy, pain in his back and the lining of the lungs I guess that's what it is. They visited for a couple days there and then he got sick in bed very, very sick and he got pneumonia. The older children (brothers and sisters) told us that this was the third time he got sick with pneumonia and he died there in Rockville.

Rose had gotten married [12/20/1916 IN SENECA, KANSAS] just before we came to Iowa. And Lena wasn't married yet I think. But then she married Ben Metzger. Ben passed away too six months after they were married [6/12/1918 IN SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA]. It was an awful epidemic. Say, wait she was married before they went because Ben died in December [12/12/1918] and our father died in October in 1918 [9/13/1918 IN TOWN OF ELLINGTON (ROCKVILLE), CONECTICUTT]. Yes it was a very sad thing. I can still remember Martha going to the phone a long distance call from way out there and she, she just hollered out she says "Oh papa died." And oh it was such a sad thing. Martha lived at home then and Hulda and Herman and I, my sister Hulda.

My brother Chris was married then and he had a family already. He built a home. He was of course an excellent carpenter and he built his own first little home right in Lester. And then of course later on he moved to the farm, wanted to be a farmer. He married (of course you children all know, you're descendants, you grand children know) he married Lena Nester [4/24/1915 IN LESTER].

I can remember so well that while we were working John Moser and Rose were married and they moved up to Lester. And a, when we would be in the harvest field or the hay field working hard it'd get so hot that sometimes we'd get the notion that we'd go down to the creek and take a swim, get cooled off (John, Herman and I, John Moser of course).

And a, then as we grew up and got out of high school, I a, we a. Oh-yes, I met that pretty little Metzger girl, you know Tillie Metzger a few times and I can tell you a little joke on Aunt Martha. One time we had a singing at the Mogler farm. Grandpa Mogler now, talking about Henry's father. They had a big Hupmobile and they had to bring us home for some reason or other. And anyhow Tillie was there too and Martha. And we crawled into the back, and they had those extra seats that you raise up, you know those little folding seats between the front seats and the back seats and they folded those up and my sister Hulda got in and then a, Tillie had gotten in and Martha said "Hulda" she says "come over here," she says, "let Ernest sit beside Tillie." [LAUGHTER]

W: Was that before you were members?

E: Oh yeah we were kids. I was about 13 or 14 years old. [LAUGHTER]

Another time a, say you know I've got to scratch my head a little about these things. Oh yes, Tillie came down some time later on and she was getting to be a young lady then. I think she was 14 or 15, 15 maybe. You came down on the train; oh you were and you were sick. [TILLIE INDICATED SHE HAD THE FLU AND WAS 17] When she got off the train then why we went up to meet her; Hulda and Martha and I. And on the way home why Hulda started walking with Tillie on the way home, down to our house. Martha said, "Hulda, come back here and walk with me." [LAUGHTER]

W: Martha was kind of a match maker then? [LAUGHTER]

E: Well it worked out beautiful thanks there to my beloved sister and Martha. [LAUGHTER]

Well then Tillie and I of course later on got married [3/11/1925 IN GAYLORD, MINNESOTA] and we moved to Elgin and got job [S?] there. And of course then when we were able to afford a car we'd come back visiting to Lester and to Hancock and marcer [MORRIS?]. Tillie of course came from Hancock.

Oh yeah, I can remember so well visiting your Grandpa, Wanda. I can remember visiting your grandpa, Christ and they treated us so nice. And then when we left why here my brother Chris put in a whole bunch of gas, I think he filled up my tank in my old Model T, had one door in front on the side and one door in the middle in the back.

W: Were they still on the farm when you were visiting?

E: Yes they were on the farm, the little farm where they later built a bigger home or had added to it or something. It was the same farm. Yeah they lived there.

W: Did they have all the kids then?

E: I think most of them, I'm sure there that a, most of them were, yeah. I a really don't know. I know he had a family.

W: Did you get to visit very often?

E: Well we came then after we got started and had a car we came every year. Then of course we had a couple of little children. In fact we had a vacation every year and I thought that was so kind of, that brother Chris gave me a bunch of gas to get me going a little bit farther.

W: Was there any other relatives living around Lester then?

E: Yes, after Nathan and Henry came back from the army they started farming there. And later on of course Nathan got married [3/24/1920 IN MORRIS, MINNESOTA] to Tillie's sister, Minnie. I mean he was married before we were. He was married in 1920 or 21 or something like that.

W: We better let him tell about that.

W: I'm at Uncle Nathan's now and he's going to tell me a few stories.

N: Nobody will believe what I say. You see they don't believe that I can remember when I was 11 months old. I asked my dad what that was that I played with on the casket when I was 17 years old, when he told me that was my mother's casket.

W: Can you remember living back in Bern, Kansas? N: When we moved back, to Bern? W: No, did you, were you born in Bern? N: Yeah! W: Do you remember anything back there? [...PAUSE...] How old were you...when you moved?

N: 4 W: 4 years old, then you moved where? N: Indian Territory. W: Where was that? ... Where was Indian Territory?

N: Assian [AFTEN?] Oklahoma. That was, the name was changed from Indian Territory to Oklahoma. Now it's Oklahoma.

W: And what year was that, when you moved there? Do you remember? N: Mmmmh, we moved there in '98.

W: So how long did you stay there then?

N: A year, than we moved back to Fort Scott around 1900. Then we lived there until...1910 and from there we moved back to Bern.

W: Did you always travel by train when you moved? N: Oh yeah! That's the only way you could move.

W: Do you remember anything back in the Indian Territory, when you were living there, for a year? PAUSE Do you remember the house?

N: Yeah, I remember the house. I remember going swimming ...when I was 4 years old ...Uncle Gob's children and W: Who?

N: Uncle Gotlieb ...Kellenberger ... their children and our family, the boys, including Martha. Martha's the only that had a dress on. The others were all naked! [LAUGHTER] Went swimming ... water come up to about our waist.

W: Where'd you go swimming? Was it a river? N: No, a creek. W: Was it in back of the house, pretty close to the house?

N: Hmmm about 40 ...40 rods away. W: Were you supposed to be swimming?

N: Hmm, nobody knew about it! Folks didn't [LAUGHTER] the boys did...they were all there. One time, they a, the boys went fishing somewhere. I don't know where they went. ...I wanted to fish too, so I ... tied a string on a

stick...tied a grub worm on it...threw it out in that little stream about 4 feet wide ...without a hook on it, just a grub worm. And I caught my sunfish, got him out on the shore.

W: Were you fishing by yourself or were the other boys fishing too?

N: No they were, I don't know where they went. ...I suppose they went fishing in the creek somewhere. They wasn't around there. It was just a little stream about 100 feet away from the house.

W: And you caught your sunfish. Did you eat it then? N: I don't remember. W: You don't remember, you just remember catching him. LAUGHTER

N: ...We always had a chicken house and eat the eggs. ...So dad knocked in the head with an axe. ...Then he came to again ...so they tried a ...knock in the head again ...and he told Dave and Chris to tie a rock on him and throw him in the creek so he wouldn't come to again.

W: Do you have any other stories to tell from back in the Indian Territory?

N: Well...a...no...a...I know that ... yeah! ...Dave and Chris made a ...a de-heading unit/outfit to cut the heads off of fish... What would they be? ...6 and... 8 and 10.

W: Dave was 8 and

N: They made a thing with a knife and put it on the side of the building and put the fish's head in it and pull down on the lever and cut his head off.

W: Dave would have been 10 and Chris 8?

N: Yeah....By the way they was out swimming too. Chris was out swimming too. But the folks didn't know anything about that.

W: But didn't Aunt Martha get her dress wet?

N: Sure! ...Cousin Mary was along... Martha and Mary was the only ones that wore a dress. I don't know how they got them out without their mother's... that was their step mother.

W: What kind of house did you live in, do you remember the house?

N: Ohhh, it had stairs in it. We slept upstairs. I don't know, I don't think there was over...probably 3 rooms downstairs and the upstairs was just a big attic so all the kids slept upstairs...

W: How many kids were there then? How does the family go? ...Who's the oldest?

N: Martha, Dave, Christ, Henry, myself.

W: So there was just 5?

N: Rose!... Lena was born [3/14/1899 IN BLUE JACKET, OKLAHOMA] down there. I always razz her about being born in Indian Territory. She don't like that. She says, "That, that was Oklahoma." I says, "That was Indian Territory."

Another incident in Indian Territory; a family by the name of Fiesters [SP?] lived down there and they had a boy who was about 12, 12 years old. And he was going to show me a game. So he told me to lay my head down on a log, he picked up an axe, and he come down with that and I got scared and jumped away. He buried the axe in the log.

W: Well what was he going to do, hit you with the axe!?

N: Well I tell you, I thought he, I didn't, I guess, he just thought that was fun! Only thing I can figure. I wouldn't be here than.

That's about all the Indian Territory stories I know, I can think of, now.

W: Then you moved west?

N: Moved to Fort Scott! It was supposed to be homesteading land down there. When we a, when dad got there why they took that off the market, couldn't homestead anymore. That's the reason we didn't stay in Indian Territory.

W: So did you have lots of land when you got to Fort Scott?

N: Well it was during the winter then we just lived in a house about a half mile from Fort Scott. Then we rented a farm in Missouri just across the border. We farmed there for 2 years.

W: So you were how old when you moved from Fort Scott? N: I guess I was 5 then. W: Did you start school then?

N: NO, the second year, then I went to school. ...I couldn't talk English. ...I remember a boy did something the teacher didn't like the teacher was going to give him a...a licken. So he strapped with her, of course he was older than I was, so he swore at her and of course I didn't know what swear is. All I know is in German they call it fluchen. So I thought that's about the same as plow in German. So I told them on the way home, ...I told one of my boy friends that, "He sure did plow!"

W: How far was school from your house?

N: Oh about a mile. When we moved away from Missouri we moved back to Kansas where dad bought a farm and he was building there. There were old buildings on it. That's where Herman was born. And I had to go over to Wills [?] over that time and when I came home I wanted to know where that baby come from, They told me they pulled him out of, from under a culvert.

W: So you had all your schooling in Fort Scott than? N: Yeah. W: Were you always a good boy in school? N: I don't know if I was or not.

Minnie: Some of the stories I heard you were a nix-nux [SP?]

N: I never did anything! You can't tell me anything I did! Well, where'd you get the idea? [LAUGHTER]

W: Were your brothers all good in school too, like you?

N: I don't remember that we did anything at school! [PAUSE] Outside of we a, I know that Henry and I, we wouldn't study United States history.

M: Why didn't ya?

N: We didn't like it! [LAUGHTER] This one time, teacher made us stay in to study over noon hour and we didn't study it.

W: What did you do, just sit there? N: We just, we didn't study PAUSE so she let it go at that.

W: Did you all go to 8th grade?

N: I don't think Dave and Chris did. W: How far did they go, do you know? N: No I don't. I don't remember.

W: Did you have livestock there; did you have a lot of ground too?

N: Oh yeah, our dad had 240 acres. We had quite a few cattle, quite a few pigs. I remember when I had a sale I had 65 head of cattle. W: What sale?

N: When they had sales at Fort Scott. We moved from Fort Scott to Bern and sold all the cattle off; had 10 head of horses; sold quite a few hogs.

W: Did you raise chickens there too?

N: Oh yeah, we had a lot of chickens. I know one time, my step-mother said, if there was something I didn't do that she wanted me to do she said, "You won't get any Easter eggs!" The next day I said, "I'll get my Easter eggs alright," so I went out to gather up the eggs, that was, my job, so I hid a bunch of eggs, I come to the house; she wanted to know where the rest of the eggs are. I said, "I hid'em, now you won't have Easter eggs." Well she wouldn't give up until she got the rest of the eggs and I wouldn't give up until she promised me I'd get Easter eggs. She finally promised so I got the eggs, about 2 dozen of them.

W: Where was it when you and, who was it, Henry found a skunk on the way to school?

N: That was at Fort Scott. Got him out of the trap and, then we didn't want to leave him in the trap, so we took him till we almost got to school. And we couldn't take him to school so we put him down the post hole until night. Of course when we got to the school teacher sent us home again.

W: Didn't have to go to school that day, huh? N: Didn't have to go to school. [LAUGHTER]

W: Did you get some other skunks down there? Is that where you caught your skunks or was that later?

N: No that was during that time. We caught about 30 of them from underneath the house where we lived for awhile. After we moved out of that house then we went back to see about catching some skunks there so that's where we caught about 30 of them.

W: Did you get a lot of money for them?

N: Oh I don't remember maybe a \$1.50 or \$2 apiece. One time, we a, we didn't want to batter them on the head all the time. They'd get blood shot when we killed them with a club on the head so we decided to make a noose.

So we a, went over to that old house where we had, knew there'd be a skunk in the trap. Henry, he wanted me to handle that noose so I slipped it over the skunk's head and Henry was standing behind the skunk so he got sprayed from top to bottom. Was you here the other day when I shared that?

W: Yes! How did you stand the smell? N: It didn't bother us. W: What did you clean up with? N: We didn't clean up nothing just washed our hands and that's it.

W: Was it in Fort Scott where you caught that black cat too? Can you tell about that?

N: Well there was a man who came through there two or three times during the winter to buy fur. So this one time we had this black cat that we had skinned him. So we thought we'd just try it and sell it to this buyer. So he paid us for a skunk. He thought it was a black skunk.

W: And you got paid more for black skunks, huh? N: Yeah, well next time he come by he said, "I'm going to have to check all of them, I don't want no more cats."

W: What's the story about the manure pile?

N: Well we had one, one time, it froze in a trap; going to skin him when he was froze so we wanted to thaw him out so we buried him in the manure pile. So we come back from school that night and when they got/went out to dig him out of the manure pile why the hairs all came out on him. We had to throw him away. [PAUSE]

I guess I was about 9 years old and I was driving a, walking behind a cultivator for Henry and he got sick. So he went home. So I thought I'd try and cultivate it by myself. So I a got the horses around, went down the road back and forth a couple times. My dad saw that, so he come over that was, one of the horses was blind. So he comes over to see what kind of a job I did. It must have been good enough so he told me I should take his team and he'd take mine. So I kept on cultivating.

W: You were only 9 years old, huh? Did you get tired of walking? N: No, in those days, you don't get tired at that age. [PAUSE]

In the summer I guess every night we went swimming. The crick was only about 40 rods [? 660 FEET?] from home maybe not that far.

W: Did you study very much at home? N: No, only homework we had was chores. W: What did you do with your evenings? N: We played until dark and then go to bed.

W: What did you have to eat? Did you have a big garden?

N: We had plenty to eat. We had a big garden. I never had to work in the garden. I don't know who done the holing in the garden.

We had a big strawberry patch. Had a strawberry patch there a, must have been about 7 years old. Never did transplant it. After strawberry picking dad always had the boys take the cultivator out there plow it then rake it, drag it. New plants come up, the next year we had a new strawberry patch. Never know transplanting.

I remember we had 4 rows of swits [?] about 300 feet long. Made wine out of that. ...Made about 50 gallons of sauerkraut.

W: How long did you live in Bern then? How old were you when you moved to Lester

N: 1917, 7 years, then we moved to Lester. I was about 22.

W: Had Chris moved to Lester before? N: He was there a couple years before.

W: How old were you when you got married [4/24/1920 IN MORRIS, MINNESOTA]? N: 25

W: So did you live at home when you were still down in Bern? N: No, I stayed there until I was 21 then I worked a year in Lester. W: So you moved up there before your family did too? N: Well I worked there but my home was still in Bern. W: Who'd you work for in Lester?

N: A, some people west of Larchwood by the name of Holman.

W: Was Chris married at the time? [4/14/1915 MARRIED IN LESTER]

N: Salome was born there in ...'16. W: Yeah, Aunt Salome was born in, May 14, 1916 N: Yeah, must have been born after a, we went there in March. W: Who's we?

N: Well a, Henry & I went together. He had worked there the year before, in Lester. We went up there on the train.

W: Did you go to Chris's very much? N: No, we didn't. I think I was only there once or twice all the while I worked there in Larchwood before the folks moved up. Minnie: Why? N: I don't know! W: Did you just stay at the place where you worked?

N: Yeah, I's with Henry and, I don't even think I went to church but two or three times the whole summer. W: Were you a member? N: No, no. It was too far away, too far away.

W: So did you go back down to Bern to help your folks move up then?

N: Yes, well I went home during the winter and of course dad had a sale down there in a, I think it was in January, and then in the latter part of February was when we moved up there.

W: Did you work for your dad then or did you keep working for...? N: No, I worked for dad then that year.

W: Where was that that you moved?

N: Do you know where Ernest Metzger's place was, north of Lester? It's about a mile north of Lester or, straight east... straight west of Chris' place. What, mile and a half, two miles. But he was still living in town. He didn't go farming until ... what in seven ... yeah in '17 He started farming ...I think.

W: What was he doing until then? N: Carpenter work. W: Did he work for a crew or did he work by himself? N: He worked for himself. W: What did he build? Do you know?

N: Houses, barns. He built Fred Metzger's barn. Then he built Ortiz [?] Mahler's barn just outside of Lester, east of Lester. Then he built that house where Martha lived in after they got married. But Martha wasn't there, she didn't live there, they built that for somebody else.

W: When did Martha get married [12/17/1926 IN SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA]? Was it after your parents had moved up to Lester? N: Yeah, she didn't get married until a '24, '25. W: 40 years old when she was married, huh? First was that or that was the second time wasn't it? N: No, she was never married before. [PAUSE] He was 12 years older than she was. I didn't know he was that much older.

W: Do you remember the wedding?

N: No, we lived in Winthrop. They just got married. They must have got married by a Justice of the Peace! She was a member, this man wasn't.

W: Were you in Lester when my mom was born? Do you remember Alice being born?

N: Oh yeah but I don't remember that. When was she born [9/24/1920 IN ROCK RAPIDS, IOWA]? Well let's see. ... 1920 ... I was living in Sioux Falls then.

W: You did? What were you doing in Sioux Falls? N: I worked for Dave and Henry ...south of Sioux Falls ...where that big shopping center is. That was a farm. W: Did Dave and Henry farm together? N: aha

W: The other night you said something about helping Chris one time, build a barn was it? N: August Mahler's barn, yeah. We helped on that. What about it? W: Well there was one time when you didn't think you were doing a good enough job?

N: Oh no. That was down in Fort Scott. He didn't think I worked good enough cleaning the barn ...I helped clean the barn out. He got mad at me. He was going to throw me in a manger and give me a lick-n. It didn't work out.

W: You ran home and he didn't catch you, huh? N: Oh, we scrapped awhile ... but he didn't succeed.

W: Do you remember when you met your wife, first time? N: Yeah, it was ...at Chris' house ... but I didn't talk to her. W: You didn't talk to her! What was she down for? N: They lived in Lester! W: How old were you? N: I a, I was 21. [BACKGROUND DISCUSSION]

Minnie: Yeah, I never had a guy pay so much attention to me. [MINNIE IS 8 YRS YOUNGER, I.E. 13 OR 14]

W: But he wouldn't say anything to you, huh? How old were you? M: What was I, about 14? N: I don't know! [LAUGHTER]

M: I was pretty young. Then we moved to Minnesota. ...He worked there a long time before he seen me again. His parents wanted me to come back and work for them a year. So then I came back to Lester.

W: How old were you then? M: Well I must have been put-n near 16, wasn't I? N: You was16!

M: What did Ben tell you?

N: Well he was up there at the folk's place where I was working. He says, "Well I've got to go about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I've got to go pick up my sister. She's coming in on the train." I says, "Which one? Ah he says, "You're not interested in her, she's about 6 feet tall!"

M: So he took a girl to a show, and Ben said, "Do you want to go to a show with me?" N: No, they invited themselves.

M: Well he took me to the show with Lena. Of course when he [NATHAN] seen me, why he came over and left his girlfriend. He didn't even take her home. [LAUGHTER] Isn't that something? He didn't care I was 6 feet or not.

N: I knew what I wanted. W: So when did you get married? M: Two years afterwards. N: I thought it was longer than that. M: Well I was 18.

W: Where were you in the army? N: Atlanta, Georgia. I was there six months then I was assigned then I was discharged and I came home again. Where was ya [MINNIE]? Oh yeah you were working. You was in West Bend.

W: Did you write letters back and forth when you were in the army? N: Did we? [TO MINNIE] M: Yeah. W: You don't remember getting those letters?

N: Oh I remember the letters but I don't remember what was in them. They disappeared. They may have been in the trunk there in Hampshire [NEAR ELGIN]. We had a fire there in Hampshire. We had a little barn and the house wasn't big enough for the trunk. I had a little trunk when I was single yet and it burned up. So that's where the letters went.

W: What happened when you came home from the army got married, huh? N: A year later or was it two years later. February 1919. It was a year later that we got married.

W: When did you move up to Winthrop? N: Let's see ... '22. M: No, we lived in Wisconsin first!

N: Fort Scott or a, ha-ha Sioux Falls. I said. Wisconsin. We was out there for a year. Then she wanted to go home and see the folks. And I was working in a logging camp and then she wrote me a letter that she wasn't coming back. I says, "guess I have to follow her!" [NOTE, VERONA WAS BORN IN LADYSMITH, WISCONSIN, 7/21/1921]

M: Ha-ha, I think you was getting tired of it too!

N: So she said that Herman would have a job, that Henry would have a job for you in Winthrop. So I headed for Winthrop to see what it was all about. You [MINNIE] came after that didn't you, after I was there? That was in a, 1922.

W: How many years did you stay up there? N: Spring of '29. Henry moved to Elgin. W: You could still be living up there. I could be living beside you.

N: When I got to Elgin I never made enough money to move away again.

W: So you lived with Henry when you were in Winthrop? N: Yeah we lived with him in a couple of places. Two different years. We lived with Herman one year. W: Farming? N: Yeah.

W: I guess I'll let you quit. Nathan's not feeling too good but he told us quite a few tales though.

[WITH HERMAN & DELLA AND ALICE (KELLENBERGER) METZGER]

H: Well, sheesh[?], Sister Wanda, so happy to have you here with us this morning. It's not a bright sunshine but it is sunny. So well my, ah dear little niece, Wanda wants me to do some talking here and ah where do we start?

W: Well Uncle Nathan told me you were born under a culvert, this morning. H: Oh but that's a myth. LAUGHTER

W: Can you start back there in Bern? Do you remember anything in Bern?

H: Oh yeah I was born in Fort Scott, Kansas January 27, 1902 and they all tried to tell me I was born in a culvert under 4' of snow. And it did snow that much down there I know that. And anyhow they tried to hide it from the children that momma had a baby. And a, we got over that alright.

Now Wanda asked me whether I remember something from Bern, Kansas and I sure do. I remember I was ah I always loved horses, I liked to ride and ah we tried to tell this on the tape the other day and the tape didn't record and so we got to try it over again.

So anyhow one little thing I remember was I went out to the pasture, the timber and a creek run through it. Went to get the cows and I didn't have our old saddle horse. I had another old plug and as I was chasing the cattle home up the steep incline, the edge of the ditch and all at once he stumbled and fell over backward and we both rolled down the hill and I rolled underneath the log that was across the creek and he rolled over the top of it. So I got up and got on and rode him home drive the cattle home again. Nobody got hurt!

W: How old were you do you remember?

H: I was about 15, 14 or 15.

So ah, Wanda just asked me if I went to school in Fort Scott? I remember that so well I was about 5 or 6 years old and the folks sent me to school and I could not talk English! All I could talk up to that time was German and I

could, mother taught me to say the 1, 2, 3's up to 10 and the A, B, C's the whole alphabet. That's all I could talk in English when I went to school. But it sure didn't take me long to a, learn English.

And another thing I remember when I went to school there in Fort Scott. There was a bunch of Yankees in the neighborhood, practically all Yankees. You know like Taylor and Malone and a Scram and all names like that. Anyhow, they always says when they see us kids coming to school, "well there come them Dutchmen with sauerkraut hanging out of their ears." That didn't make us feel very good! We didn't pay any attention to them.

So anyhow I learned to read and write and arithmetic in Fort Scott already.

W: Do you remember any of your school teachers?

H: Yep! I remember one school teacher. Her name was Stella Farmer and she rode a little black pony from her home near Fort Scott out to this school which was 2 1/2 miles east of Hammond which is 9 miles north of Fort Scott. So she had a long horseback ride every morning. And she kept it in a stable across the street from the schoolhouse in a farm, in a farmer's barn there. She was a real nice teacher. She sure had a lot of patience with us kids. The big boys always tried to give her a hard time. They would stick a, there was a stove in the center of the school room, and they would stick a poker into the stove until it got red hot then they would pull it out and run it through a 2x4 and burn a hole through it. She would try and get them back in line but they kept doing things like that.

W: Nathan said the Kellenbergers were never naughty though!

H: No, the Kellenbergers were not naughty. [LAUGHTER]

We were told by our father that we should behave ourselves in school because if we got a licken in school we'd get another one when we come home. And ah that I never forgot.

I want to say more about Fort Scott. Every two weeks we would hitch up a team on the wagon and load up our eggs and maybe a crate or two of chickens and a can of cream we'd go to Fort Scott and trade them in for groceries and clothes and things like that. It was about 11 miles we had to drive with a team and a wagon and come home again the same day. It was always dark when we got home. That I'll never forget.

W: Was it a family affair? Did everybody get to go?

H: Nope, it wasn't always a family affair. One time I would get to go along with mom and dad, sometimes Ernest, sometimes Hulda. It seems like they never took two of us along. The oldest ones had to stay at home. Well anyhow I remember the store keeper always gave us a little sack of candy which we always looked forward to.

Well then there came a time when Henry and Nathan, my older brothers they went to work for some farmers up in Lester and Larchwood, Iowa area and pretty soon Dave and Christ moved up there too. And Christ took up carpenter work and I think Dave helped him. Your dad [TO ALICE?] built a nice new home there in Lester. Then he got married and then I think it was about that time, oh, I remember when Salome was born [5/14/1916 IN LESTER, IOWA]. She was the sweetest little baby girl you ever saw. We just all loved her. One thing just broke our hearts when she had to have one eye taken out but she sure got along good without that one eye.

W: How old was she when she had the eye removed? H: She was only about 1 1/2 years old. She was just a little baby. I remember your dad and mother [TO ALICE?] how they cried when the doctor told them that they had to take the eye out of that little baby. I'll never forget how they cried and wept and we cried right with them because we just loved that little girl.

W: Was that your first niece? H: No, Dave had a boy and girl before that [ACTUALLY HAD FLOYD (4/12/1913 DIED 4/22/1922), PRISCILLA (5/19/1914), & FREEMAN (12/2/1915)]. But she was so sweet. Well anyhow let's see. Well now, what else do you want me to tell you?

W: Do you remember mom being born? H: Oh your mother? Oh sure, yeah, I remember when you was born, Alice and Henry and Della. And pretty soon then I married a gal named Della too. I'll tell you about that later.

Now Wanda would like me to tell a little bit about our trip to a ... Oh yes than my folks went up to visit the boys up there in Lester. And they liked it so well they rented a farm a mile and half north of Lester, the old Davenport place where Jake Wolf is now.

So the following spring my dad had a sale, a public sale there in Bern, sold all his cattle, all his horses, all his pigs, and the rest of the stuff they loaded on a freight car. And Nathan, yeah they took some chickens along that's right, on the freight car. Nathan, he rode in the freight car. The rest of us, all of us kids got on the train with mother and father. And a, we were used to train rides cause we always took the train from Bern to Sabetha to go shopping when we lived in Bern; go down in the morning come back in the evening. Well anyhow, that was a long train ride.

We went from Sabetha to Hiawatha; there we had to change trains. Then we got by a, it was just about nighttime when we got to Omaha. And I never seen so many lights in all my life. Everything was lit up, electric lights. And I thought we'd never get through that big city. The train just poked along. And well, finally we got to Sioux City, Iowa and there we had to change trains again so we could go up to Lester. We went on the Great Northern now. And a, you remember the Great Northern don't you? Well that used to go puffing through Lester there.

Anyhow we finally got to Lester, Iowa and they took us down to your father's [TO ALICE] house and that's where we stayed. I don't know where in the world your mother [TO ALICE] put us all; all of us kids and mom and dad. We all stayed there at least a week until they had our house ready out on the farm. But, three times a day we got a meal and every night we had a bed to sleep in. I don't know how they did it but that's how loving your father and mother were; they took care of everybody.

What else do you want to know, Wanda? Oh, do you want me to tell you about our courtship?

The other day, when I made the recording, I told you about my father and mother after they lived there in Lester one year they went on a trip out to a, Connecticut to visit mother's sister, Elizabeth Luginbuhl. And while they were out there my father passed away; caught pneumonia, passed away [9/23/1918] and that was sure a very sad time. And that was on Friday, September the 13th. I'll never forget that. We always [UNINTELLIGIBLE] those kids were kind of superstitious. Friday the 13th was an unlucky day and here my father died. And you know what, 50 years later on Friday, September the 13th our dear sister Martha died [9/13/1968] too; remember what a sad time that was? We just couldn't hardly take that; you know she's better off than we are.

Well anyhow, then that same winter, no, it was a couple years later Della's father died [1/17/1921 IN WINTHROP, MINNESOTA]. And I didn't know Della yet but then a, she and her mother came down with her father's body. They wanted to bury him in Lester because he donated that piece of ground where the Lester Church and cemetery is. He donated that ground to the church and so he wanted to be buried in Lester. And so they brought him down on the train and mother and I met the train because my mother used to know Della's [STEP] mother when they were girls. And so we took them to our house and I'll never forget; I a, first time I saw Della's face I just fell in love with her and I just knew that was going to be my wife. Now that was a long, long ways ahead. It took, that took three years of letter writing; courtship by mail. But that was a lot of fun too. And, anyhow about three years later we got married [12/11/1923 IN GENEVA, ILLINOIS] and a

W: Did you ever take her out? H: Oh yeah, when I had the chance. [LAUGHTER] Once in awhile, once in awhile I'd get to go up to Winthrop and a once in a while she'd, once in a great while she'd come to Lester. W: What did you do?

H: What do you think we did? [LAUGHTER] we just loved each other. [LAUGHTER] And anyhow, finally, I still say the Good Lord opened the way and provided a very good wife for me. And so we've been married, we have eight children, four boys and four girls, we got 31 grandchildren, 17 great grandchildren and we just really love them all. And so now we've been married 57 years and we're still happy, we still love each other.

And now Wanda reminded me that I'm going to have a birthday next week. I'll be 79 next Tuesday, January 27th. I'm sure your mom knows that. [PAUSE]

Well here we are again; Wanda wanted to play it back to make sure I was recording because the other day I didn't record. Well lets see now, oh yeah, you know what Alice, I remember when you and Arnold got married [11/30/1941]. We drove all the way from Elgin, Illinois to Lester, Iowa. We stayed all night with your folks and they always welcomed us in when we come and always had such a wonderful time at your home. And I still remember how you couldn't talk; you had laryngitis. And you took carrot seed [?] and sugar and everything else trying to get your voice back so you could say yes, you know. [LAUGHTER] But anyway, we finally got to church and a after church, of course... I don't think we could stay in then, could we?

Della: Yes, we were members then. Only members were allowed.

H: Oh, yeah, that's right, okay. Well anyhow I remember Uncle Joe Banwart married you folks and a, you could bow your head anyhow and say yes. So that night I remember a great big wedding supper at your folk's place and goodness it was almost Christmas time, wasn't it?

W: Yes, November 30th. H: Then we started singing Christmas Carols over in the living room while the rest of you were eating. Here, Della wants to say something.

D: And I remember when all those young folks, the non-members left the church, there was nine brothers left in the church and about thirteen or fourteen sisters. So that was a very little church compared to what it is now.

H: Well keep on talking mom. Well, mom remembers something I didn't quite remember but a, sure are blessed memories. And how well we remember when we come to West Bend, your [ALICE'S] house was always open to us

and you'd invite, us in and we'd stay all night with you and we'd enjoy all your children and now we've got your sweet little daughter, Wanda here with us and we're enjoying her too.

Well let me see now. Oh we got to talking here about your sister Della was named after my wife, Della because we were going together about that time and I guess your mom and dad kind of liked that name, Della. So they named their little baby Della [BORN 5/16/1922]. That's your little baby sister and she's a sweet girl too. [PAUSE]

Yeah, I remember, you know how it was, and I'll bet you had to do that too Alice; a, living out in those farm homes, was no bathroom and we'd take our bath on Saturday night in a tub out in the middle of the kitchen floor. We'd try to keep it next to the heating stove so we wouldn't freeze in the winter time. Summertime that was a lot of fun; sometimes we'd even take a bath out in the yard. Or in the summer kitchen mom said. So a, those were great days. Wintertime we had a stove in the middle of the room and we'd all sit around the stove trying to keep warm and then we'd have to turn around and warm our back and we'd go to bed and cover up with all the covers we could find and in the morning there'd be frost on the covers. And, sure is a lot different nowadays; we go to bed and turn on the electric blanket and just keep nice and warm all night. Well anyhow...

W: What did you do for entertainment?

H: Well when we was kids the folks used to go to singings once in awhile on a Sunday evening and all of us kids would, our cousins and us, and we'd a, be outside playing Blackman, Drop the Handkerchief, Blind Man's Bluff and a few other games like that. And our father and mother was in the house singing and we always thought that was so funny. What do they get out of setting there singing all evening? But when the Good Lord called us and we repented we soon found out what a beautiful pastime that was to sing those hymns one after the other all evening long. We just really rejoiced in that. We still do! Wanda shakes her head, yes! So, I remember that from my childhood days.

I remember in Fort Scott my father made a sled for me and he painted it red. He made it out of old tire irons a, tire irons a, wagon wheel irons. And I couldn't wait until we got a little snow and finally we got about 2" of snow and I went out and I played with that sled all day long until the snow melted and I couldn't play any longer. It don't snow much down in Fort Scott you know. But we moved that sled along to Sabetha, to Bern, and even up to Lester. And there we got to use it a lot more

One thing, Alice, stands out in my mind, when your father passed away [2/12/1976] and Ernest and I came up on the plane for the funeral. Your brother Henry met us at Sioux Falls at the airport and we went right down to Rock Rapids to the funeral home. I'll never forget when I walked into that funeral home and I looked at your father's face. He had such a happy and a contented look on his face you just knew that he went to heaven. And that has always been such a wonderful comfort to me to know that your father; you know he always had a lot of pain and suffering while he was living, arthritis and stuff. So, now he was at rest, and he had a nice smile on his face; such a contented look. It impressed me so much, so deeply, I still remember it. I hope I can die that way. [PAUSE]

POSTSCRIPT

W: This tape was made in January of 1981 when Dean & myself went down to Zapata, Texas for a week. We had a very enjoyable week with all the great aunts and uncles down there. The great uncles that talked on this tape were Uncle Ernest, Uncle Nathan, and Uncle Herman.