

- R: This is Kenneth Rock, and I am visiting today with Mrs. David J. Miller, Greeley, Colorado, in her home at 2319 21st Avenue, and Mrs. Miller has agreed to talk with me about Germans from Russia, and she said in her letter that she'd like to talk about "As I See It," something of that nature. Mrs. Miller, could you just start out by telling us where you were born and when, and perhaps the names of your parents?
- M: Thank you, Mr. Rock. I was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, February 1, 1908. My maiden name was Lydia Alles. My parents were Adam Peter Alles and Mary Elizabeth Doll with an umlaut on the o. My parents were both born in Russia in the colony called Walter. The village, or colony, is situated on the Volga, it is near other larger colonies sometimes more familiar, especially the colony called Frank and Norka as well as, with in, about the same range to the major Russian city Saratov, as other colonies along the Volga.
- R: These colonies were on the [inaudible] weren't they?
- M: Yes. These are the colonies on the [inaudible] and by the way, most Germans from Russia in Colorado, that is, not entirely all of them, but the majority, are from the [inaudible]. Other states in the United States have Germans representing Black Sea in great numbers, and we find ourselves here in Colorado, by far in the majority, all in the many colonies along the [inaudible]. But not the [inaudible] or the meadow side.
- R: Primarily Germans, then, from the [inaudible] of the Volga regions.
- M: Of the Volga regions, in Colorado. Very much so.
- R: Um-hmm, and do you know of any colonies, or let's say, settlements of Black Sea Germans in Colorado, to speak of?
- M: Not as settlements. The early pioneers of Weld County south of Greeley, around LaSalle and Gilcrest, were Black Sea, and they came the beginning of the founding of Greeley, around 1870's.
- R: Oh, that early to this region.

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- M: That early to this region. We always knew, I did, from childhood on, when my father would talk about some of the German friends he would meet, the common names were Bohlender, Moser. There are many in LaSalle from these two names.
- R: I've heard the name. And these would be of Black Sea extraction.
- M: They are of Black Sea extraction. They were not very many families. They came here as early homesteaders, but they were the Black Sea people
- R: Yes. So they really would have been long before irrigation, and just sort of pioneers on the prairie.
- M: They were pioneers on the prairie, and they came long before this movement, the majority of Germans who came with the sugar beet industry.
- R: Yes, Yes. But I'd like to talk with you about that a little bit more, too. Could I ask you, though, at this point, when did your parents leave Russia and come to this country, and they must have come to Nebraska first.
- M: Yes. My parents came to this country in February, I don't know the exact day, 1905. They did, of course, land in New York at Ellis Island, as a family I wasn't born then, but my mother and father had four children. My older sister had eye problems. Glaucoma. My mother had to stay on Ellis Island for a whole month, and her eyes were treated, my sister's eyes were treated, and finally, declared well enough to enter the United States. During that period of time, my father and the oldest brother would go into New York City as a work force, to work with work crews, and he earned a dollar a day, but he was happy to earn any money, and my brother earned a few cents. I don't recall the money, but maybe he didn't get anything. The two worked together. My brother at that point in time was thirteen years old.
- R: Was he the eldest?
- M: He was the eldest.
- R: And they had the older sister, too.
- M: Yes, my sister was eleven.
- R: And then were you and your other sister born in this country?

M: No, there were two brothers with the family then, and one little one died shortly after they came to Lincoln, diphtheria. One little brother. I am one of eleven born, nine of us grew up, two young boys died. I am exactly in the middle--five older and five younger.

R: Uh-huh, right. So a number of them were born in Russia and the rest here in Nebraska, probably.

M: Yes, five in Russia. And the first born in, yes, my sister just older than myself, was born in Nebraska in December, 1905. And then I was born in Nebraska February 1, 1908. An interesting point about German families, it was to me as a child, and it always was a wonder to me, how come so many of us were all approximately two years apart in age. And I really, I talked to my mother about that many, not many times, but more than once, because my aunt, my father's brother lived here, and she had children the same, every two years, and she had a family of ten living, and Mom and Father's other friends--we'd go visiting, you know, that was the only social life we had, visiting.

R: Visiting relatives.

M: Relatives or friends.

R: Or friends.

M: As a family. With a wagon or a buggy and horses, early days, and all these young mothers at that time, and then later on they were older, all their children were two years apart. And my mother explained it this way: this also was true in Russia. They nursed their babies for two years, and as long as they were nursing, they would not conceive another child. And that was their method of birth control.

R: Is that right?

M: That's really true. And it seemed quite universal, I mean, you can't, families now, large families, they have about that same ratio, and my husband's family, there were ten born, and living, they were two years apart. Totally unrelated, you know, in background, or except they were from Russia, from a different colony. And that happened to so many families that I knew, and it was almost a universal pattern. The parents of those years, had their children every two years, approximately,

within a month or two.

R: And that then, of course, I mean, came in very handy in this country as a labor force. It was spread out.

M: This was why the German families were popular as a labor force, and in great demand, and the German families also simply thought everybody just had to work. That could walk. There wasn't any age limit, really, and there weren't any laws at that time, preventing child labor. And a child, even, five, six years old, if she or he were nimble and were able to thin some beets, not as many as an older brother, probably, but they'd be out there with them all. The babies on the end in the shade somehow.

R: Um-hmm, um-hmm, this is the story. . .

M: The whole family would be out in the field.

R: Working from sunrise till sunset.

M: Absolutely, and often, if and when they became landowners, then with land it was way into the dark.

R: Yes, right. Well , let's back up just a second here. Do you recall , from your parents, why they left Russia in 1905?

M: Yes. My father had served as a soldier. He was conscripted. The rule was, the oldest son of a family was automatically conscripted, if he was well enough, to serve as a soldier, and my father had that good luck, good fortune, or whatever we need to call it. He was the oldest, so he served five years and several months as a soldier prior to 1905. He was released from the army, sorry I don't have my passport or the record in front of me, just before 1900. I think 1898 or '99.

R: I see.

M: And the war with Japan was on the horizon. R: Yes, that broke out in 1904, 1905.

M: That broke out, and the soldiers who would have had to be drafted were given notice by the government that they had the option to emigrate out of the country or serve when they were called. My father had such a notice, and it speaks so in his records of dismissal. And he chose to come to the United States. My mother did not choose

to come to the United States. She did not want to leave her parents and her sisters and her family and her home. And I think that, for my mother, it was a very difficult thing to leave, because she had to live five years with two babies without the husband, and he was home just three years from the service before he, I'm really wrong on the three, about five years from the service, before they decided to make this journey to the United States. There was no money in our colony nor in, I have to say, the Volga colonies. My father's one brother was in the United States years prior. His name was Jacob.

R: In Nebraska?

M: No, he also started in Lincoln. Lincoln, Nebraska was a, what is the term that you use?

R: Sort of a stopping-off place?

M: Stopping-off place, the recruiting offices were there, and sent people to the beet fields. To Michigan, to Montana, to Colorado, to other parts of Nebraska, wherever there was a center there where the Germans were sent. Were brought by agents to Lincoln to then get sent to their jobs. R: I see.

M: And brother, Uncle Jake, by then had moved already to Colorado.

R: Oh, I see.

M: And, however, when we arrived, when our parents arrived in Nebraska, in Lincoln, they did do beet work.

R: In Nebraska.

M: No. In Michigan, in Montana, in Colorado, and returned to Lincoln each winter, and after one Colorado summer, my uncle agreed to help finance my father to return to Colorado and rent a farm.

R: Do you know approximately when that was?

M: Yes. That was shortly after I was born. I was not quite a year old. That was in 1909. The fall of 1908, I was born in February, and in the fall of '08, they were making their plans, and then the following spring, instead of coming to the

beet fields to thin beets, they moved to Colorado to farm. R: In what part of Colorado would it be?

M: In Greeley.

R: To Greeley.

M: East of Greeley. The year later, my other sister was born, which made it a two year difference. She was born in '10.

R: I see, okay. That fits in with your pattern.

M: Yes.

R: That's true. So then your family came to the Greeley region in 1909, uh-huh, and were they then doing seasonal labor and living in Greeley in the wintertime in those early years?

M: No, they rented a farm.

R: Oh, they rented immediately.

M: Yes. Uncle Jacob helped a little bit with the money.

R: To finance that.

M: But my parents had three children that could work beets, two of the older ones, and one younger one that came after Father returned from the service. And the one m4o the baby that died of the diphtheria. Four across the ocean. Then another boy was born, and he died of diphtheria. He was born in Michigan. And died in birth, not in birth, but one year old. But my parents had three working children in the beet fields. And my father did extra field work for the farmer, extra hired man work for the farmer, and my mother was very, very thrifty. So they saved all their pennies and dollars that they had, and they saved enough money in three years of summer, fall, or spring work, to buy a little house in Lincoln, which they then sold, had enough money to come to Colorado to begin farming.

R: Uh-huh. At that time.

M: With horses, of course, and at that time, the machinery, my father would only use machinery on a very low level, but he farmed from then on as a renter.

R: And this was mostly beet farming at that time?

- M: It was regular irrigation farming. Some beets and hay and whatever the farm had. R: This is what I'm learning that I have to correct my stereotype there. That beets was not all that was done.
- M: Oh, no, oh, no. Not at all. The only relation to this constant beet labor is when the folks lived in the city during the winter, and they'd have their homes in the city in Greeley, even the farm people called them the beet workers. You were either a farmer, or a beet worker, by nomenclature. It didn't mean anything wrong about it, but there were quite a few families that never did own a farm or farm. In fact, many, many. And they, during the winter, then, did other labors in the city. Picking dried beans was one of the common jobs that I remember, or sorting potatoes, things that farmers would have to have help for, if they didn't have enough help. The men would do labor, or the women would do housework. By the way, that was the favorite, house cleaning, person, in any city, that anybody could hire, that one of the German women or girls.
- R: Because of this passion for cleanliness.
- M: Yes, this constant hard work that they were used to, and the city people soon learned that this was a very, very great source of the type of work that they really wanted and appreciated. Housekeeping or housecleaning and cooking and baking and all those things.
- R: So these were the so-called Englisher I assume, who hired the German women, then, to help out with the housework.
- M: Yes.
- R: Do you know if, did any of the men work on the railroad here in town?
- M: In Greeley, no. Not as much, if at all. In Cheyenne, yes. The railroad had been finished throughout this area at that point, and where there was still end lines to continue, that's where some of the men worked on the railroad, yes. But when I was a child, I don't recall any railroading by people here in Greeley .
- R: Okay, um-hmm.
- M: Always in Cheyenne. Some of the Greeley people moved to Cheyenne to get jobs at

the railroad, and stayed there. That's why there are a lot of Germans from Russia in Cheyenne.

R: Cheyenne, too. And all the way along the railroad towns.

M: Yes, all along the railroad towns, absolutely. The Burlington, especially. To Loveland and wherever it goes from there. They followed the Burlington.

R: Okay. Well, then, I wanted to ask, too, do you know what had your father done in Russia? Was he, had he farmed there too, and just continued as a farmer when he came here?

M: Yes. My father, my background is with the soil. My father was a farmer in Russia, as his father was, and that was true of my mother's family, too. They were not landowners Non skilled labor people. Not my family. On both Mama and Father's sides. So they toiled the soil in Russia. That's why they were a poor colony Walter as a colony were primarily farmers. Some of the larger colonies had some industry, some specialties, and larger churches. For instance, the church, confirmation, would have to be done for the children of Walter in Frank, because we did not, Walter didn't have a church.

R: Is that right?

M: That's right.

R: What denomination would this have been?

M: This was the Lutheran, Reformed Lutheran. All the colonies were either Lutheran, Evangelical or Reformed, or Catholic.

R: Now, do you say Evangelich or do you say Luthereich?

M: In German? Evangehlich [inaudible].

R: [inaudible]. Okay, all right. Fine. Because there's a distinction. I guess some other Reformed churches became more Congregational, evidently. But this was Reformed Lutheran.

M: Yes. Reformed primarily, then, adopted in the U.S.A., in America, the Congregational pattern. There is a reason for that, because the Reformed was a change in Russia, perhaps even before then, at least, I recall my father talking about it quite a bit,

you didn't believe in some of the ways and symbolisms, et cetera, of the E[inaudible] or the Evangelical Lutheran. They preferred the simpler worship. And the American, or the U.S.A. Congregationalism of the northeast, of the old New England colonies, appealed to the Reformed Lutheran German people the most. And then the second reason was the Congregational Church of U.S.A., or the general conference, also gave them money, gave them financial aid, to start their churches.

R: Oh, in this country.

M: In the U.S.A. And they could understand each other in that respect and the way they liked to worship. Independent worship. They liked to be independent. And the Evangelical Lutheran, they had their independence, too, but they had more rigid rules from above.

R: Okay, with the . . .

M: Hierarchy of some type.

R: Hierarchy, the bishops and so on.

M: Yes, and the Congregational Church to this day doesn't have that. And I'm still a Congregationalist.

R: Oh, well, here, I think you've been leading me on. I thought you said you were Lutheran.

M: No, no, no, my father and mother adopted the Congregational faith right away.

R: Now, in Colorado, or in Lincoln?

M: In Lincoln already, and then in Colorado. And my father was one of the founders of, not the founder, but one of the early founders, of the St. Paul's Congregational Church in Greeley. And in 1915 the cornerstone was laid of the church that still is there today, at the corner of 4th Avenue and 12th Street.

R: Hmm. Must be downtown.

M: East side, across the tracks, where the German people had their homes, basically. Near the sugar factory.

R: Okay, all right. Let me ask you: how would I get there from here, because I want to go take some pictures, if the church is still there. Because I'm hoping that . . .

M: Yes, oh yes, it's still very active.

R: And it still is St. Paul's Congregational Church.

M: Yes.

R: Ah-hah. Okay.

M: Yes, I'll be happy to direct you when you leave here.

R: All right. Very fine. And that's down in the general direction of where the sugar factory was.

M: Yes. It still is. Greeley was not taken away, you know, in the recent dropout of Great Western.

R: In the recent Great Western announcement.

M: Greeley still is alive. And that's the only one left in this area.

R: I'm glad you told me that.

M: They closed the others down.

R: That's a good fact to remember about 1977, because we've been serving the whole first two-thirds of this century, and here in the papers, recently so many of the factories have been, well, more or less taken out of service with, I tend to think, the mismanagement of the company.

M: It has been that. They admit it, really. They don't, it's more that than blaming other things. This Windsor closed a long time ago because other factories were close, Fort Collins, Loveland, Greeley, Longmont, even Brighton used to have a factory, and Ft. Lupton. Very, very many factories, actually, Great Western had within that region here. I don't really have the numbers.

R: Right. I think there were about nine factories or so by about 1910 or '11 in the South Platte Valley, right here.

M: In this very region, yes.

R: That's true. Big industry.

M: It was for the farmers, and they made, a lot of money with the sugar company, they were allowed to receive, you know, the beet pulp free for acreage, and there wasn't a single farmer that didn't take advantage of that. Not a German farmer. Disregarding the smell. If you haven't ever smelled wet beet pulp, you haven't lived.

R: I haven't.

M: Then that was used for their livestock.

R: To feed the cattle and horses?

M: Yes. Not horses, but they fed their own cattle or raising calves. It was not good for milk cows, fresh milk, because of the taste. The strong taste of the pulp would transfer to taste in the milk. But there were always other animals growing--hogs and chickens and other things. And then most farmers on a small scale were always feeding some stock for butchering or for sale. Not on a big way--in a big way as they do now, but always enough to add a little to their income. And to use up the pulp.

R: Yes. Were there sheep in this area, too?

M: Yes, but not in Greeley. Sheep were brought in as feeder sheep here.

R: Um-hmm. I understand there were quite a few around Fort Collins.

M: Yes. My father fed sheep before he bought this farm, but we called it Jackson Place, and Jackson, banker, the First National Bank of Greeley. Not First National, it's now the United Bank--Weld County Bank. It's now the United Bank of Greeley. My father rented from him for years, and for him, he fed the sheep. Mr. Jackson would buy the sheep and put them in the pens, and my father would--I don't know his arrangement in money, whether he got profit from the sale and when Mr. Jackson had profit, and whether he had to lose--I'm pretty sure that's what it was, because there were some poor years. So . . .

R: Yes, this is part of agriculture.

M: I'm sure my father was on a share basis with the feeding. But this is where the pulp would go. And other feed ,of course, and hay, beet tops, and, well, they didn't waste anything in those years. Everything was used for fodder.

R: Now, was the Jackson Place the farm to the east of town?

M: Yes.

R: You mentioned, where they first came?

M: No. It was still east of town, though, but it was a different location. It was on the Platte River, further on south. The first farm was northeast, and the

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Jackson Farm was on the southeast of Greeley. Both close to Greeley.

R: I see.

M: And the present place, where you and I are now talking, is west, southwest of Greeley.

R: And when did they acquire this property?

M: My father bought this farm in 1917, and we moved (end of first side of tape) .

R: Yeah, okay. This is Side B of the first tape. Could you tell me once again, just so we make sure we have it, your father bought this farm here in what year?

M: In 1917, and we moved during that following winter then. In February, 1918. Farmers moved during winter, because that was the time of least outdoor labor. So I've lived here since 1918, except for my few years teaching or traveling, being married.

R: Okay. When did you build the present house here?

M: This present house is a story in itself that I wish, Dr. Rock, I could give you a different time on the tape, because it really does relate back to our ancestry. I don't know whether you know it or not, but this is made of earth. You are sitting in rammed earth house.

R: Is this adobe?

M: No, earth. Tamped wall, earth walls. All the walls in this house are earth.

R: That's why they are so thick?

M: These are all earth. Yes, sir. That's an interesting story in itself. And it relates to, and I, my husband did read about these things many years ago, and he always was fascinated by it, because our parents talked about living in earthen homes, earth block . . .

R: Sod homes?

M: Well, they called them block earth, earth blocks in Russia. And . . .

R: I see. Semelinken?

M: Yes. And Semlinka.

R: How do you say that again?

M: Semelinka.

R: S-e-m-e-l-i-m-k-a?

M: Yes, that would be one good spelling. It's really a Russian word, semelimka.

R: Yes. Semya means land, or earth.

M: Yes, so it's "Of earth." So most of the houses are made of earth in Russia. And they even have earthen floors. Now, my mother and father both lived in such houses, and my mother talked often about how once a week, they would sweep out the sand, the soil during the week, and to clean the house, that was how they had to do it, and bring fresh sand and sprinkle it on the floor. That was the cleaning of the house. And Dave's family--my father's family--you know, when they marry in Russia, the wife has to move to the husband's house. So this was true of both my father's family and my mother's family. Now, my husband's family, in another colony, Miller, from Frank and Norka--the mother was Frank and Miller was Norka. They, from the colony, Norka.

R: Jacob Miller was your husband's father?

M: Father, right.

R: He came from Frank.

M: Norka, no. Norka. And Dave, my husband, David Miller's mother, was from Frank, and her last name was Walker. Walker, we say, in English.

R: How do you spell that?

M: The spelling is spelled two ways, it means the same name. The German spelling is W-a-c-k-e-r, the English spelling is W-a-l-k-e-r. And our own, we have one son, and two daughters. We named our one son Walker David Miller. So . . .

R: With which spelling?

M: W-a-l-k-e-r. Because David's mother's family spelled their name with l-k-e-r. His own uncle, one uncle, the same family, never changed the spelling. They spell it W-a-c-k-e-r.

R: Now, I've read about, I think, a Miller and Walker mercantile store in Loveland, I believe?

M: That's correct. It's the same store.

R: Is it, it was two relatives, then, that set up this store?

M: Yes, that's correct. That would be my husband's father, Jacob Miller, and I believe it was Conrad Walker, it was his wife's brother. Who shared the store with him, so it was Walker and Miller Mercantile Store.

R: Uh-huh. And that's your husband's.

M: That's my husband's.

R: Tell you what. Maybe we can come back to that, but I interrupted you about the house.

M: Yes. This house is made of earth. It takes in the full cycle, I think, of our life, because when we visited Miller relatives in [inaudible], U.S.S.R., 1967, in [inaudible], [inaudible], for three days, we were, this was July, we were very, very hot, it's semi-desert, in fact, desert, it's like Arizona, in the summer, just as hot as Arizona. The temperature had to be about 118 out in the sun when we arrived. We were told we looked very tired, and we were. "Would you rest a little bit? Go into this room, this part of the house. That's the coolest." So Dave and I were so happy to rest a bit, and we did rest in the cool part of the house, when we later talked to the family, that was the earth part of the house. Of course, we were so excited then, because we, in Greeley, Colorado, have been living in earth houses since 1945.

R: Here in Greeley.

M: In Greeley. Dave and I started this and were the only ones that did this. We literally are at Greeley. Now, there are earth houses in other parts of the world, of course, and the United States. We built this house that we're living in now in 1950.

R: I see.

M: We've lived in it now twenty-six years, going on twenty-seven.

R: Huh. And so you and your family helped put this up together.

M: Yes, yes, yes.

R: Now, it must be a very cool house, then, in the summertime.

- M: Extremely environmental. It's very cool, as you can see the sun heating it. The sun is now leaving the windows. It was designed for sun heating twenty-seven years ago, and the earth walls to retain the warmth and the coolness, which it does, This house does not have air conditioning nor does it need it. It's always fifteen degrees or more cooler inside than out all summer long.
- R: Is that right?
- M: It's extremely comfortable house.
- R: You practical people are way ahead of your time, any way you want to look at it.
- M: This is true of this house and these things that we have done. We have done many things that--we don't even, I can't even answer you why we did it. I feel, though, it's in our blood, I think. Part of the cycle of our life and everything. And when we really took that nap, in Central Asia, high up there in [inaudible], in an earth room, and later we took another nap in it, I said to my husband, Now I know why you had earth walls in your blood." Now I know. When, sleeping in some, in Russia, because that's where our parents, they talked about it all the time. That's how they lived.
- R: And you say here that you have been living in earth walls in Greeley since 1945?
- M: 1945, yes, sir.
- R: You had another house, then, prior to this one.
- M: Yes, we have built five of them.
- R: You have built five houses. Oh, my goodness.
- M: Yes. Right here in this, on Alles Acres. That's the name of the subdivision. My father's name was Alles or Alles. Now I always said Alles, because I speak the German language. It has changed to good English, Alles Acres, and . . .
- R: Spelled the same way? Or did they change the spelling?
- M: Yes, it's spelled the same way, A-l-l-e-s. Acres, and all the earth house are in Alles Acres.
- R: Is that right.
- M: Yes.

- R: Were other German-Russian families also interested in these other earth houses, or was it by that time just Americans?
- M: No, it didn't catch hold for any reason with anybody except curiosity and we had thousands of visitors, people, till, we had to stop the visitation. Our daughter lives in one, Mrs. Lydia Rule. My neighbor here. She has earth house.
- R: I see. This is so different from the other houses...
- M: But all my children all wanted earth house.
- R: I bet.
- M: They do, they really do.
- R: I can understand that. M: We are in the process, Dr. Rock, of writing a book. We have lots of research material. We don't know how to find enough time for it, but we are trying to put all the experiences down, and that's all. We know what we've done, and we know how we've lived in it. We know what it means. Environmentalists and all their talk today, you don't have one new word in their language that we haven't lived.
- R: Um-hmm, I believe that. Well, you know, I have run across sod houses on the prairie, and there were some of the German pioneer families that you've referred to earlier, and particularly, I guess, out here in the northeastern part of the state, in soddies. And, of course, a lot of "Americans" began the same way, and so, here, I guess, we've got a very special semelimka house in Greeley that's considerably different from the others, a long time ago.
- M: Yes, we had a very fine, farsighted architect draw the plan. And he believed in the earth qualities, too. We had interesting, well, many stories about how to finish such a house, because this house is not standard in design. By standard I mean just, oblong or square wall, or square building. Therefore, it, our architect, also being an artist, didn't have two boards the same size. In any one of the rooms. It would take me quite, wouldn't take me long to show you why, and what I'm talking about.
- R: Okay, right. Well, no, so many of the German houses that I think of here in northern Colorado are the small, framed, rectangular houses with the hipped roofs.

- M: That's correct.
- R: Uh-huh. Your hexagon wasn't at all . . . reminiscent...
- M: Pentagon.
- R: Pentagon. I can't count.
- M: A star. Five-star.
- R: You're right. I just miscounted.
- M: I know. It's easy to do.
- R: All right. Well, this is very nice.
- M: This was an undertaking, and the architect, we give him, of course, the credit for it. But all the rock is naturally outside, nature, and the large window, indoor-outdoor window look, the trees, evergreen trees. We have that year-round, no matter what the weather. Because the windows are thermopane, so the blizzard can blow, or the rain, you don't notice any, you just enjoy it.
- R: And you are residents of Northern Colorado, because not only are those spruce trees beautiful, but they're a good windbreak, aren't they?
- M: Oh, beautiful. And windbreak. And they do break the wind. They're protective.
- R: Do you remember the wind blowing across here all your lives?
- M: Oh, yes. Yes, of course. I worked these fields as a girl, in either beets, beans, or hay, or grain--by the way, on the farm, the German family worked in the fields, whether they were, if they were farm families, whether boy or girl. And my father was blessed with more girls than boys, and my Uncle George was more blessed with boys than girls, so we weren't spared at all. We were in the fields all the time.
- R: And the wind was there all those years.
- M: Oh, yes, all the time, all the weather. But you know, that was a beautiful time of life, though because we could enjoy, when you were too tired to work, you'd sit down a while, and you'd look around, especially up at the sky, and watch the clouds go by, and you'd look for those clouds to make some shade (laughing).

M: No, that is a translation, you know. His story, coming over the clouds, is, he explained that, you know. That is just Tim's folklore. No, that is not folklore per se. I don't know anything about it at all. But the phrase is correct. And to come over the Volga, you see, Volga is the river, and then volken in Deutsch means clouds in English, and this is where the two words sound similar, and that's where Tim got his . . . folklore translation.

R: Right. Now, did your father or mother talk about their heritage, or did they tell you about the old country?

M: They did, a great deal, a great deal. In fact, my mother longed for home, for Russia, many, many years. And I remember many, many things my mother talked about, because she really was homesick. Her mother was still living, her father had died, and her sisters were there and her brothers. And she really was very homesick, so she talked a great deal about how she lived and what she did and how they did all the work in Russia, yes, I heard a great deal from Mother.

R: Could you tell me a couple of favorite stories that you remember?

M: Yes, I believe one, I wouldn't know it as one of my favorites, as much as it's one of the, I find it one of the hardship ones or the enduring kind, how they lived through these things, I don't know. Father left for the army in October, drafted, she had a baby boy two years old, and a child due soon, that was my sister, the oldest sister, and she came, then, the second of January. Second of January in Russia, on the Volga, is very cold, snow and ice, even the river freezes. The tributary river, the [inaudible], is where the colonists of the [inaudible], really, would go more to that river, rather than to the big Volga, which was toward the east more, and down [inaudible] the map from Saratov. The [inaudible] River is where the women would have to go to do their laundry. Nobody was spared. Mother not only was the oldest daughter-in-law, but she also now was without a husband. And she had this new baby girl. Three weeks after the baby was born, there were other women in the family, other sisters-in-law and other sisters and brothers, but it was simply the rule you have to take your turn, you have to do

your work. Mother was the oldest, so she had to go along to laundry, to the river. She had to stand, they had to chop the ice to get to the water, and they would wash the clothes in the ice water. First they laundered them at home in their boilers. Soaped them and cooked them. And then they'd take them to the river where there was plenty of water for rinsing. That's how the laundry was done.

R: Yes. On the riverbank.

M: On the riverbank. She had to stand in the icy water, because she was the oldest, to rinse the clothes, and hand it up to the other women. That was very difficult for her health, then. When she got back the next day she had a high fever, and then she was apparently; nearly died from it, but today we would probably call it rheumatic fever, we would call it one of the rheumatoid fevers. She was swollen and in bed for four months after that experience. And again, without her husband, she had, so she had a hard time at that point in time, but she got well from it, and that was the one experience she liked--not really liked to tell about, but did tell about many times, that hard experience that she had when Sister Katy was born. Katy Dietz still lives here in Greeley. She is 83 years old now, and she's the only one living of my family that was born in Russia.

R: Is that right?

M: Yes. And her husband also was born in Russia, but that's all that's left of the family. And Mama, another story she just loved to tell, how the work was divided. And it also went according to what particular, they didn't learn it because they wanted to, but what was necessary. Somebody had to make the shoes, or to repair the shoes. Somebody in the family had to spin the wool. Somebody had to weave the wool. And some, oh, they all had to make soap. And they all had to help with the butchering and everything like that. But my mother's family, when she was still at her house, and then also my father, they had a lot of sheep, or liked to raise enough sheep for their food. So they carded their wool, they saved all this wool, washed this wool. Mother was a spinner of wool, my mother. My father was a weaver. This Uncle George I was talking about, I think I said Jacob, but

I was wrong and it was George, was in Colorado first.

R: The one who helped finance?

M: Yes, who helped finances. Uncle George.

R: George, rather than Jacob.

M: He was the shoemaker, and throughout the week, that was their extra job. During the winter months, they all did these special things, and they wove all their own cloth, and spun their own wool, and they also had flax, which becomes linen, you know, when they beat it out and turn it into thread, and they'd have to spin that, too. And they did all these things, like, from nature, in the colony days. Now, that was late, 19th century, because my mother was born in 1871, and my father in 1872, so this was during their young lifetime, and their full lifetime, approximately one hundred years ago, when they were still doing these ancient crafts.

R: Now, did, was there a carry-over here to Colorado, this sort of self-sufficiency continued among the German families?

M: Not much, no. Because it wasn't, they didn't have time. They had, again, America gave them a different opportunity. They didn't have to spin the wool because they could buy the cloth, and they could buy the yarn to knit. And my mama would spin wool if she'd get some.

R: This isn't her spinning wheel over here?

M: No, that is not her spinning wheel. She did not have one of these. She used a spindle.

R: Oh, yes, okay.

M: My mother would always do the spindles. But she knit wool socks for my father to her dying day. And my father wore, my mother's knit socks all his lifetime. Something that was just part of her life. And she liked handwork and crafts and, well, was taught those things, and she talked about it, and she taught all of us children how to do many things.

R: Um-hmm. So you sew and your sister sews?

M: Oh, yes. All of us do many things.

R: What about quilting?

M: And oh yes, and quilting, we had to do patch quilting, by the way. You never bought anything, you know, it was always the leftovers. And then if there was any left from that, then we would tear that up and make rugs, we made the rag rugs.

R: Oh yes. The round ones.

M: The round ones, yes, that was another favorite craft of my mother's. And then we were very, very busy with making all the foods, all the butchering, the sausage making, the salting down of the meats, and the canning, preserving, then large gardens, always on the farm. Storing it all for winter, and I believe my mother lived a full lifetime with nothing but the word thrift, because one of her favorite stories in America was: the first year they went out to thin beets in Michigan, she bought ten pounds of sugar. In Lincoln to take with her, and some flour and salt and that was all. And then when they got to Michigan, she didn't touch the sugar, because she might run out, and that was during the winter. In the spring there were early berries, wild berries. Raspberries and strawberries. And brother and sister would pick them by the bucketsful. And it was sweet. And my mother never used that ten pounds of sugar. She took the whole bag, every inch of it, back to Lincoln, Nebraska. Never touched it.

R: Is that right?

M: And she would bake her kuchen with the fresh fruits they were sweet enough, she just didn't want to break this sack, thinking she'd run out. So she, that's why I think they eventually had a little money, or were able to . . .

R: To purchase the farm, then.

M: Yes, to purchase the farm, because everything was, had to be thrift, and we lived the life of thriftiness. And all of us were taught that and hard work and cleanliness, and they were taught that at home. And that must go way back to the German influence in Germany, because that's how the Germans are to this day in Germany as a people. And from what Mama used to say, the Russian people, in the Russian

villages, were not clean at all. And actually, the Russian people who could hire helpers, who had enough money, some of the landed people, always got the German girls.

R: To come and clean for them?

M: To do their housework. And they were not really bonded to them, but they got very little money. They would give them food, or wheat, or something in kind, but very little money. And the girls, extra daughters that could be spared, would be sent out to work.

R: Do you know, did your mother or your father speak Russian?

M: My father did, because he was in the army. Mother did not. My, another interesting thing about my mother, she was, I mentioned before she was so homesick, she didn't want to learn English.

R: She didn't?

M: Oh, no. No, no. And she didn't want us children to speak anything but German in the home. And it was very difficult when we started school. Because we had not used English in the home, even though the older brothers and sisters had learned it in school, the younger ones, as we would start, we just practically had to start from scratch. At school. Fortunately, the schoolteachers understood us, or knew why we weren't able to speak, and they were very patient. And most of us started in a one-room school because it was country schools. I started school in the Delta School District, right out here in Greeley.

R: Which direction is that?

M: Just east here.

R: To the east.

M: East of Greeley.

R: All right. Were you, did you feel discriminated against at all because you spoke a different language?

M: No, not by the students nor by the teacher. No. What little discrimination I felt and remember as a child was when the war, First World War, and I was about ten.

No, less than that-born in '08, '14. Then I would hear about it more than anything else, because I was too young. The, and my father didn't get involved downtown with, but some of this was more downtown among the young people on the streets or in the city. But on the farms we didn't feel it much at all.

R: Uh-huh. So you came through the war with more or less normal lives.

M: Yes, Yes.

R: Nobody played tricks by overturning wagons or anything like that.

M: No, no. And I don't know, our families, and the St. Paul's church people, there was enough of us in a large group, we never felt that we were part of that war, because we didn't come from Germany, even though Germans were being discriminated against, and called Huns at that time. And some of the German people, because of the German language, were called Huns.

R: Here in Greeley?

M: Yes. Even though they were from Russia. But I, attribute that a little bit to the person, I think, too, they would invite it a little bit. I think as a rule around Greeley, we really didn't have it very hard at all. I think it was different in larger cities, other areas. Not in our area.

R: Okay. I was very interested in that, because this is what one reads about, that during the First World War, this was a bad time. And so we kind of like to elaborate and find out what we could say to correct the story.

M: I would say that this would be in areas. And not always equal though, by any means. I don't believe the farm people felt it much. My father would hear about it when he'd go downtown, merchandising or something, and my mother couldn't speak enough English, so she didn't. And they just didn't concern themselves with it much. They didn't like war, and were worried about the war, but they didn't feel that they were the same German people.

R: Do you remember if your father, perhaps your mother, were reading newspapers at the time?

M: Yes, my father took the Greeley newspaper. (END OF FIRST TAPE)

- R: This is the second tape, side A, of Kenneth Rock talking with Mrs. David Miller on the 28th of February, 1977. Okay.
- M: Yes, and we were talking about some effects of the World War, World War I, and I feel in the Greeley area, the farm people, specifically, did not feel it as much. Probably some of the city people. Primarily, I think, because still a lot of lack of knowledge of the language, of the English language among the people, and the children were young, primarily. Now, my oldest brother, born in Russia, was naturalized automatically when my father was naturalized, and he was eligible for service. But he had already gone to divinity school, preparing for preacher.
- R: Your brother?
- M: Yes. My oldest brother.
- R: All right. And this would have been at the time of World War I. Your father was already naturalized at that time?
- M: I'm not sure. No I'm, yes, no, I'm not sure. I'll have to pass because have to look that up.
- R: Okay. All right.
- M: But my brother, nevertheless, was drafted.
- R: He was drafted.
- M: Oh, yes, he was. And when the notice came, he was away at school, at Redfield College, South Dakota. That was high-school level, but it was also a branch of the ministerial school of the Congregational Church. And he was excused because of learning to be a preacher. Even then.
- R: Yes. That would have been around 1917, or so.
- M: That's right, that's right. And so he never served. He did finish his school, and he did finish his divinity degree in Oberlin College on scholarships. From Oberlin he had a scholarship to Yale University.
- R: Do you remember approximately when that would have been?
- M: Yes. 1920, he did finish an A. B. degree at Greeley, C.T. C, after Redfield, see, that's a high school preparatory. Then he went from Redfield, South Dakota, came

back to Greeley to get an A.B. degree. He couldn't get it anywhere else. Well, he could have, I suppose, up in Dakota, but he came to Greeley to get the degree. From Greeley he received a scholarship to the divinity school at Oberlin. And he received a D. D. , Doctor of Divinity, at Oberlin. Received another scholarship from Oberlin to Yale University, and Yale University, from there he was interested in philosophy and the religion. He was preaching at New Haven, Connecticut, attended Yale University one year, 1921, 1922, two full years he spent in Germany as a scholarship student again, studying philosophy.

R: Was this after Yale?

M: During the Yale period, and he returned to Yale and received his Ph.D. in philosophy, and he . . .

R: In the mid-twenties?

M: Yes, in the mid-twenties. Then he taught philosophy after that instead of preaching.

R: Where?

M: First at Annapolis, at St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland, and then Long Island University, New York.

R: Um-hmm. And his name was, what, again?

M: Adam Peter Alles. Named after my father.

R: I see. Named after your father. Uh-huh. Well, now, you raised a couple of other things here I'd like to follow along with. Could you say something about your own school experiences and what I'm wondering about here, is with your brother going all the way through Yale and divinity school, obviously, someone cared about education in your family.

M: Yes.

R: What does that do to the child labor statistics?

M: We all give credit, primarily, for our education, more to our father than to our mother. She really, especially, for girls. Girls in Russia did not get any education. Except church school. And if they were too poor, and my mother's family was, they'd, she did not learn to read or write in school. She couldn't even write her own name. My mother had to make x's till the day she died.

R: Over here, too?

M: Over here, too. Really, that's true. And so when her daughters were growing up, see, the older parts of our family, there were four boys born. Older than I am. And one sister. Two had died of those four. The, so when the rest of us were girls, we were not supposed to go to school except to grade school, and that was mandatory. Eighth grade was mandatory. And we were all interested in learning. As a family. My father, I believe, was the most important person there, because he had traveled quite a bit during his soldier period. And he worked very, very hard as a soldier, and learned many things and the language and so forth. And he learned, I think, out of the village, away from the village or the colony, that learning and the knowledge was important. My mother didn't have that experience. So my father encouraged the schooling very, very much. So some of us went on to high school, some did not finish.

R: Did the schooling intervene with the working in the beet fields, or . . . ?

M: The school, fortunately, accommodated the beet fields.

R: Did it?

M: Yes.

R: Okay. How do you mean?

M: We were able to take time off to finish the beet work in the fall, and then go back to school and make up our work. And, as far as I know, all of my family, at least, always were passing everything, and most of the children, the teachers were tolerant or helpful. Most of the children were also good learners, because they were hard workers at other things, so you, when they were put to a book, they also worked hard at the book.

R: Yes.

M: They really did. And that was true of my whole family. It was true of other families. We weren't unique at all in that. It was true of German families. And we were disciplined, strict discipline at home, so we had no discipline problem, the teacher didn't have any discipline problem, and we were able to keep

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men in the spring if they were early, beet thinning period, we'd be excused to thin beets.

R: I see.

M: And still get our grades and still pass.

R: Uh-huh, well, that's good. So then most of your family, girls as well as boys, continued through elementary school anyway, and you say some went on to high school.

M: Yes, and started high school. I finished high school, the first one of the girls.

R: What year was that? Do you recall?

M: Yes. 1925. Then I entered college the same year, in the fall.

R: Was this Greeley High School?

M: No, we always, when we moved to this farm, you know, it was close to the college. At that time till even recently, it was always called College. And it was called Colorado Teacher's College. And they had a training school. It was then called the training school for students, and we entered the training school as children. From here. It was a mile and a half to walk it to school. From the farmhouse to the school. Which we had to do most of the time. And walk home. Mother, if we didn't walk, would drive us in a buggy, one horse, and we enjoyed all that so much because some, it was interesting. Some German children were ashamed of this.

R: Of going to school?

M: No, the experience of a mother with her shawl, coming in a horse and buggy and picking them up. Because, and some of my sisters were. Why, I don't know. But I never was. I was just always curious why these things happened. And I just accepted them. And I enjoyed my mother coming down that street, whipping that old horse and she'd be parked there waiting for us all. There'd be five of us to get in the buggy, and we always had a really good time, coming and going, in this buggy. It was either that or walk. And I was able to finish high school because I loved to read, I loved books, I loved, and I read many books, and this sidelight . . .

R: In English or German?

M: Oh, always English. I didn't study the German language until I was at the college

level.

R: But you spoke it at home?

M: Oh, yes, all the time. See, my mother wouldn't speak English, oh, we had to. And then Sundays in church, everything was German. So that was in a big day, German in church and German at home, and visiting was always in German. Now, the young children, you know, either my cousins or my friends, our friends, we all spoke English. We would in school, and when we were visiting.

R: So you were really bilingual.

M: Bilingual. We, on, young years. Then, but to teach it, as you know, you have to earn some credits in it, and I didn't study any German for credit till I was at the college level. I did study Latin and French at the high school level. And language and music, always fascinated me very much, and I played the piano and worked at that. I do want to tell you why I read so much.

R: Okay.

M: One of mama's favorite, I don't want to call it tricks, that's not fair, but one more of her ways, and she was set in her ways, was to herd the cows. If she'd see some good grass not being eaten up somewhere, reminded her of her hard time in Russia. Where they'd have to take the cattle out and herd them and one child would herd them all day and protect them and bring them in at night. That's how they fed them. We had this long ditch bank, here, from this farm, right here where the road is, there were some wide spots between the ditch and the fence and the road . . .

R: Reservoir Road?

M: Reservoir Road had lots of beautiful grass for cows. So Mama simply insisted that all these cows, when the grass was green, they had to be herded all summer long. And again, with four sisters growing up two years apart, we had to take turns, or we did take turns, herding the cows, by the week, not by the day. So it was my week to herd the cows, I had an armful of books from the library, and I would get ahead of the cows and sit there with my little switch and my book. That's how I could read so many books, and I read many, many, many books.

R: While the cattle were grazing.

M: Yes, before I was through the eighth grade. Yes, I read a great deal when I was young during the summer. And then, if I didn't finish my book, I would read at night by the lamplight, but activity, and my interest in this continuing education to reading, I really feel that way to this day. And it's substantiated itself in my learning, psychology of learning, et cetera, when I later learned how to teach school. I also, again, understanding teachers. Now, high school wasn't any different than grade school, Dr. Rock, as far as timing goes on the farm. I had to take my place the same as my mother did on that river. I had to work in the potato field in the fall. I had to work in the beet fields in the fall. Even though school had started I'd enroll, and get back home to the farm and had to work. Till the harvest was finished The school understood these farm problems with the farm children, and again, I attribute all this to the profession at the time. The teachers understood, and they helped, again, to pick you up. I somehow managed to get through high school, and in the spring, when there was farm work to do again, and it didn't have to be beet thinning this time, I would have to harrow, or we hired men, we sisters, that's all there was to it. Father didn't have anyone to, he had plowed the field and it needed harrowing, and there wasn't anyone to harrow, I'd have to stay home from school to harrow. All day, walk up and down those rows. That's why I'm short. But it was good exercise. I did get through school that way, and one more interesting point about school and then I won't say anymore, was my principal. He was, his name was Hal Blue. He left his mark at this college. He was a very, very brilliant man, and he was, went on later to teach at the college in education. He was interested in the German background. The German-Russian background. And he was curious not only about me, but others whom he'd met, and he talked to me a great deal about my background, and he wanted to visit and meet my family, my parents, the farm, my sisters and brothers, and see some of the work we were doing. And he did. He'd come out and visit us quite a bit. And my mother couldn't talk with him, and he enjoyed visiting with her.

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She used sign language, and she understood him. She would always give him something to eat, and he always enjoyed that, and then when come graduation time, he called me in and said, "Liddy, you can't graduate." And I was shocked. I didn't realize. You know, you really don't know all the rules, when no one can help you. I had no help. My oldest brother was the only one educated at that time, and gone, why, I couldn't ask anybody, except teachers, and somehow I didn't know enough to do that. To go to college, and even to graduate from high school, we had to have at that time, geometry and chemistry, among other things, physics and other basics. I had had physics, but was never admitted to chemistry late. That was that chemistry teacher, is the way I used to remember it. And then the geometry teacher would not admit me late.

R: So you had to get there.

M: And I couldn't get here.

R: Oh, you couldn't.

M: So I didn't have geometry. Nor chemistry on my record.

R: I understand. Um-hmm.

M: I had to fill in my credit hours with whatever class would admit me, and one was home economics, I'll never forget that, and bookbinding, of all things. And that was totally unnecessary, except it was a credit. I had enough credit hours, but Mr. Blue explained, I didn't have the right credit hours. Was it possible that my folks would let me come to summer school and make up, he would graduate me with the class on the promise that I would go to summer school and take geometry and chemistry. I said, "No, I know they will not. I am one of the work force. At home, my mother and father do not treat me differently." That was one hundred percent true. "From those that are staying home, and if I don't carry my share, my work, I have to stay home." I said, "In the summertime, Mr. Blue, there's no way. We're in the field, every day, all day long. Absolutely no way." "Well," he said, "you go home and talk to your folks." And I cried about it, and it didn't help anything, not to him, I mean, on my way home. And I actually asked my parents,

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and the answer was "No way." And my mother was happy. She said, "Well, you don't need to graduate. That's just fine. Now you're finished." My father had no answer, really. He didn't like it, but he didn't know what to say, nobody could do anything about it. Next day, I went back to school, and Mr. Blue called me in, to the office, as he did all seniors to straighten them out, ready for graduation. Discovered, I don't know how or why he did what he did, but he had come out, he said, "I'm going out and talk to your folks," and he did, and he talked to my father and my mother, and they made it plain to him what I had told him, that they couldn't spare me. Any different than anybody else. He didn't say anything to them. Third day he called me back, and he said, "Get ready. You're gonna graduate." And he said, "Did you say you wanted to go to college?" I said, "Well, yes, I do, I want to go to college." "Where do you want to go to college?" I said I wanted to go here to Greeley. I said, "Where else can I go?" "You really want to go to Greeley?" "Yes, I really do." "Well, what do you want to study?" "I want to study foreign languages." "Why do you want to study foreign languages?" "Well," I said, "I already know German, and I like French so much, and I studied Latin," and I said, "my sister-in-law is a language teacher." That was my philosophy brother's wife. She was a language teacher, foreign language teacher.

R: I see.

M: They were my idol, my model.

R: Ah, yes, that makes sense.

M: So I said I wanted to be a foreign language teacher. "All right, you get ready for school next fall, you'll be admitted." And I was admitted to the college, and I graduated with a foreign language degree in 1929, and I did that in four years without losing credit, and again, I had to do it the hard way, but I got a little more leeway as far as farm work goes, but I had to get up much earlier and work much later. All these many years of my schooling, my mother's income was cows, you know, milk cows and milk and milk money and butter, with her daughters. She

ran that system, and I had, my favorite answer, about my family and my college degree, is "I milked my way through school." Morning and night.

R: You milked your way through school. That's good.

M: Till the day I graduated, until I went away to teach.

R: And then you taught. Where did you teach?

M: I started teaching in Grover, Colorado, and then for two years, we were supposed to stay two years. If you're rehired, then your credits are okay. Then they'll hire you again. Well, then, the third year I chose to go to Arizona. I had the adventure in the blood, I think. Line followed my, the adventure blood was in my bloodstream, I think, and it carried on the rest of my married life, you know, and we traveled a great deal, but I enjoyed teaching in Casa Grande, Arizona, very, very much. I planned to go to Mexico, but married Dave instead.

R: When was that?

M: 1933.

R: That does strange things to plans.

M: In the depth of the Depression, without any money, without anything but parents and again, their generosity and homes to keep us until there was work.

R: Okay. All right, now can you say anything about the Depression?

M: Oh, much, yes, I certainly can, but do you want to hear that now, too?

R: Maybe I should come back another time.

M: Well, you see, I graduated in '29, and that was the year of the Crash. And I was certainly able to read things in those years, naturally, I picked up all the, advanced enough, fortunately, that I was able to keep up with a lot of current events, without radio, and without any other communication except school. I was aware of all this, and of course, the family was aware of it, the farmers were aware of it, the prices were low for their commodities, so the hardships were hitting the farmers, and if it had not been through the Depression years as well as prior to all these years, my mother and her milk cows, our family would have had it harder than families who had a lot of sons, again, father had only two

sons, one gone, and one left to farm. And the youngest, he had another son, he was next to the last in the family, and he was just a young boy, twelve, when I graduated from college, so he hadn't done much farming then, you see, and the main thrust of that farmwork was on the four sisters in the middle years, then, and the Depression in Colorado was very hard on the farmers and in Greeley, and this whole area covered by the Colorado Big Thompson. We had a drought, too. And there were no crops. There was no income. So my teaching money, I sent home to my parents.

R: I see, uh-huh.

M: And then my sisters that were still home helped Mom with the cows, and so when I, then when I stopped teaching in '33, my contract read, "You cannot get, if you get married, your contract is void." Only the head of a household can earn money, or teach." So marrying Dave voided my contract, and that was also, though, the year, '33, when the banks closed, the school district went broke from January to June or April-May, I had no teaching money anyhow, our checks were discounted through February and then from then on the district didn't write any more. We finished our teaching without money.

R: I see.

M: And I had some savings and was able to get home on that, and I had sent all my money home to the parents. They needed it to survive. My father needed it. For three years he planted crops and harvested absolutely nothing.

R: Is that right?

M: There was no water, you see.

R: Well, the irrigation system was cut off, or not in yet?

M: Well, the Greeley-Loveland only, the Big Thompson water wasn't in yet. That didn't come until '36 and '37.

R: I see. Uh-huh.

M: Through the tunnel. And from then on, we haven't been short. But just prior to the water coming, we had the big drought, in this area, and any farmer under the

Greeley-Loveland, they were all dried up. And this farm was one of them.

R: I see. Now, do you think that the so-called Englisher suffered any worse than Germans?

M: No, yes, they were all alike. They were equally suffering.

R: Everybody equally suffering.

M: No, at that point, every five-ten years, it seemed like a hundred years, or fifty years. Everything moved so rapidly in our lives, our lifetime. Really did, really, it has for me. Living with my mother, and growing up in the German family, and learning all about her life, their life in Russia, all, because she lived it here, so I have to just really say I lived a lot of the things and learned a lot of the things the way they did it in Russia.

R: Uh-huh. Right here in Colorado.

M: Right here at home with my mother on the farm, uh-huh. And haven't lost it, either. And I've taught it to my children.

R: That's good.

M: Some of it.

R: That's good.

M: And they have many talents, so whoever had the talents, many of the young people of the German background have gone to great things in the modern world.

R: Yes. Since the Second World War in particular.

M: Yes, yes. The second generation. Our children.

R: When were your children born?

M: Our children were born in '35, '37, '39. 1939.

R: Okay. And your husband was in law school when you got married? Those would have been bad years.

M: No, he finished, he had finished law school, and he's two years older than I am. And he finished law school in 1932, and he went to C.U. He had a degree in history.

R: Oh, really.

M: A.B. degree in history, and then a law degree in 1932, and did not have any work

nor private practice to earn enough money in Loveland, where he stayed with his father, married in '33, neither one of us, I had seventy-five dollars in savings left, and that was like Mama's ten pounds of sugar. We didn't use it. We stayed with Dave's father.

R: In Loveland?

M: In Loveland, and then Dave decided to open an office in Greeley, and my mother and father right here on the farm, invited us to live there, and my mother, when we moved "said, "Thank goodness you're back, now you can work again for me."

R: There you go. And so you all got through it together.

M: So I went back to work with my mother. And Dave opened a law practice, but then he did receive a job call from the Federal Land Bank of Wichita, Kansas. And as a lawyer, he qualified for it. So we did leave my mother's house, then, and move to Wichita, Kansas, in December, 1933, and had income. From then on.

R: Uh-huh. How long were you in Kansas?

M: Fifteen months. We lived through the hot season there and the dust storm. We returned in '35.

R: To Greeley?

M: No, to Denver. Dave changed from the Wichita Land Bank to Denver Joint Stock Land Bank; as all Coloradoans, back to Colorado was our wish, away from Kansas. The weather was very, very hard for us. We were not used to the heat and that type of weather and everything. So we were in Denver, and the children were all born in (end of side of tape).

R: . . . Private law practice in Greeley at what year?

M: At the beginning of, January 1, 1939. Again, reminds me of Mama's ten pounds of sugar. We had one thousand dollars in the bank, savings. Because we'd had our babies and they were expensive babies, and yet we'd saved some money, and Dave turned down the presidency of the land bank to become a country lawyer and his own boss. So we dared to do that and moved to Greeley, and again, I would say our thriftiness, both our thriftiness, Dave's first month earnings were three dollars cash, compared to three hundred dollars salary the month before in Denver.

But we made it, and have made it ever since, and Dave now has been in private practice in Greeley 38 years.

R: The firm is called what?

M: Miller and Miller, right now. It was Miller and Ruel when our son-in-law was with him. And then for a while he had two other lawyers with him that didn't stay very long. That partnership didn't last. So it's our son now, and his father. Walker Miller and father, David Miller.

R: I see, right, right.

M: Yes, our children, then, all went through the schools with honors, I say that with pride.

R: You may, you may.

M: Pushing it a bit, and daughter number one, Lydia Rule, was the first year the Boettcher Scholarships were given, she received one of those.

R: She did?

M: Yes, she did, and she was Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude, University of Colorado.

R: Congratulations.

M: In political science.

R: What year did she graduate?

M: From Colorado University, '56. And Robert Rule, her childhood, started kindergarten with her, her only romance, I call it, started law school, and they married then, and she worked two years at the university, and then they moved to Greeley and he joined Dave when Robert graduated from law school in '59. Daughter Mary, Lydia was also valedictorian of her class, high school. Daughter Mary, two years later, was also valedictorian of her class, cheerleader, 4-H leader, and everything under the sun, and all this animal life out here, too. She wanted to be a veterinarian, she'd been taking care of animals like a veterinarian, and the veterinarian taught her how. She got admission without anybody's help to Wellesley, she was admitted to Wellesley. Because she wanted to go Ivy League. Again, she had dreams from what she was reading, and all the children, I feel, were, and Dave is the

same way, if it was constructive and worthwhile, we encouraged it, and so if she could get in, why, go try. Well, believe it or not, she got in, and much to our surprise, the price was pretty high, of course. And she turned down her scholarship to CU to do it. I taught school at the time at Greeley High. Dave wanted me to not teach. He thought that would reflect on his law practice.

The students, the children needed the money, so I taught. And then two years later our son graduated. He had a joint honors scholarship also at the university.

R: Colorado?

M: Colorado, and he graduated in [inaudible] from law school, had . . .

R: Was that Colorado again?

M: Colorado law. Received a foreign law scholarship through Chicago University, studied one year in Freiberg, University of Germany, returned to Chicago and received a Master's in Foreign Law, and taught law at Kansas University three years. Returned to Greeley in 1970, joined his father in law practice. I forgot to tell you about daughter Mary, she returned from Wellesley after one and a half years because she wanted to get into medical school. She could not get into medical school without an A. B. degree, if it were from out of state, and in Colorado, you could still enter medical school if you had the high grades at a three-year level. She was always on the top scores, so, she decided to drop Wellesley after a year and a half, return back to Colorado, lost twenty hours credit, Wellesley credit, Colorado didn't accept them, because some of the credits were medical credits. And, 'cause that's how she enrolled. At Wellesley. She made up the lost twenty hours, was admitted to medical school in three years, in spite of half a year loss, she was carrying twenty-two hours solid plus an honors chemistry course, and then entered medical school four years there.

R: This is at CU.

M: Yes, but the medical school in Denver. So she graduated from medical school in Denver with honors in surgery, interned in Weld County, she married when she was a junior, had a little boy, no, yes, when she was still a junior, it happens in a year, I guess, second child was on its way when she graduated. Due before she

was supposed to intern July 1, but the child didn't come, so she interned anyhow, started July 1, the head of the hospital didn't know what to do with her, put her into anesthesia to sit out her time, because she was due any day, baby came July 13, she had four children. She never missed a day from medicine nor practicing medicine, nor med school, she had four babies, nursed them all, she'd run off when others would have coffee break to wherever her child was and took care of

the child. Again, I think those are all those things that are in the blood, I think, like my own mother. I always say that mother must have been in her to get her to do all this, because that's what my mother would insist that we always do every-thing her way, Mother's way. And...

R: And she's a doctor in Fort Collins now.

M: Yes, and she's a medical doctor in Fort Collins, and she's a family practice specialist, now, she's an A.A.F.P. by title. And they had one misfortune. The third child, a little girl, drowned in a ditch. When they were planting flowers . . .

R: I recall hearing about it.

M: Um-hmm, they had this sad tragedy. It's ten years ago now. This year.

R: These ditches are treacherous, aren't they?

M: Irrigation ditch, yes. But it's one of those things you have to accept, and she had to accept it, and she did, and she never, she stopped medicine that time only one week, because her patients would call her, they were very sympathetic and helped her through the hard times. So it worked, we all have losses, you know, and so she had a hard time. But she has three wonderful children, too, growing up, our son has three children, and Lydia Rule has three children.

R: Um-hmm. The family goes on.

M: An interesting pattern develops again. It's hard to understand why it does. Our family has had this interesting pattern. Our children are all different, from Greeley, here, Lydia Rule's become a fine artist, got her degree, from Greeley, here, a Master's in Fine arts, finishing her four-year term on the school board, lots of civic work, church work, children do the same, the grandchildren do the same. I did a lot of church work

all my life. I was taught that.

R: Well, you wanted to say something earlier about the church, I think.

M: The church. Yes, I did, because . . .

R: Would you like to say something about that now?

M: Yes. One of the things we learned at home, all German families were very strict with their children, about church, all were piled in a car, it used to be in a buggy or wagon, and bundled off to church. It was simply the only thing that parents had to do. I really felt that way later in life, when I thought about it. It's no wonder they went every Sunday, that's when they could catch up with all their friends and their information or gossip or whatever happened during the week, and on Sunday this would be the full day, the Sunday school, afternoon prayer meetings, and for young people, evening service, Christian endeavor, in the Congregational Church, it was called that name. Christian endeavor.

R: So this was religious life as well as social life.

M: Yes. Definitely, and that was the only way, and that's how I met Dave.

R: Through Christian endeavor?

M: Through Christian endeavor. That's a fact, it's how young people met each other, even.

R: Had he come over here to Greeley?

M: Well, we had young people's conferences, same as the brotherhood had conferences, same as the congregation had conferences. And again, custom, then, was you put them up in your homes, and you made food for the incoming guests to the church, and families that had that willingness were always loaded with guests. And my mother and father were very much a leader in the church movement at all levels, and their doors were awfully wide, because they had a lot of daughters to do an awful lot of cooking and baking, and Mama did it herself, and we had so many people so many years. Sleep with us and eat with us at all these conference and convention levels. Then when the young people's turn came, they had to be confirmed to take part in that, and that would be past fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen-year-olds. And. Then they, we would go from, not far away, but Fort Morgan, I remember Fort

Morgan, Fort Collins, Loveland, Berthoud, and Greeley. I don't recall any other towns that we went as a youth conference and group. And that's how we met each other, many of us, and I met Dave that way. In Greeley, at one of the youth conferences. I knew him for a long time before he started college and before I started college, and then later we married.

R: Would you say that the church had something to do with many German families marrying other German families?

M: Yes, Yes. Just sort of again carrying on some of the traditions from Russia. The colonists married within the colonies. Friends, had to know friends. And in my mother's, with so many daughters, the main counseling was, "Look at the family of the young man."

R : Oh, yes.

M: Then you know of what stock he comes from, what kind of a family he comes from. And there were some families that had rougher talk, or I know my mother and father disallowed all that. They were the brotherhood, and the brotherhood was pietism.

R: Was it active here in Greeley?

M: Very active. Is.

R: In the Congregational Church?

M: In the Congregational Church. And all the Congregational Churches. It's practically died out.

R: Yes, I've heard about that, but I don't know too much about it. Was it Evangelich, or was it mostly Reformed, or Congregational?

M: It didn't have any of those terms. It had the term [inaudible], brotherhood, and that could be [inaudible] or, [inaudible], or could be [inaudible], that's congregational. It will be church name didn't enter, although each church had their own brotherhood.

R: I see. Now was it strictly male?

M: Oh, no, no. Women and men. This came from Russia. This came with them from Russia. And that simply meant that you were reborn. That you had given up worldly . . .

R: Goods, possessions . . .

M: Well not, so much, no, mainly dancing and drinking and carousing and roughness.

R: Then, did your congregation, then, frown on dancing?

M: The brotherhood did. Not the congregation. Oh, and the preachers always did, yes. Yes, yes yes. But they would marry a couple, say, and if that couple's family believed in having a dance wedding, the preacher didn't deny it. You never danced in church, you see, so-the Lutheran people danced more than the Congregational people. Really, that's really true.

R: Yeah, that makes sense to me.

M: That's true around here. At least we learned . . .

R: We've heard about these so-called Russian weddings. Would they have been in one church more than in other churches?

M: More in the Lutheran than in the Congregational, and I don't know why, except that it just happened that way, and they also had [inaudible] but they did not mix much with each other in their churches. Any more than the church members would mix. They stayed within their limits, their own bounds, their own churches, and the Congregational [inaudible] was very large.

R: Right here in Greeley.

M: Colorado.

R: Colorado, okay.

M: Yes, or in Nebraska. All over, wherever the German people were, that had that. You know, there, today there's a certain sect of Mennonites called the Brotherhood Mennonites, and they have the same Pietism that [inaudible] had here.

R: Were there any Mennonites in Greeley that you remember?

M: Not at that time, no, we're having some now, but not then that we knew of.

R: What about Roman Catholics?

M: A few, and they weren't in any churches because they would go to the non-German church or not at all. We didn't have it in Greeley. And the majority would have been moved to Sterling, where there is a Catholic community. That's one reason they moved there.

- R: Oh, so they could be with others of the same faith.
- M: Yes, with the church, that's right. Faith had a lot to do with it. Where they would move and stay. And also, it had a lot to do with the mores of the group. And the Russian dancing, the Russian wedding dancing, was simply forbidden by my parents. Absolutely forbidden. Then my sister just older than myself married an Evangelisch [inaudible] from Eaton, and they had a dance wedding, and my mother was most miserably, most miserable and unhappy. She refused to stay and . .
- R: At the wedding?
- M: Oh, yes, wouldn't attend it. Oh no, that would be breaking her religion.
- R: Oh, my.
- M: She didn't approve of it. What she didn't approve of, she didn't do. My father would have, out of, would with have being a father, would have stayed, and I think he did stay, and my brother had to take my mother home, because my mother wouldn't stay.
- R: Well now, she would have gone to the religious ceremony, but not to the wedding dance.
- M: She did, that's right. But, see, my mother was in church, in the Lutheran church in Eaton, it's still there, the little old Lutheran church. And the wedding dance was at their house. It wasn't a big one. But anything called a dance, why, my mother was out. And then when I later became a teacher, and even cut my hair, after I left home, couldn't do it before, even though I went through the . . .
- R: This, that was an act of self-assertion.
- M: This again was an act of, well, no, well , the teaching, when yes, when I was twenty-one. But not cutting was one of the things that many German families, not merely my mother, many, did not allow their daughters to cut their hair, because that would be too stylish (?), and that is a little bit like narcissism, or you aren't supposed to brag about yourself and look at yourself and show yourself. Other than . you what you are, and that's to be a good person. And the good Lord gave you long hair, and you keep your long hair. But . . .
- R: That's fascinating. Well was it worn long, or was it up in a bun because you were working?

- M: No, always in a bun. And we had ear [inaudible] stuff, and we styled it up as much as we could, and a lot of non-German girls had it also, long hair, of course. We went through the, I went through the twenties, in that era of the . . .
- R: The bobs and the Charleston look and all of that.
- M: Yes, yes, oh yes, and one girl that I know in our church cut her hair in the twenties, and became a, oh, a Charleston dancer, and [inaudible].
- R: Was she disapproved of?
- M: She was disapproved of. But she was one of my good friends, I didn't ever change as far as friendship goes, because I didn't ever know anything other than she was a good person. Her haircut and her way of life, I didn't know what it was, I didn't pay any attention to it, you know. And when I, she'd come to church, she wasn't thrown out. Oh, no, our church never practiced that. Closing a door. Now, that's one thing about the Congregational church, you know you're yourself, you believe within, you're not, and no one had dare tell you what to believe, you know, you're very independent. This was preached to this day in the Congregational Church. And that's why our parents liked that, because they were very independent people. Yet they liked this community feeling, too, of the brotherhood, and of the church. They supported both very much. My parents did.
- R: It all seems to fit together.
- M: And then they taught us all to do the same, and we did. All of us children did, and I followed that rule even when I married, and I made it because I married Dave and he was of the same background. Because we were very even and compatible on church and where to go and what to do with the kids and so on, and it's carried down through our grandchildren. The oldest now is a deacon, for four years he started C.U. The next oldest is a junior deaconess now, that's Lydia's two children, so it's down in the grandchildren level.
- R: Okay, you have passed it on.
- M: At least in this family, and I would have to say many, many, many German families carried the tradition up to now, through into their generation, and the German

Miller

kids in school cause the least trouble, because they had this discipline from home. And a lot of it's changed, though, Ken, because of, now, I don't blame it on the intermarriage at all, I just blame it onto the times. Because there are a lot of young men and young girls now that, well, they just don't have the heritage left in them at all. They really don't, so I don't blame it onto . . .

R: The assimilation and the Americanization and . . .

M: And the T.V. and the movies and cars and everything that goes with it. And money, they've had more money. And they do now what any Jones kid does. Really, as an average group. This I'm very aware of, Ken, and I think Dave and I were still of the old school, and our children received as much of that as I received from my mother. And daughter Lydia has brought back from school boards comments that could have been from me, from my mother. Daughter Mary, the medical doctor, had a grandmother visit her with her daughter and grand-daughter, Mary was taking care of both, and the grandmother said, "If you don't mind, I just would like to follow you around," and Mary invited her while she was taking care of both the daughter and granddaughter. When she was finished, just before she was leaving, she thanked Mary, Dr. Hoffner, and said, "May I just ask you one question, Dr. Hoffner?" "Well, yes, yes, what?" "Where did you learn your common sense?" Now, this is practicing medicine. This is the same thing our daughter Lydia comes back with from the school board, common sense. You know, there's so much lacking today in common sense.

R: And we're all in trouble.

M: And one more, and that's the third one, and that's our son, and he is last. Again, we, he doesn't tell us. Judges will tell Dave, other lawyers will tell Dave. I hear it from some person or another. "Your son is our most honest lawyer in town." "Your son is the most brilliant lawyer in town." We don't do it, we don't know why, but this is, the three children are carrying on that old, hard discipline that both my mother and father gave me and Dave's mother and father gave him, too. And we carried it on, Dave and I did, and we transferred ours to our children somehow, thank goodness. I don't know. Except we both felt when we were raising them, that we had to do, well, we had many experiences to back this

up, that they had to have the religious training, that they had to have an education and they had to have the training that suited what they really wanted to do. And we did not force them, but we made, we did have rules, house rules. Even though they edged over an hour or two, or day, or something like that, we kept to our house rules. For instance, the girls loved slumber parties. And I had two right in a row, so I had years and years of slumber parties. Argue, and usually in those days at night, when our girls were--now they have them during the week, only Saturday nights or Friday nights. Saturday night was the least one I wanted, because they had to go to Sunday school. And I didn't want the kids here, either, in my house, because I'd have them too, you know. So when they'd be at my house, mine would have to get up and dress, because I was teaching Sunday school. We'd go to Sunday school, they'd sleep. We'd leave our guests and they could stay or go home. And when mine were out at somebody else's house, I would mean Mary and Lydia.. I picked them up for Sunday school , and oh, my, they thought I was pretty rough about it, because "Why do we have to go? We're the only ones that have to get up and leave. The rest are all asleep." "Well, that's too bad. We said you could come, or could go to the slumber party, but you would also go to Sunday school. You don't sacrifice Sunday school for slumber parties." That was basically the system we used. We had our house rules that were--not hard, I don't think, but they were regular. We kept them regularly.

R: Well, that's good.

M: Held them to the line.

R: You're to be complimented for that.

M: Well, Ken, I'm old-fashioned.

R: That's all right.

M: I'm of the old school, and I've carried it on, and I do to this day, and I imagine I'll never change (laughing).

R: Oh, my.

M: I missed a lot about Russia, I know, because I, you and I, spent almost, a

little bit, across our lifetime, but I sometime, if you do have interest, we do have a great story to tell about the rammed earth of this house.

R: Okay. I'd like to maybe have a talk with you about that.

M: Dave and I together probably could give you a good story on that, because we're working on that and it's interesting and it's timely now, and we should tell the story in book form so that others can read it, and also, it can be done by hand, it can be a low-cost system. Now, with the solar systems on the horizon, many of them, a person would, I suppose, would have to almost make their own decision which system he could afford, but there are many systems that are not so expensive that can be employed, so with the solar system in addition to earth, a tremendous energy saving combination. It really is, and we'd like to tell you that in a different way sometime.

R: Maybe I could come together some evening, we could chat for a little while. Can I ask you just a couple of quick things, because we're gonna run out of tape here. Could you give me your husband's birthday?

M: Yes, May 6, forgive me, May 23, 1906. Loveland.

R: And he was in Loveland.

M: Loveland, Colorado, was his birthplace.

R: Okay. And his parents came from Nebraska?

M: From McCook to Loveland.

R: Okay.

M: And his parents were married in McCook. However, they were born in Russia. Came as young children.

R: In Norka, I think you said.

M: Miller was, and Walker, Katherine Margaret Walker, was born in Frank.

R: Okay. Yeah. Then, as you reflect on the Greeley community here, of Germans from Russia, did most of them come from Frank, Norka, Walker, Walter?

M: Mixed, very mixed. They came from Volga areas, and the majority would be Frank. [inaudible], many of the colonies. Walker. Donhoff--not as much as Windsor. But I'd have to, and [inaudible], you've got to read the list, almost, from the

maps, and you'd hit most everybody then. But the majority were Frank or Walker or [inaudible] or Norka. [Inaudible], they get those that were close together on the map, I can't quite recall them.

R: Okay.

M: In order, you know.

R: Did many of them come right here to Greeley, would you say, or were they in Loveland or somewhere like that, and then came over here?

M: No, no, I don't think, no, they were probably, those Loveland, they went to Loveland, I think, came there too, directly, either from Lincoln or other areas of Nebraska. There were some moving, probably, from Greeley to Loveland or vice versa, but not much. The Amen family is a typical example I'm thinking of, or the Zeiler family. Those are two old Loveland families, and the Uhrich families. And they have lots of children now involved here. They did not come from Greeley. See, the Amen family landed in the western slope at Delta. And Sterling. From Sterling to Loveland. And the Zeiler family, from Lincoln to Loveland. And the Uhrich family, I believe, from Lincoln to Loveland. But Lincoln was the dispersing point. And Amen, H.

J. Amen, the man who lived to be nearly 98, Ruth Amen's father

END OF TAPE