

ROUGH DRAFT

INTERVIEW WITH AMELIA LUFT VENDEGNA

STERLING, COLORADO

JANUARY 21, 1976

by Timothy J. Kloberdanz

January 21, 1976 Amelia Luft Vendegna Interview

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Tape #1, Side A

Today is January 21st, 1976 and this is Timothy Kloberdanz and I am about to interview Mrs. Amelia Vendegna at 425 on Highway 14.

TJK: Do you have the farm numbered now?

ALV: Just the house number.

TJK: Okay. Well, I'll start. Is that your full name? Amelia Vendegna?

ALV: Yes.

TJK: Your maiden name was?

ALV: Luft. My important papers I sign Amelia Luft Vendegna. Like my checks and savings, or anything like that, important thing--I put my full name. I use my maiden name as my middle name because I don't have a middle name.

TJK: I see. Your parents names were what?

ALV: John Conrad Luft, Sr. and Maria Barbara Schadt Luft.

TJK: Her maiden name was Schadt.

ALV: Schadt, yes.

TJK: Alright. What was your birthdate, what year?

ALV: October 21st, 1905.

TJK: 1905. You were born in Russia?

ALV: I was born in Russia.

TJK: What village was that?

ALV: I believe it, I'm sure it was Konstantinovka, as I have learned to pronounce it.

TJK: Uh huh. This is where your parents came from?

ALV: That's where they lived at that time. (pause)

TJK: Do you remember your grandparents at all?

ALV: (pause) No, I don't, but they would be on this paper--where is it?

TJK: Okay. (pause, shuffling of papers)

ALV: Now, you want to ask me a question?

TJK: Yeow. Now, the grandparents, what were their names?

ALV: Conrad and Anna Gurjahr Luft.

TJK: Alright. Now, what was the religion of your parents?

ALV: They were Lutheran. Anyway they started the Lutheran church here. They started Trinity Lutheran Church. I think they always were Lutheran, as far as I know.

TJK: Um hum, um hum. They weren't affiliated with the Bruderschaft, remember--they had the brothers and the sisters?

ALV: I don't know--that is something mother never mentioned, that I remember.

TJK: Um hum. Now, how old were you when you came over from Russia?

ALV: I was born in October and I am sure we came in February, so--just a little over a year old.

TJK: I see. That would have been in about what year you came over now?

ALV: 1906--would--February, 1907.

TJK: 1907?

ALV: Um hum.

TJK: Do you have any idea why your parents decided to leave Russia?

ALV: Well, they, I guess they thought they could make a better living over here and they wanted to find a new country. Some of their friends were over here--in Kansas. I think that encouraged them to come.

TJK: I see. Then they had probably contacted these friends in Kansas, beforehand.

ALV: Yes, well--Dad had been in America before, according to this he had come to--the people had recruited a lot of these people to Mexico to clear the land, and build up the country there. I remember Dad talking about it. When he left there he went to Bevine

[?], Kansas to his friends. Then he went back to Russia. I believe he was nineteen years old that time. Then he went back to Russia, and after he was married and with the two of us, my older sister and myself, they decided to come to America.

TJK: Oh, I see. So when he was a single man then he already came to the New World...

ALV: He had been here before.

TJK: Oh, I see. And he was recruited to go to Mexico.

ALV: Yes. Yes. A lot of people were--and he used to talk about it. It was very interesting--how they worked there and all the diseases—they had nothing to fight the diseases in those days and people died, a lot of people died, and everything.

TJK: Hum. Were quite a number of Germans recruited?

ALV: Well, I don't--I guess they had quite a few, I couldn't say just how many.

TJK: Do you remember which area in Mexico this was?

ALV: No, I don't, I just don't--I thought it was in South America, but according to this it was in Mexico. I always thought it was South America. But, well, my sister had this--evidently mother gave her all this information because she has a little bit more in detail, which I don't have. But, according to this it was Mexico, where they had gone.

TJK: And naturally you were probably so young that you don't really have any recollections of Russia itself, right?

ALV: No, absolutely not. (laughter) Absolutely not.

TJK: I see. What about, did your mother ever tell you though about the experiences of coming over, did she tell you about the ship, and...?

ALV: Yes, she often talked about the ship. I was just a year old and she used to tell about, how I would run around, go out in the kitchen, and (pause) how the cook always had a pet name for me, it was kind of cute, but I didn't remember. (laughter) How to the end of the trip, it was a long trip and she said she took it real well but dad became very sea

sick at times. Then I guess toward the end of the trip a lot of the children contacted the measles.

TJK: On the ship, now?

ALV: On the ship, yes. There was a lot of sickness, and of course they had docked in (pause) Galveston. She often talked about Galveston. They were quarantined there for a long time.

TJK: Was this where they landed, then, when they came...?

ALV: Yes. Yes.

TJK: ...to the United States?

ALV: Then dad went on to Beazine, Kansas to his friends, and mother and my sister and I were quarantined. How long, I don't know. Then, of course, when we were able to get out we went to join him.

TJK: Hum. Now, how were you treated on the ship, what was done to...

ALV: Well, they were low class...uh, passengers. They were down in the lower floor. Of course, I guess those were the cheapest rates and that's about what they could afford. But, they wanted to come over so bad. I know mother used to talk about being in the lower class...of travelers.

TJK: Um hum. You'd mentioned before something about--that when they tried to make you better that they'd used--what kind of a treatment now?

ALV: (laughter) Do you want to hear that?

TJK: Yes. (laughter)

ALV: Well, in those days I guess they didn't have any, way of reducing fever, and I was, she said I was very sick. I had the measles, and, oh I had pneumonia and measles at the same time. I had a very high fever, so they would put me in a tub of ice water until I

was blue, and my skin was all blue, and then they'd wrap me in a warm blanket and put an ice pack on my head, in order to reduce the fever.

TJK: Hum. And this is evidently the only treatment they had then to...?

ALV: I guess that's all they had in those day--they just didn't have all these...

TJK: You mentioned that some children did die on the ship.

ALV: Yes. A lot of them died. I wanted to mention too that living conditions in some of those places I guess where they had to stay there were just very bad, they were just...miserable. No sanitation of any kind, and it was pretty rough.

TJK: Um hum. Now, you had told me earlier that you were close to your mother and naturally [?] spent a lot of time with her and had heard certain things from her--in terms of recollections...

ALV: Yes, when we were younger, before we were old enough to do a lot of work, out in the fields, I was more or less at home helping mother with the children, because my older sister, she helped out in the fields a lot more. And the boys would get out in the fields, but then myself and my younger sisters that were old enough, we'd help mother in the house and with the children. Of course, after we got older we all worked out in the field. Driving horses, plowing fields, I remember running the buck-rake and stacking hay. Dad would do the stacking and we would have to run the buck-rakes and somebody would have to lead the stacker horse. I'm sorry I don't have a picture of that. (laughter) I don't know if anyone has or not. But I can still see that over there. When we lived over on the other place.

TJK: So, then you worked in the home as much as you worked in the fields?

ALV: Well, as I got older I think I worked as much out in the field as almost anybody else. When I was younger, why, and then of course later on though, I remember, when the

family was all home evenings why mother would start talking, we'd all gather around and listen.

TJK: How did she explain it, wasn't it confusing for you, the, uh, what you knew about the story in terms of Russia, and then that the fact that you were German, how did she explain all of this to you?

ALV: Well, she told us that a German princess, right offhand I can't remember her name, she married a Russian czar and while she was ruler they, she asked the German people to come to Russia to farm, the land and work, I mean work up the land, and uh, I mean build up the land, and while she was alive they did not have to pay taxes, and each son in the family was allowed so many acres of land. Of course, the people just lived in villages, the German people just had their own German villages, they did not mix with the Russians. The Russians had their villages, the Germans had theirs. They'd go out in the field during the summer, during the week they'd go out and work their land, and week-ends they'd go back home. Then on Mondays they'd go out again. How far it was I don't know. Everything had to be done by hand. Mother used to tell how they would have to tie the grain--by hand. You see it in the movies once in awhile, but that's more like a fairy tale. But she said she used to do that and it was much harder than working beets.

TJK: It was?

ALV: She said it was very hard work. Where they cut the grain with a scythe and then of course the women would come along and tie it in bundles. I remember Dad talking about his father, or grandfather, I believe it was his father, still worked with camels. That is...I'm., just pretty sure it was his father...that still had camels. While they were out there I guess they had tents in case of bad weather but they just slept on the

ground. They said it didn't make them sick...when you sleep on the ground here in this country you catch cold.

TJK: This is when they would go out to the fields to work?

ALV: Yes, all week long, until the harvest was done or the planting or the harvest, whichever they were doing. But then, in the winter time, they lived in their villages and they raised things and I guess they had their food, they preserved their own food, and everything. I know mother used to tell about--they had the great big ovens, they made their own big squares, or bricks I think, to build their homes, of mud and straw--she used to tell us how they did that. They had these great big ovens and how those were operated I don't know, but they were great big ovens that they'd take--a whole bunch of loaves of bread in and bake it. Just how they were fixed, I don't remember that. Then they--I mean, in the winter time they just lived in the villages and used the food that they had preserved in the summer. I guess they had storage places, cellars, or whatever it was. Of course, when it got cold in Russia it got cold, it stayed cold. They said when it snowed in the fall it never melted till spring. There was always snow all winter long.

TJK: Did she ever talk about the countryside itself, like what it was like--was it hilly, or was it...?

ALV: Well, she used to talk about the steppes. That, I believe, is spelled s t e p p e. I've seen it in writing. That would be more like our prairie, I'm sure. I remember she used to tell this stor--I heard it at least once, the uh, now this must have been before her time. The country was so wild that--this is one story she told us--people were riding through the country and going someplace and a pack of wolves started chasing them. Of course they had to drive just as fast as possible to try to, I mean, outdistance the wolves. Where one man fell off and they just didn't dare stop and pick him up

because they said they all would have been lost. It was just so wild and there were so many wolves at that time. I remember that story, now, it must have happened before her time because it was almost too unbelievable it could have happened in her time.

TJK: So this had been a wilderness that they had went into...and settled then?

ALV: Yes, had been a wilderness. Uh huh. Now just how far it was from there, but from, I mean to go to the larger cities like--Saratov was a larger town, how big I don't know. Of course there was the capitol and all that I don't know how far they were from that.

TJK: Did she ever talk about the Volga, the river itself?

ALV: Yes, but I just don't remember enough about that. I've just forgotten completely about that. But she did talk about it, I remember that. Since you mentioned the name. But just what she told us about it I couldn't remember at all.

TJK: I see. Did she ever mention like the school, or the church, in the village?

ALV: Oh, definitely. They had a schoolhouse and they had a teacher, well, they didn't call him a teacher, well, their instructor--and he would teach school and on Sundays he would have reading services. Once a month a minister, a preacher, would come through the village and do the baptizing and the marrying and whatever had to be done, but in between--the schoolmaster they called him--in between he would, the schoolmaster would have reading services. They had their religion, they didn't give that up.

TJK: Would you say they had a strong faith?

ALV: I think so...at least it seems that way.

TJK: Did they sing German hymns?

ALV: Yes, yes, mother used to sing some of the old German hymns for a long time.

TJK: Was the bible an essential part of uh...?

ALV: Yes, I think so, definitely. Yes, Mother used to have, well she always had her bible, her German bible, and I know it was, those things were very important to them.

TJK: What was your parents attitude toward the Russians? Did they ever talk about this—their Russian neighbors?

ALV: Well, they didn't mingle with them, they didn't seem to, they were just Germans and the Russians were Russians and they just kept to each side of their own fence.

TJK: I see.

ALV: Each kept to his side of the fence. The way I understand it--the way I remember. They just didn't mingle with them. Oh, some, I guess, but not very much.

TJK: Um hum. And they still considered themselves Germans, completely--even though they...?

ALV: Well, most of them do, but I've heard in the past that some of these German people that were over here they called themselves Russians. They maybe had been Russian citizens, but they, I mean as far as their blood was concerned they were not mixed with Russian, they had, uh, oh I would say they were a pure blood Russian—uh, I mean Germans. Definitely--there was no mixture, they did not intermarry--in any way in those days. They were just full blooded Germans. A lot of them still are. I know I still am. (laughter)

TJK: Did they speak any Russian at all, did your father know any Russian or your mother?

ALV: Well, they knew a few words--they didn't really converse. They knew some, but...

TJK: But they didn't speak it fluently?

ALV: I don't think so, at least they never did around home.

TJK: Um hum. Was anyone in your family, like your grandparents, or your father, ever in the Russian army or the military?

ALV: Uh, well Dad wasn't. His youngest brother was in the First World War and he disappeared--they never found out what happened to him. That was Uncle Carl. He was the youngest. They never found him--alive or dead. Then there was another uncle, Uncle Alexander--I can't remember what happened to him. The older brother, Uncle Ferdinand--he lived through the war and the last we heard from him was after the war and they said they were going to send him to Siberia. They uh, after the Bolsheviks we heard a lot about this, because the folks were in constant contact with relatives over there--when the Bolsheviks came into the villages and tried to get these people to join them--those that refused they would take them out and kill them. One of mother's brothers was killed that way.

TJK: Now, how did she hear about this?

ALV: They got letters.

TJK: Oh, they did receive letters.

ALV: From her friends. Oh, they uh, they corresponded. They heard all this. Of course, after the war they were so poor they said they had so much money they used it for--when they start fires so they keep warm. They were freezing. Not much food, and they couldn't buy anything with the money they had. The grandparents, Dad's parents--of course Mother's parents were both dead by this time--but dad's parents...his youngest sister was still with them, she was not married, and lived with them. The last time we heard from her she wrote that their parents had died and she was sick and that's the last we heard. But they said they sent these, uh, after that the Bolsheviks took over, they did not want the Germans around, they tried to get rid of them. And if they wouldn't join them they killed them. So, uh, the, uh, well, they tried to get them out of there so they just hauled these people around in box cars to try

to get them out of their way. Dad's parents were some of these people, and they were older, and no food and cold and I guess they just died from starvation and freezing.

TJK: What was their profession, do you know, were they farmers, or...?

ALV: Well...

TJK: Did they have a trade, a special trade?

ALV: I can't remember, but, uh...Dad's father--what he did. Well, they did farming. They had their land, I know that, but what he did aside from that I just can't remember right off-hand.

TJK: Previous to the Bolshevik takeover, did your parents describe their parent's way of life, as good, in terms that you can...

ALV: I think so, I think they were just happy and had what they needed and I don't think that there was any suffering there until the Bolsheviks stepped in and just simply, uh, killed people and just--if people didn't leave or join them, why uh, they killed them.

TJK: What year would this have been now when they heard the last word from anyone in Russia, would you say?

ALV: Well, now, my sister could write German--she did some writing for mother and mother did some writing. Now, I didn't keep up my German, which I had learned when I was in first few years in school. But uh, they would uh, know just what your--well, it was after the First World War. It wasn't too awfully long after that.

TJK: And then contact was broken then, and you never heard...?

ALV: Well, the folks used to gather up a lot of clothes and send money for food and send clothes over- -anything Mother could collect she sent it over, package after package. Now, we had two--one of uncles had two daughters, and they, from the last I heard they joined the Communists. Of course after, that we didn't. hear from them any more. I think my sister used to --and mother used to send them money and things.

They got a few answers from them, later on we just lost complete contact. So for years now--of course as Mother got older I guess she just kind of got away from that--she just didn't talk much about it anymore. But in her younger years she talked about it a lot.

TJK: Do you remember any peculiar beliefs that the old ones held--like your parents or grandparents--like uh, well, like superstitions, or folk medicine, or...?

ALV: Yes, well, they had their own way, well, there was no modern medicine in those days, they had their own way of using their own medicines, now just right off hand I couldn't think of any. I know they had their own medicines that they used. Of course, Mother didn't believe in some of them but she believed in others. But I couldn't name any of them right off-hand.

TJK: What about the beliefs, the peculiar beliefs, superstitions that they...?

ALV: Well let's see (pause)...well, like uh, my mother's father, like I told you, one day had a family picture taken and he wouldn't have his picture taken, he just didn't believe in it. I don't know why. Other things I just, right off-hand I just can't think of any.

TJK: Do you think they felt, oh--did they ever mention anything like witches, or things of this nature at all, or had this pretty much gone out?

ALV: Well, something like that. I remember when we were kids we lived over across the road and we had friends living over here at the corner where Mrs. Hall lives now--there's just a little two-room house there. Well, some people lived there and then the Willmans lived up right across from the park. Oh, then my aunt and her family lived up where the park is now. They farmed that land at that time. Well, evenings us kids wanted to get out and just run back and forth. Well, mother didn't approve of us running around at night--we were supposed to stay at home, where we belonged. So

one time, why we were out and there were trees right along the road, there's still some there--there by the ballpark--and one time we saw a ghost...white ghost. Scared us half to death and we all went home. (laughter) Well, it occurred to me later as I got older that mother and my aunt was staged it there to frighten us, to make us stay at home then.

TJK: Oh, I see.

ALV: As I got older I keep thinking about that. I can still see it very faintly in the back in my mind but I think that was put up. [First? But?] we came home and we were all scared to death and I'm just sure the two of them put that, I mean staged this to scare us.

TJK: Yeow--one way of keeping you home then. (laughter)

ALV: Believe me--we stayed at home.

TJK: Do you remember, oh for instance some of their beliefs concerning religion? Did they believe, for instance, in a personalized devil, like uh, that uh, you know that uh, that evil in their mind was very clear what was bad, and what was good was very clear what was good and what we should do.

ALV: Well, one thing the German religion I think is much more strict than the English religion, cause I grew up in it and we always had the German for many years. I know the German religion, the laws in the German religion, are so much stronger--to me anyway--than they are in the English. I don't know why, but there's something about it, unless it was just, I mean just pounded into us in such a very, very strict, harsh way--this is wrong and don't you dare do this or else--and I'll tell you, I was just scared to do anything wrong, and still I've made plenty of mistakes, just like anyone else. But really, all my life as I grew up I was just scared to death to do anything wrong.

TJK: Do you think God was presented more or less as a strict individual?

ALV: Uh huh. I don't know about God, but by golly the preacher and the [inaudible] sure were. I'll tell you, they were strict. Our minister at that time was that way too, he was very strict. And our parents, with his help, why--believe me we just walked the line.

TJK: You mentioned your parents were married in Russia.

ALV: Yes.

TJK: Did they ever talk about their wedding at all?

ALV: Well, in those days, in fact it used to happen here in America years ago. You know, they didn't do anything all winter long--anybody got married, they had three day weddings--they danced three days and nights. Well, they used to do that here in Sterling, years ago. These people, you know they'd go out to work in the beet fields all summer long and in the winter they have their little house downtown. When somebody got married they had three day weddings. They'd dance all hours of the night and sleep in the morning, in the afternoon they'd start in again. I think I went to one of those. (laughter)

TJK: Oh, just one though. (laughter) There was--among the Lutherans there was no belief that this was wrong then, or anything, right, these kind of weddings?

ALV: Well, no. In the earlier days it wasn't, but as us kids got older it kind of got so they kind of stayed away from it. Because I remember one time when I could have been around ten years old, Dad had his birthday and one of his friends had his birthday, so they, they had a little dance, just a few couples got together. Of course the house was small. They had their drinks and danced.

TJK: Did they have musicians at all?

ALV: I don't remember the musicians, but I remember the rest of it, the dance, very faintly. It happened that, one of the men got drunk and started singing dirty songs, that's the

one thing that the preacher just condemned very much, this drinking and dancing. I remember then that was the last time I saw my parents dance, because of this. I remember mother mentioning that. They did not want us children to see these things. So, that was the end of their dancing. So consequently none of us really ever became very good dancers. You take some of these kids they go out and have all kinds of shack dances. They go out and find an empty beet shack and, Sunday evenings and dance. Well, I went to two or three of those. When I told my mother about it well, she didn't say much--she kind of let me know she didn't exactly approve. So consequently we just didn't go much for it. And our minister condemned it very much because it wasn't just the dancing but the way they carried on, they'd get drunk and sing dirty songs and all that which I didn't approve of either. In those days I didn't know the difference. I know our minister used to condemn it very much. Of course those, times have changed--they don't condemn it as much as they used to. Of course the way they dance now-a-days is so different anyway, because--they don't even hold on to each other (laughter). It's very different.

TJK: Yes, right. Okay, let's go back to Galveston. You said that the second time your father came to the United States, and then you and your mother and your other sister were quarantined in Galveston.

ALV: He came with us. Yes, yes, yes.

TJK: Do you have any idea how long you were in Galveston?

ALV: I can't remember. No, I--Mother talked about it, but how long we were there I don't remember.

TJK: And then when you were all well you went...?

ALV: We went to Bezine, Kansas. That's where Dad was with his friends. They were a couple that he came to America with the first time, when they went to Mexico, he

came with them that time and they stayed. We went there. Then, I know the first summer my parents worked beets, they worked at Garden City, that I remember, Mother talked about that many times. She said that was the first time in her life she saw a snake. Said she was lying down and pretty soon she saw a shadow by the screen door and she looked up and there was a snake by the screen door. She said he just scared her to death. She'd never seen a snake in her life.

TJK: So in that part of Russia where they came from there must not have been snakes, then.

ALV: Evidently not, evidently not. But then, later on I guess they then must have been there only a year, because then they lived in Granada that's where my oldest brother was born.

TJK: This is in Colorado?

ALV: It's right on the border, I've looked it up on the map. It's right near the Kansas border, down in Southern Colorado. They must have lived there one year, worked beets there one year. Then they, came to Sterling.

TJK: And then they came to Sterling? Do you have any idea how that came about that they would find themselves on the way to Sterling from...?

ALV: I just don't know. Now my uncle, Mama's brother, Mr. Schadt, George Schadt, they were here before the folks came. Evidently .they came, some of the other friends and relatives got to Sterling before they did. Then they came to join them, and that's my idea just at the moment. Because I'm sure that the Schadts were here before we were. Then of course later on Uncle Fred came and then later on Uncle Dave came. Then of course they both passed away here. And Uncle Henry was here for just a few years. He didn't like it here and he went to Kansas City and he was there until he passed away.

TJK: What did he find wrong with the area here, was it the beet work?

ALV He was not a farmer. He tried beet working, he was not a farmer. He went--then they went to California for a while, and he came back and he built that little store where the uh...

TAPE 1, SIDE B

ALV: ...and uh, now the Schadts, Mr. Schadt, he built the house that is on the corner of Douglas and South Sixth Avenue, the south [probably another direction here – transcript at margins] corner. Course that house has been remodeled and rebuilt quite a bit. That's where they lived. Then of course Uncle Henry [original transcript problems] like it here, and they went to California for a while. Then they came back and they had lived in Kansas some place before they came to Sterling. Then they went back to Kansas City and [there? Then?] he opened a shoe shop. He was a shoe repairman, he repaired [missing word] all his life then. Had his own shoe repair shop. Till he passed away.

TJK: What year would that have been, when your parents came to Sterling? And your family?

ALV: Well, it had to be oh, seven, 1910.

TJK: Nineteen...

ALV: Wait a minute. Let's see, we came to America in 1907, in February. That I remember quite well. I was--I should have been three years old when we came to Sterling. Seven, eight, nine, ten--it must have been ten, 1910. Now just what time of the year I don't [word missing]. Whether it was spring or fall or winter. I don't remember.

TJK: Do you have any memories at all of Granada or Kansas?

ALV: No.

TJK: No memories of that...?

ALV: No, I was just not old enough. I do remember when we lived down here by where the feed lots are, now there was a four-room house there.

TJK: Was this the first home you lived in now, when you came to Sterling?

ALV: Well, that I don't remember either, but I know we lived there several times and uh, at least for a while. At one time we lived at the end of Douglas Street. That would be Seventh, or Eighth and Douglas. No, Seventh and Douglas. We lived there one year and Dad worked at the lumber yard. Then he rented a farm over there, but after that time they had worked beets and they lived, in the winter time they lived in that little farm house and there were four families living in there, much of the time. A family to a room. Then of course south of the house where the feed lots have been all these years, that was all pasture. We would go out there and get the cow chips for burning. People used them, I mean it isn't a fairy tale. He'd go out there and we'd find some that weren't thoroughly dry, we'd turn them over so by the time we came out the next time they were dry. We'd take them home, I mean I must have been around four years old then, four or five years old. That I remember. Maybe it's from there on my memory--that seem to remember that actually happened.

TJK: The area you are talking about, this is what later would be known as Russe Eck (Russian Corner) then, right?

ALV: Well, that's uh...around Sixth and--Sixth and Douglas, from there on south and west, a few blocks there, that's where all these German people lived, in the wintertime-in the summertime they'd go out and the farmers always had a little beet shack where they lived in the summer. Another thing that has come to my mind is the families all went out into the field, they never left anybody at home. Every baby, no matter how old it was, was out in the field. They made a frame of wood and then they put canvas over it for protection for the children. Or either maybe just some kind of old tent. I

do remember, it was just like a little frame house. I just wonder if they had canvas, covered with canvas and an opening and where the children could go in for shelter, and be out of the sun and if it rained. They would just take that out in the field with them. And about meals, I can't remember, I think sometimes a mother would go home and get food. And sometimes I think they'd take their food right out with them in the field and ate right out there.

TJK: Now, how did this work? Would a family living for instance in one of these shacks in Sterling contract with the farmer before going out to the field to work the beets?

ALV: Well, I think the uh, I think the farmers would contract with the laborer, they would find who they want and some people--I think that these people would work for the same farmer year after year, if they had a good understanding and of course some of them would change. I remember we worked out south of town a few miles for Bill Logan, which was well known in Atwood. He lived in Atwood for many years, in fact I have a vague memory that he lived in that little sod house at one time. I remember we lived--uh, worked for him. I remember that very faintly--now see I was four years old and that's when Anna was born. I remember very faintly how we would go over and get milk. Then, I know Dad worked for Mrs. Damm, she owned this place. Later on she moved to Fort Morgan and then Edgar, the oldest son, he, I guess she gave him the [missing word]. Course, after that, after Dad started farming, we lived over across [missing word] way. We lived over there thirteen years. That belonged to Martin [missing word]--he passed away many years ago. Then Dad, well after Edgar--[missing word] first wife passed away, and his second marriage didn't work out and he just had to give up the farm. He couldn't keep going [missing word] more and he was, wasn't well. So he sold the farm to dad. [missing word] Dad rented it out for the first few years and later on we farmed both farms. Then they, course the

old house was getting pretty bad, they tore that down and moved the big house out from town.

TJK: Now, where did your father accumulate the money in the early years to get started? Was it from working in the beet fields?

ALV: Well, the beet fields, and then when he started farming he also kind of gradually started into the cattle business. I remember faintly when we got our first car. Well, my sister was sixteen so I should have been fourteen then, cause she learned to drive right away. I don't know how--I could have been around twelve, fourteen, something like that, at least twelve. Dad later on got a little, like you call pickup nowadays, it didn't have a top on it, it just had the motor, and the seat and windshield and a box in the back, [missing word] four wheels and a steering wheel. That's about it. We used that to run back and forth to the dryland. He'd take that little old car, bought himself a fur coat, and you drive out into the country, west and northwest and buy a few head of cattle, and somehow they got them home, they'd drive them home. The boys would have to bundle up and go out there on Saturdays and bring the cattle home. Do he started in very gradually...

TJK: Um hum, now you refer to the dryland--did he have, was he farming land out on the dryland?

ALV: Well, I think when, after he started in the cattle business somehow he got this uh, guess it's a quarter-acre, three-hundred, what is it, three-hundred and sixty acres...uh, well it's seven miles northwest from town. Somehow I guess after he got into the cattle business he bought this. Then, of course, we just went back and forth for years and years and just farmed the land out there. Course the girls never stayed out at night, the hired men and the boys would stay out, they had a little one-room shack where they'd sleep. They had two springs and mattresses on the floor. They used a

great big packing box and put a board on the top for a table and they used a apple boxes to sit on. They had a kerosene stove. I know during harvest I would be at home, I'd help mother milk the cows in the morning and I think Mary had to take care of the farm in here. Mary or whoever helped her. While this was during harvest season mostly. Mornings we'd milk the cows and I always had to take the milk to town. When it was payday I'd have to cash the check and I was trusted with the money (laughter) Mother'd tell me what to buy and I'd bring it home, then she'd tell me what to cook and I'd drive out there and the first thing I did was put the meat on. I couldn't--we didn't have an oven, everything had to be cooked. I put the meat on, there was always soup or fried potatoes, or fried meat. I put that on right away and then I'd wash the breakfast dishes--they had to fix their own breakfast. They put up one of those windmills without a pump, why I don't know, but if there wasn't any wind we didn't get any water. I know twice I had to climb up on that windmill and turn the wheel to get water and it scared me half to death, but I did it. I was afraid that thing would turn and knock me off. Then at 10 o'clock I'd fix sandwiches and take them out to the field, then they'd stop and have their break. Then if I had time I'd help in the wagon, like when they were cutting grain I'd sit in the wagon a few rounds, and scoop back the grain when they were cutting it with the header. Then they'd come home at noon and eat and they'd wash out by the tank. Then, they'd come in and eat--then I'd wash the dishes. Once in a while one of the hired men would take pity on me and help me with the dishes. (laughter) Then, in the afternoon I'd go out in the field and work until it was time to go home and fry potatoes and meat. Now, this didn't happen every time. I remember one time they said I wouldn't have to go out to help, so I lay down and took a nap. Pretty soon I heard the horses and I jumped up and I didn't have any supper, and believe me I made the fastest supper I ever made in

my life. By the time they had everything done out there, their horses fed and washed up and everything I had supper ready. (laughter) I don't know how I did it but I did.

(laughter)

TJK: Yes. Now, in regard to the beel: field experiences--what do you remember about working in the beet fields?

ALV: Well, I'll tell you, we went out in the morning--we got up in the morning, went out and milked twelve to fifteen cows--now this is when we were older--I remember when we were over here--over there we always milked some cows too, but over here I remember we milked twelve to fifteen cows in the morning, and then we'd go in and eat breakfast, then we'd go out in the field and work till noon. Mother was always with us but she'd go home and fix the meals. She was always with us out in the field, and the whole family was always out in the field.

TJK: Including the smaller children?

ALV: Everybody. Nobody stayed at home. The little ones played around and of course we--later on when we had cars we'd take the car out and if it got too hot they could sit in the shade. We'd come home and have dinner and we'd rest a while and we'd go out again and work. During the summer when it was hot we'd lay down and take a little nap, and I'll tell you it was murder to have to get up and go out again. Then in the evening, about sundown, we'd come home and milk twelve to fifteen cows again. Mother would fix supper and by nine o'clock we'd, might be eight, nine o'clock, we'd have supper. We were ready to go to bed. We ate--there was no running around at night except Saturday evenings we'd go to town and have a little spending money and we'd go to a show or something. That was it. But in the fall during beet harvest, now you can top in the dark--you can't pile them in the dark, but you can top in the dark by moonlight--and we went out a few times when the moon was shining. In fact, many

times Dad talked about how they would work out uh--as long as the moon was shining they'd work out all hours of the night...in the fall. The rest of the year you couldn't do that. But they piled their beets in the daytime and in the evening go out and top them by moonlight. Every beet you know—you handle every beet twice.

TJK: That was all by hand, then.

ALV: All by hand, everything by hand. And throw them on piles. Then, when it got cold so the beets would freeze we'd have to cover them with tops. Because the factory would not take them when they were frozen. At least not from the pile, they'd have to go right into the factory and so we'd have to cover them in the evenings. So I remember how we'd be, out till way after dark, and then come home and still milk twelve-fifteen cows. We were ready for bed after supper.

TJK: Oh yes, I can imagine.

ALV: Had a pile of dishes to wash, a big family--we were a house full. Always had one or two of our hired men, sometimes three, during harvest time. And they all lived in that house. They uh, we had the three rooms upstairs and the large room had two double beds and a cot for five of the boys and we'd have a bed down in the basement for the hired men.

TJK: How did your parents look at this kind of work? Did they see it as unbearable or...did they accept it?

ALV: No, they accepted it. We used to have a lot of fun out in the beet fields. We'd win races, see who could beat, who could top the most beets in so long a time, or see who could get to the end of the row first. We used to have a lot of fun. We worked like horses--we had our fun along with it. Of course Dad wasn't around, he was always out looking after his cattle or doing other business. But Mother was always there and

when we got to playing around too much she..."Alright, let's get to work." She was the boss out in the field. So uh, we had our fun along with it.

TJK: Now, the thinning--the thinning was done differently than it is today, of course.

ALV: Oh, absolutely.

TJK: In what way was it different?

ALV: Well, we had a hoe, and we'd go along the row--they'd have to cultivate the row. See, they cut the row about this wide, about three or four inches on each side of the row, then the middle, the weeds and everything was all cut out with the cultivator. But anything in the beet row, weeds or anything, had to be cut out and we always had to be careful, always leave the plant. Don't leave too much space and don't have them too close. So you had to--Dad was very particular about which one to leave and which one to cut out. And about weeds, and about leaving doubles. There were to be no doubles, absolutely none--and no weeds besides. (laughter) In those days when--we had to tap them by hand, we didn't dare have any weeds in the field--we'd get them all over ourselves, our hands and our clothes. The weeds had to be out. Nowadays why the beet fields are just thick with weeds and they do them with a machine and it's different. But uh, it was hard work. One would hoe along and the other one would crawl along the row or stoop over and go along and thin. And of course some people would work with a short hoe--a hoe a handle about 10 or twelve inches long, and they'd just hoe with one hand and thin with the other.

TJK: Do you remember how many acres you would average a day, the family, I mean, uh...

ALV: Oh dear, I don't know. (pause) I remember we always had to be finished by the 4th of July, then we ate ice cream all day.

TJK: Hum, this was the thinning now?

ALV: The thinning, yes. And then, as soon as the thinning was finished we would start the first hoeing. We would go through everything and I mean check on the doubles and uh, get all the weeds out. And of course in between it was always cultivated with a cultivator. Then, later on--a few weeks later we'd have to go through again--after the beets got pretty big we could see the weeds, we could take four rows at a time. First time we would take two rows at a time, the first hoeing. We'd just walk between the rows and just you know get the weeds out on each side. Then the second hoeing was a few weeks later as the weeds began to come out above the beets. We could maybe take four-six rows and just reach over and just cut out the big weeds. By that time there were no little weeds, or at least very few.

TJK: I see, uh...now, did the sugar companies and the farmers depend most on the German people in the early years to do the work--the beet field work?

ALV: Well, in those days yes. It seemed like it was the German people that came in here and did the beet work, in those days.

TJK: And it wasn't until later then that the Mexicans and other groups would come in?

ALV: Yes, later on these people just got so I guess they just didn't do that kind of work any more. A lot of them got other jobs and some got to farming themselves. They did other work and just got so they didn't do it anymore. Then they started bringing these Mexican Nationals to do the work.

TJK: What were relations in the early years between the Mexican Nationals and the German people, the farmers, I mean?

ALV: Well, I think some of the farmers weren't too happy with them. They said the Mexicans were not very good workers. I know I heard some complaints about that. They wanted special facilities in their little houses that they lived in. They wanted modern facilities, everything right up to date. And they said by the time they moved

out the place was a wreck. They wouldn't take care of anything, it was just--they destroy and damage everything. That it was just almost impossible--and still they wanted everything perfect when they moved in. Modern facilities end everything. I remember, I heard one man talking about it one time, he was just furious about it, because--and I heard other conversation, but I don't remember enough of it.

TJK: What were relations like in the early years with the German people from Russia and the Americans, you know the people they call the Engliche?

ALV: The Engliche and the Deutsche, the Rooshuns, huh?

TJK: Um hum.

ALV: Well, during the First World, well, when we started school...we had church, uh school in the church. These German people had to have...

TJK: This was what church now?

ALV: The Trinity Lutheran, that's where we started.

TJK: The Trinity Lutheran.

ALV: And that was the only Lutheran church in Sterling. Well it was the only church in Sterling that had a parochial school in those days. I don't know if the Catholic had parochial schools then or not.

TJK: Was it German speaking at that time? The church?

ALV: Yes, definitely. It was all German. These German people thought they could live in America as they did in Russia. Just their own way—I remember the minister complaining, at the meetings they would say, "Well, this is the way we did it in Russia." And he would tell them they're not in Russia anymore. He expected them to more or less follow the more American way. Well, these German people had to have their German schools. They wanted their children to stay with the German and have their education. They were very strong on education. So you start in having classes

right in the church for several years. And then they built a basement under the church and then they had their class down there, they had eight grades in that basement.

TJK: How many pupils altogether, would you say?

ALV: Oh, uh...sixty-seventy, maybe. And one teacher. I'll tell you she had a rough time. Anna Bandemeir (sp)--you can talk to her sometime. She can really tell you a lot. It was all German. No, we had German in the morning and English in the afternoon--that's the way it was. Well then, when the First World War started, why, they cut cut all the German--we were not allowed to have--in fact our school was closed.

TJK: It was?

ALV: Yes, yes. They closed it.

TJK: Now, who closed it?

ALV: Well, I don't know. But the English speaking people didn't want any more German. In fact I even heard that people were not allowed to speak German over the telephone. Now it didn't ever happen to us that I recall, but I heard about it. I know our school was closed for several years during that time. And then of course we lived closer to the Lincoln School, and so that was before the Franklin School was built. So we had to go to the Lincoln School. I'll never forget this...I think the older children had their room up in the attic...I remember I was in the basement room. All these German kids were in there. We were not allowed to mingle with the English children, the American children. We had to have our recess at different hours. We could not be in the same room, grade with them. We were just separated from them.

TJK: Well, this was a segregation then?

ALV: Yes, definitely. Of course, in those days we were called "Rooshuns" which is, I think...well, people just didn't know how to pronounce the name. It wasn't Rooshun,

it was Russian. They just didn't know any different. I know for years, it went on for a number of years. Of course now it's completely forgotten, except for maybe some of us older ones remember that, because well I remember--I was [ten? Word cut off] years old at that time, that I'll never forget. When I was in the basement at the Lincoln School. Course I was behind in school anyway because I told you...I was sort of pantywaist, I guess. (laughter) And maybe because of the serious illness I had when I was a baby. I couldn't take things like my sister could, she was tough and I wasn't. We lived out here, this was the time [of?-word cut off] that four room house. Of course my sister started school and had to walk. We had no way of going anyplace except walking. [And?-word cut off] then when it came my turn, wemother said you just can't go, I [word cut off] she said they took me in a few times and it was just too much for me, to walk that distance. During the winter when it was cold. So I had to wait until I was seven before I went to school. So I was behind. I remember this, very definitely. And then of course [might be a word missing] on they were allowed to open, a few years later they were allowed to open the parochial school again. When the Catholics started theirs, I don't remember. Then of course our church later on built the school there on Second and Clark Street. We had that school there for many years...of course it's torn down now.

TJK: And then of course being children, this sort of a discrimination [at?-word cut off?] that time was a terrible thing to bear.

ALV: It was...it was hard to bear. It was hard to take because it was a battle, we had to sort of battle it with the others to...we [just?]-word cut off] I mean to be ourselves and to be human beings. We just had to [word cut off] it. Now I was not a fighter, but my sister was. I'll never forget how she used to fight. The kids would walk by to the Lincoln School, we were on this side of the street and they'd walk by on the other side

and they'd yell at us and call us Rooshuns. And the Rooshun School. I remember how she used to just battle with them. We'd throw things at each other... across the street. It was rough, it was just plain rough. Now I don't know how some of these other older people feel, my age, but I have never forgotten that. Of course I forget, I mean I don't dwell on it, but there is something, it's in the back of my mind and it will always be there.

TJK: Well, you... would you say that you've forgiven but you just haven't forgotten.

ALV: Oh definite. I mean, I have forgotten in a way, but I mean, if the subject is brought up it's in the back of my mind and it brings it out. Like here, oh, three-four years ago I heard an older woman, I know she's older than I am, somehow we got to talking about something and she was referring to these German people and she called them Rooshuns and it just made my hair stand on end. To think that after these fifty-sixty years she would still use that term, and it's a woman that knows better. To me, it just made my hair stand on end. I didn't say a word, but...

TJK: The term was used in sort of an icy way, wasn't it?

ALV: Well, years ago it was, a hateful way, years ago it was. Now she just referred to it because she had, she was just referring to some of these German people. It wasn't anything resentful, it was just a term she had learned when she was younger. I guess she still uses it, if she refers to these German people. To me, I couldn't understand that... she, after all these years she was still use that word in that way. Mispronounced the word. To me it has an ugly sound. Because, you know, we were just pushed back in those days. Like I said, I think when you are hurt when you were younger like that for so long a time, you can forget it and forgive it and all that, and, but, if anything comes up it will pop out.

TJK: Um hum. Right, right.

ALV: I think it's only natural. Now, you know, a few years ago when they moved all these Japanese people away from the West Coast because of the war with Japan, I guess think about those people had to give up. They didn't, weren't just pushed aside...they were moved out of their homes, and I thought that was terrible. Now, one of the women one time, just not long ago she said, "I will never forgive the Japanese for the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor." She said, "I'll never forgive them for that." I said, "Yeow, but we went over there and threw a bomb on one of their cities and killed everybody. Was that any different?" She says, "Well, I still can never forgive them for that." I think that's kind of overdoing it, where here we were just as bad as they were. We did terrible things too. I mean, she didn't look at that. She just looked at what the other side did.

TJK: A very narrow view then.

ALV: Yes, that's right. One-sided. I learned when I went to Opportunity High School in Denver, I had a teacher (pause) she was my English teacher, and from her I really learned to try not to be one-sided. She was never one-sided. She always saw both sides and she was always on even terms with both sides, no matter how good or bad they were. She was a very, very well educated woman. I'll tell you I sure learned from her and I'll never forget her, I'll never forget the things that I learned from her. She was up on everything.

TJK: What was her name, do you remember?

ALV: Winona Norton...was her name. She reminded me so much of my mother. She had that beet, uh, a beet field complexion. (laughter) I don't think she ever worked beets, but she had that beet field complexion and she had her hair straight back in just a little round knob in the back just like mother always fixed her hair.

TJK: What do you mean by beet field complexion? Roughened from the sun and the wind?

ALV: Well, you know...yeah.

TJK: Oh, I see.

ALV: No, sort of roughened suntan. You know in those days they didn't cover up, they just maybe wore a hat to keep the sun off the head but they didn't, I mean, avoid suntan. Now they go out especially to catch a suntan. (laughter) I mean I know for a number of years the women, the young women when they were not in the beet field, they just wrapped themselves up, everything but their eyes. Wore gloves and everything. One time we had a young woman helping us work beets in the fall...oh, how she bundled up. She bundled up everything but her eyes...when she went out in the field. She just wasn't about to get any, any wind or suntan. That was for a few years, but now they, boy they lay out in the sun by the hour. (laughter) Very different.

TJK: Yes, now, during World War I--of course the children had it bad...what about the parents and some of the older people who spoke only German and could not possibly handle English? Did they have a hard time, or...?

ALV: Of course Dad got out in public quite early and he learned soon, he didn't have any trouble getting around. Soon got in with these businessmen downtown and worked with them and did business with them. He got along real good, but mother just didn't get out that much, she'd go to the store and buy what she needed Saturday nights. She'd go down and buy everything she needed, that was it. I think she usually ended up with someone who could talk German enough to help her. She didn't have to speak English until...she learned very slowly because she didn't try very hard. She just didn't think it was necessary...that she had to. She got by. But then as she got older and the grandchildren came along she finally learned English and she learned to speak from the younger members of the family. They'd come home--why, uh, they'd

kind of help her along a little bit and she learned to read the newspapers. Course she had her German papers all the time.

TJK: Where did the German newspapers come from, do you remember?

ALV: One of them came from, either North or South Dakota. Yeah, it was called the *Dakota Freepress*.

TJK: Oh, I see.

ALV: Then she had her German magazine from church and one other one. Can't remember what it was. She kept those up till the very last. Then, she always kept up with the papers. She could read it well enough so she knew what it was, what it meant. Maybe not the big words, but she knew what was going on.

TJK: Hum. Were both of your parents educated to some extent then?

ALV: Dad wasn't. He didn't believe in education.

TJK: Oh, he did not?

ALV: No, he said he got out of school as fast as he could.

TJK: Well, could he read and write, or...?

ALV: Well, he learned. He learned when he wanted to become a citizen. He, I remember very faintly that he did get to night school. I think he had to--and I remember very faintly. I remember him studying. And he wondered sometimes why the spelling of the word wasn't like the sound of it. Like right should be r i t e and it's r i g h t. And uh, rough would be r o u g h--should be r o f, or something like that. I remember he asking my sister several times. "Why aren't these words spelled the way they sound?" That I remember, and of course he got his citizenship papers and he kind of, somehow he went along. As far as school is concerned, he hated school and he didn't believe in education, for himself but mother enjoyed education. She said she loved it and she

worked hard at it. So of course hers was all German. She was well educated in the German. And she could write, she, I don't know--dad was much at writing German...

TAPE 2, SIDE A

TJK: Was the discrimination in World War I the last that was of any great extent?

ALV: You mean over here?

TJK: Right. Right

ALV: You mean of the, uh, the German people suffered because of World War over here?

TJK: Right.

ALV: Well, except for what I told you I just—oh let me see...I don't think so, not especially, nothing serious, I don't think.

TJK: Yeow. What about in the 1920s when the KKK, the Ku Klux Klan started up?

ALV: Yeow. No, I don't know that that had any effect on these German people. I think they were fighting the Catholics, weren't they?

TJK: Um hum.

ALV: Cause I remember Dr. Ladda was our family doctor and he wasn't allowed to work in the hospital so he started his own hospital.

TJK: Oh, really?

ALV: He, the house is still there on South Second Street. It's quite a large house. He started his own hospital in there. Then he had St. Benedict's built.

TJK: Hum.

ALV: Dr. Ladda started that because they wouldn't allow him to work in the Sterling hospital.

TJK: Hum. Oh I see, I see. Do you remember any of that at all, like when the Klan was active?

ALV: Well, not really. I believe there was some activity here, but it never affected us personally that we didn't pay too much attention to it, I don't think. We were at that age where maybe it didn't affect us to the point where it bothered us. We didn't come into direct contact with it in any way. So it didn't really bother us to the point where I remember it. I'm sure it didn't have any special effect on us.

TJK: What about World War II? Here again the United States was fighting a war with Germany. Was there any feeling...

ALV: Well, about that time I was living in Denver. I don't think so. I think about that time the people became broad minded enough not to blame the German people individually.

TJK: Yeow.

ALV: The first time wasn't the First World War started because a high German officer, not officer, but more than that, a prince or somebody was killed and that was the first shot, anyway so it was called, and that started. So the Germans were blamed for that and the Germans were aggressive people at that time. That's another reason they were blamed. Now, the Second World War, I don't think they were actually blamed that I know of. I lived in Denver at that time but I don't remember ever hearing any direct comments that Germany was blamed. Now, I worked up in the mountains at dude ranches three summers, four summers, well two summers at hotels and two summers at dude ranches. At one place these people that owned the place were Germans. The Holzworth Ranch. This was 34, 35 years ago.

TJK: These were not Germans from Russia, either were they?

ALV: No, these were Germans from Germany. They had a cousin that came over here and he still had quite an accent and he married a German girl. She worked out there at the ranch. Well, the oldest daughter of the family worked downtown and she hired me

and had this cousin take me up to the ranch from Denver, I worked in Denver then. His wife worked up there, so he come up for the weekends. So I rode up with him. She was from Germany, during Hitler's time. You know how Hitler was admired at first and later on they hated him for a lot of the things he did. At least the Americans had no use for him. They didn't hate the Germans but they hated Hitler. This girl was very offended because she said I can't understand why these American people hate Hitler. He has done so much for the poor German people, for the poor people. She said the German people don't hate your president. She was quite offended because the American people didn't like Hitler. She hadn't been over too long. Course she spoke English well enough, I guess she learned it over there. Because I think they learned languages in school

TJK: Did she change her mind after World War II?

ALV: I don't know, I knew her only for the summer.

TJK: Oh, I see.

ALV: Two, it was about two and one-half months I worked up there. After that I never saw her again. At the time, why uh, she was just offended to think that the German people hated Hitler. She thought he was okay. Course, maybe later on, as he started killing off the Jews why, uh, made a lot of the people change their minds. Of course, when I met her, it was before Hitler started killing off these Jews. I'm sure it was before that because she didn't, she saw only what he had done for the poor class. Maybe he did help them, but what he did later on was...I don't know. In fact my brother Carl, he was in Germany for awhile there--now he [told?-word cut off] me where too, because when Barbara was born I sent him an announcement and he says he'll never forget the day he got the announcement. He was out in the field in the mud holes and out near the front and how terrible it was. He used to tell us, he didn't tell us too much, but he

didn't even care to talk about it, I don't think. I remember hearing some of his conversation. How things were destroyed, and the things they found, you know. I mean, uh, the personal property of the people. I said, oh, why didn't you bring some of that home? He said, oh, we weren't allowed to take anything. And why they couldn't have brought home [anyway?]-word cut off]. He said he saw some of this awful stuff, the bodies, piles of bodies and all that.

TJK: Was he the only one in the family that served in the war?

ALV: Oh no, five of the boys were...in.

TJK: Oh, five of the boys.

ALV: Carl, was, well, I know he was in Oklahoma for a while and in California and then of course in active duty in Germany. That I remember. And Johnny-the oldest of the boys that was in the army, he left home and he was one of these, you know, when MacArthur had to leave Mani...the Philippines? I'm sure he was on, in one of these ships. I can't say for sure, but he was out there at that time. Because, then Solomon, he taught flying, he gave flying lessons, so he somehow kept out of it for a long time. But [inaudible] got him anyway. He just got as far as Hawaii. Well, he sort of complained about this and that. He'd had it easy and he wasn't used to this rough stuff. He sort of complained about it and Johnny said, well, if any of these boys I was with would hear him complain, they'd kill him. From what those boys suffered. He said they would just lay out on the decks with their tongues hanging out like dogs. It was so miserable and so hot, but they were out in those ships. I guess he had to leave and later on he came back. Johnny said it was terrible what those boys suffered. The way they had to live, just inactive and hot and miserable.

TJK: Right. You say there were five who did serve?

ALV: Well, there was Johnny and Carl and Solomon—August, yes August was in for a while and well, he had surgery. He'd had a little trouble with his appendix when he home, and then he had an attack there and they operated on him. Then later on they just sent him home. He was very upset though, because they couldn't use him. And Davey was in twice. The youngest one. He volunteered. His friends wrote to him and said don't volunteer. The minute he was eighteen he went and volunteered. He wanted to go. So, he worked on one of these, uh, what do you call them? 727s, I can't remember the exact number, these ships that flew over Japan, bombed Japan. Anyway they fought Japan. He was the tail gunner in one of these ships. He said he had credit for downing two or three Jap planes. He wasn't proud of himself, he hated every bit of it. Then they sent him home and uh, but he, what did they call these others—reserves. He somehow got in the reserves and they called him again. I took the message and when he came home I told him. Oh, he just about passed out, he didn't want to go again. But he had to go again and how active he was the second time I can't remember. When he came home he had several medals. He got rid of all his army stuff, his medals and everything. He never wanted to look at them again. He would never talk about it. He did--he hated it so. He didn't want any part of it. All he wanted to do after that was fly. That was the only work he wanted to do, if he couldn't fly he didn't do anything. (laughter)

TJK: Now this was the Dave who went into crop dusting, right?

ALV: Yes, uh huh, yes. He was killed. That. was his life. I know Mama told me that morning when he, see I helped in his office that summer. I had taken typing at the Junior College.

TJK: What summer was this, now, when Dave was killed?

ALV: Oh, let me see...Barbara was in college...the last year. She had to go to summer school that summer in order to finish with her class the following year. Oh dear...'63...oh, I cant remember which year it was. I'd almost have to look it up.

TJK: In the mid-sixties, though, wasn't it? Around that time?

ALV: Yes. Anyway, Barbara'd helped him the summer before in his office with his typing, and all that. Well, then, she had to go to summer school this summer in order to finish with her class. They had kind of messed up her schedule and she had to take certain things and she couldn't possibly finish in one year. So I let her have my car, of course I was chauffeuring Dad anyway, so I used his car if I wanted to go anyplace, which I seldom did. Then one day he stopped by and he said is Barbara coming home? I said, well, she won't be home till Saturday, she came home about every two weeks, and he said, well, I have some invoices, he said could you help me. I said, I don't even know what an invoice is. (laughter) I said, but I took typing at Junior College, I said, I can help you out. He said when Barbara comes home you come up. So, we went up and she showed me what to do. Course there were a few times she had to help me out, and so I was working for him that summer, doing his office work. That morning I started out, I just used Dad's car because when I needed a car they had the hired man take me up and someone else just had to chauffeur him. That morning he was spraying Joe's field over here. He went right up to the trees, and he went straight up.

TJK: This was Joe Applehans?

ALV: Yes. Joe lived over here. I was just on my way up and I stopped on the highway and watched him. So, when I came up to the shop or his office, why uh, I said, do you ever hit the tops of trees? Joking. He said, well, once in a while I take off a few leaves. That morning he told me to go down and get the mail early, and I get some

rolls and coffee because they usually had a coffee break when they came back around nine o'clock. I went down earlier than usual to get the mail. He was upset that morning about something. I don't know what...there was a letter. Some people said he didn't spray the field that he charged them for and all this. He asked me to do this and that morning he asked me to change it. I always made notes of everything to make sure I wouldn't forget what he asked me to do. I know there was something about this letter I was supposed to do. He was upset. I never argued with him. I just did what he told me, and that was it. I went downtown, well, they had a sale at Anthony's and it was about five minutes to nine and I thought, well, I'm going to wait. He wanted me to get him some eye, uh, something to wash his glasses with, a little spray bottle, so he could do it on the plane while he was flying. He said, oh his glasses would get spray on them and he couldn't see. I waited five minutes at the store and I ran in and got what I wanted. On the way out I was worried. I thought, oh, what if he gets to the office before I do and he might be unhappy. I was concerned because I stopped at the store for a few minutes, I thought I should be up there. When I got there there was the man that brought our chemicals and his man that mixed his chemicals and helped him there. Tom. They were standing there talking and just as I started to go in the phone rang. So I answered it and she said, did you have a red plane and I said yes. She said it went down on the North Seventh Avenue. It crashed. I said, was he hurt? I don't know, she said, it just happened. Well, I was so upset. I called, before I'd even hung up I tried to call the ambulance. The operator said you have to hang up first. So I hung up. I said I want an ambulance right away. She said, which one do you want. I said the first one you can get. Well, she got Frank Radford, I knew him, I'd worked with him at the factory for a while and I said, Frank will you go out such and such a place on North Seventh Avenue and I

said, Davey had a crash. I don't know if he's hurt or not but will you go out? In the meantime a man came in and wanted to pay his bill. I told everybody else--I thought those two men would never move. They just stood there they were stunned. I told them, I said to Tom and this other guy, I said Davey just crashed his plane. I told them where and I thought they were never going to move. They just stood there stunned and so I, I don't know who else I called, and then I took care of this man and I just shook like that. Finally, when I got rid of everything I just left the office and I had Dad's car that morning--it's a good thing I had his car that morning and I came right (out?) on Highway 14 and they had just oiled and sanded it and I was so careful. I almost upset the car, I guess I was so nervous. I went up there, then I went down there and I found the place and by the time I got there there was just a mob of people there. I tried to call the neighbor there. Ted Ruf. And somebody else, and nobody answered their phone. Well, they were all out there. At that time. Well, there was just a mob of people there. Well, it happened that Anna Ruf called the other ambulance right away. And the fire department because it went into flames. Of course, I mean, Frank Radford left, I didn't know he didn't have Davey. They wouldn't let me go in. Honeybun (?) was there and I said 'is he hurt?' He said 'yes.' I said 'can I go in.' He said 'no, you'd better stay here.' He wouldn't let me go in. It was in the field a ways. So pretty soon they came out and I said, 'how is he?' They said, 'He's gone. He was killed instantly.' They said his safety belt was ripped off the plane. He crashed so hard. He was waiting for his flag boys. Now Ted Ruf was right out in the field, across the fence in the field. He said, 'I waved to him and told him not to get down so low.' Now, there was a wire, it was a twisted wire—that went to this home. Tom could never remember whether they didn't have this on the map, or didn't know about this wire, or whether he just accidentally hit it. He was, he had

sprayed someplace else. They'd gone out long before daylight that morning and so he, I mean Ted was right out there. Ted said he was waiting for his flag boys to come up. They had to drive in the pickup. While he was waiting for them he made one run across the field. Then he went back for the second and as he came back he hit this twisted wire. He must have just caught it and that was just enough, it was a twisted wire, it didn't break. He said he had broken wires before. And why it was twisted it didn't break. It just evidently gave him so much of a, that plane so much of a shock it came low enough and hit a fence post. That broke something on the plane and he went right into a corn field. The man there was, I know the guy, I know his name, can't think of it right now--he was irrigating and it happened one wheel hit the dry land and one hit the irrigated land. Where it hit the irrigated land it got stuck and the, uh, flipped the plane around. I guess, I heard a long time afterward, that it broke his neck, and it just flipped his belt right off the plane. Course the plane caught fire, but he wasn't burned. I guess the fire department put it out.

TJK: Were both of your parents alive? When this had happened?

ALV: Yes.

TJK: Oh, they were?

ALV: That morning mother sat by the window and watched him when he was spraying over here. When I stopped my car and watched him. Mama told me then, she said, well, Dad had been talking to him. Toward the last I guess evidently the good Lord had something to do with it. He took Dad out to supper many times. When he used to not do that. Of course he was gone a lot except when he had his work here. He took Dad out to supper many times. I guess it was just something that—I mean the good Lord just had something to do with that. Mama said Dad tried to get him to quit. He was forty-two, or something like that. He was getting that age where he should have quit,

but that's all he lived for. Mama said that he said that he knew it could happen to him. I mean, he knew it could. So, guess he wasn't afraid.

TJK: Yeow. And no doubt prepared too, then.

ALV: Yeow, more or less. I know he was upset when mama he said, I'm trying to get some insurance and they won't let me have any. With the dangerous job he had I guess they wouldn't give him any more insurance.

TJK: Right. How many were in your family, now. Altogether, starting with--Marie, was the oldest, right?

ALV: There were seven boys and seven girls and then we had an adopted cousin. Carl Schaadt. His parents both died and he came to live with us when he was twelve years old. The three older boys were on their own, they were the age they didn't let anybody take care of them.

TJK: Now were his parents from Sterling, the Schaadt boy?

ALV: Yes.

TJK: Were they?

ALV: Uh huh. Well they lived here, yes, they lived out at Atwood. Their mother died when June (sp?) was still a baby. Then he was married again. Then of course he was kicked by a horse. In those days they had no way of, you know, knowing what to do. He was kicked right in the stomach. He died a few days later. Then, of course, there was the widow. She tried to keep the children for awhile, but she had to get out and work beets too. She had children of her own. She said she just simply couldn't keep the children. She brought them back. Then mother took Carl and her sister, Mrs. Helmet (sp?) took the youngest one cause she could handle him better. He was a little bit spoiled. So of course then, the oldest brother went out and took the youngest brother. I don't know if he was married then or not, he got married later on. He just

took him away from her because they'd had an argument. He was mad at her so he went and got Junes. The folks just went and adopted Carl so he couldn't do that to Carl. Carl just grew up with us and he's just one of the family to this day. Of course, George died many years ago and Junes is still in Denver. They moved to Denver later on.

TJK: Starting, then there was Marie, and who was next?

ALV: Myself, Amelia, and Ferdinand and Anna, Annie, then Conrad, Jr. Then Pauline, then Johnny and Carl, Solomon, August, David, Bertha, Martha and Frieda. Then Carl Schaadt was about the same age as Johnny.

TJK: My, that was quite a family then.

ALV: Fifteen of us. Then we had a cousin, Uncle Dave's second boy. After he was through school he just, he came out and worked for Dad and he just lived with us. That made sixteen kids. (laughter) He was one of the family too as long as he lived in Sterling. Then he went to Oregon and got married up there and he still is living there. He just liked it better at our place and he worked for Dad and he got his wages--just one of the family. So there was sixteen--then during certain times of the year we'd always have one or two extra hired men. We all ate at the same table.

TJK: Your mother didn't do the cooking, though, did she? For all...

ALV: No, we were all there to help. Course, when we were out in the fields, mother did the cooking. She used to bake bread two, three times a week--I don't know how many loaves she'd bake. She had one of those great big--you seldom see them anymore, those great big round dough pans, you know? She had one of those and she baked two, three times a week. Many loaves. I remember when we used to buy tomatoes, something we liked very much and corn flakes. Certain things that we used a lot of--we'd just go down and buy it by the case, they could get it cheaper. In the

summertime mother always had a great big garden. We'd go down, she always had her cucumbers by the ditch. We'd just have to fix a little path and we'd just get water out of the ditch and water those cucumbers almost every night, beside the ditch. She would plow her garden herself, with one horse, with one of these one-horse-plows.

TJK: She would do that?

ALV: She would have to lead the horse and she would handle the plow and then she would hoe the rest. Always had a lot of watermelon. And cantelope and cucumbers. We had a lot of these blackberries, you know? Blackberry bread and blackberry jelly and blackberry dumplings and she would make syrup out of her watermelon. That's another thing I want to tell you about which I think is very important. She made the syrup out of watermelon. She would cook her watermelons and strain them, put them in a bag. A cloth bag. Drain all the juice out and then she cooked this down to a very thin syrup. Well, we'd use it for pancakes. The more it was cooked, the stronger it got, and you could get drunk on it, it was so strong.

TJK: And very sweet, I take it, wasn't it?

ALV: Very sweet and strong. Mother told us that they used to do that in Russia, and you know in the wintertime the children would get sick and get diptheria and the children died from it. She said that it was her mother, or her grandmother, that one time when the children were sick, a lot of the children were sick, she would give them a spoonful of that syrup, it was so strong it would just burn that throat. Those children lived. It was the medicine. She said that those that didn't get it, some of them died. Because you know, from what I understand about diptheria, the inside of the throat swells and they just choke to death. She said when, mother said she would give them some of that syrup...in fact after I moved over here and we had our own little garden why, of course later on Mother didn't make a garden any more cause it got so the last few

years there would always be some kids from town walking through there and they'd go through and just damage things. They'd mash up the watermelons--if they picked a few we didn't care but they'd break them up and ruin everything. So she quit having a garden. Then when I moved over here why they plowed up the alfalfa fields so I just used that old corner out here. It was a place was hard for them to get into anyway so I just planted a little garden out there. The kids and I and the first year we went way back behind the graner (?), they plowed up places start to freeze and we hauled our water from the tank back to the garden, unless they irrigated then 'd get a little water. So the first few years I raised a few watermelons and I made some of that syrup. I gave some to mother and I still have some in my pantry. Mother said it would keep forever. I think I have 2 or 3 little bottles in there.

TJK: What did they call that in German? Did they have any...

ALV: Arbuse.

TJK: Arbuse?

ALV: Arbuse Mus. Um hum, and mama often, well we used a lot of jellies and jams and everything and that's something we cooked by the gallons. I always helped Mama can, I loved to can, I still do, I still can for my kids. I always helped Mom with that and I loved it. Mother would cook gallon after gallon after gallon of that...different kinds of jellies and jams. She would cook the pumpkin and then she would take some of this Arbuse Mus and pour it in to sweeten it and that was all she used, just used that syrup, just was the pumpkin and that was, we called that Kerbis Mus. We just put it on our bread. Dad ate it with a spoon. Almost toward the last Mother would fry a can of canned pumpkin and just use Karo syrup or something and, but when I made this syrup I gave her several bottles of it. After she passed away I notice there was a bottle setting there, I guess my sister maybe gave it to someone. Anyway she had a

bottle left. She would just get some dark syrup and put it in with the pumpkin and make this for Dad because he loved it.

TJK: Did you ever make syrup from the sugar beets themselves?

ALV: Um hum, I did that. The last time I made some I cooked it too long, it almost burned it. I think I have a little jar of it left, doesn't uh, I just can't throw it away. It's too thick to use, just really thick. When they raised beets out here after Bob Kunz started farming here I was working for the sugar factory I was on the pulp (?) crew. Years ago I worked the beets and then I sacked the sugar...(laughter)...so one evening I came home 4:00 and Bob was just out here with his machine, you know, chopping the beets. I said, I want to ride on that. So I rode on it one round and that was it (laughter). Oh, it was rough, oh that thing just about shook me to pieces. But anyway I rode around, made one round. So I told him I wanted a few beets, so I took about oh, 4 or 5 beets.

TJK: This was a train, now, a small train, or what are you referring to that you had a ride on?

ALV: No, the uh, why the machine that they pull the top of the beets with.

TJK: Oh, I see, oh okay.

ALV: The topper. I rode on that (laughter). But I told him I wanted just a few beets, and so I got a few. That was quite a few years ago and I made a little syrup.

TJK: How was that done, now? How did you go about...

ALV: Well, you peel the, wash them real good and kind of take that outside peel off and cut them in small pieces and cook them.

TJK: In water now, or...?

ALV: In water, I think you kind of have, well, not cover them too much. Cause then you have to boil them that much longer, you get too much syrup, and cut them in small

pieces and cook them until they were soft and put them in a bag and just drain the juice out of them. Cook that juice till it's a syrup. Beets, uh...

TJK: You wouldn't add anything, now to this to...?

ALV: No, no. Well, if you wanted to turn into syrup faster you would just add sugar that's all, but in order not to add a thing you just boil it slowly down until it's just syrup. The beet syrup was really better than the watermelon syrup.

TJK: What did you call that now? Did you have a German word for the beet syrup?

ALV: Oh, let's see. (pause) What did mother call it? (pause) Rëve Mus.

TJK: Rëve Mus.

ALV: I mean is that what they call beets in German? Rëve, yeow, Rëve Mus.

TJK: Hum, oh I see.

ALV: So everything had its name.

TJK: And the blackberries you referred to, now, uh...

ALV: Schwarzebeeren.

TJK: Uh huh. Now these, some people say they were brought from Russia by the German people.

ALV: Yes, I heard that too. People brought seed over from Russia. So they are still here, but they are like a weed they once get started. I keep mine right in the garden and I just let a few grow here between the flowers and the vegetables that I do raise. I just have enough for myself and my children. I make coffee cakes and freeze a few, Barbara likes the dumplings. It's a lot of work making them, I'm getting lazier...(laughter)...to work anymore. Last year when I went over I took some frozen berries along and made her some dumplings. Course you have to grow up with that stuff to like it, her husband didn't care for it, so Barbara and I had dumplings and he had pizza. (Laughter) I know these people that didn't grow up with these berries, they

didn't care for them at all, but those that did, boy, they really want them. Every once in awhile somebody will ask me, you have any berries out there, I'd like to have some. I said, no, I just have enough for myself. (Laughter)

TJK: Let's backtrack a little bit, and go back to the depression years. What do you remember probably best, maybe worst (laughter), or best about the depression, in terms of uh...?

ALV: Oh, you mean uh, during the depression?

TJK: Um hum, right.

ALV: Well, that was just about the time Dad was getting started pretty good, I think. He had started to save money and put it in the bank. Well, when the bank went broke he lost that. So after that he would never put...(end of tape)

TAPE 2, SIDE B

ALV: I was in my late teens I imagine, I don't know--seventeen, eighteen something along there somewhere, but Johnny was small then, I know. Johnny and I went along and I drove the truck part of the time. We went up to the stockyards. Of course we had to stay over night. We got a hotel room, you didn't make it in one day in those days. It always took 2 days. Later on he would start shipping to Chicago and Kansas City and St. Jo was one of his favorite places, back and forth. Then toward the last he went up to Denver a lot. While I was working, he didn't say anything, but finally when I quit, and then I worked at Scotts for over 12 years, when he saw I was at home, I notice Buz Wooters used to take me to Denver once a week. So he came over and asked me if I would take him to Denver. He almost had an accident one time and he didn't like to drive and Buz was busy so I said okay, I tell you I was scared to death to drive that great big car, I'd never driven a big car. ...(laughter)...I was used to these little cars. I had a '39 Chevy. So I took him up for several years. Week after week after week,

sometimes then he'd quit a few weeks and he'd start in again and I took him up there and toward the last he lost his driver's license and I drove him almost every day. When they shipped cattle I'd get Buz to take him to town and take him over to the Bluebird for coffee. He always got by. At first he was very upset to think a woman had to chauffeur him (laughter) but he soon got so he depended on me. I said that was one of the roughest jobs I ever had. He was so used to driving himself, you know. All his life he was very independent and he always drove, did his own. Here, about all I did was just guide the wheel, and 2 or 3 times it was very, very close. I automatically did what he said. We could have had a very, very serious accident, both times if there had been any other traffic around. I guess the good Lord was right up there, with his angels. We were coming out of Denver through Commerce City. There was a stop light and there was a car ahead of us, think it was a pickup, and I thought he was going to stop there. The light was yellow and I thought the guy was going to stop. So I was going to stop. Then the guy went ahead and Dad said go ahead and I automatically stepped on the gas instead of the brake. I mean, I just obeyed him. Instead that guy stopped right in front of me and I just stepped on the gas. I swerved the car and slammed on the brakes and thank the Lord there wasn't any other traffic around except that one ahead of us. I just missed him and Dad almost went through the windshield. Boy, he didn't say another word. He knew what happened, he knew it was his fault. One time I took him over to the pasture, and as we were coming out to the highway, there was a stop sign and there was a steep hill toward town. Well I stopped and looked both ways, I usually looked twice both ways on a dangerous place, to make sure, you never know when they're going to sneak up on you. I stopped and I looked both ways very carefully and there wasn't a car in sight. He said, go ahead, go ahead. I stepped on it and up from that hill came a car

full speed ahead. That guy swerved over to the left and I slammed on the brakes and Dad almost went through the windshield again. That's another time he didn't say another word. Cause he knew, it was awful hard, if there'd been any other traffic, oncoming traffic it would have been very bad. One time we had a big battle. I took him to the elevator and it happened Buz was gone already. I was supposed to take him down to the sale barn. I pulled out from the elevator grounds onto where the stop sign was and there was a car ahead of me. I just pulled up very slowly behind this car. I got real close but I was just barely moving (gasp)...he heard me, I just kind of made a little sound because it bothered me, it scared him. He said, what's the matter, don't you like it? I said, when I'm driving will you let me drive? And oh, he got mad. I never told Dad what to do. Oh, he got mad. He started telling me off. He said, you don't like it, huh? I got down to Chessman, stopped at the stop sign and oh, we were really at it. As a rule he was, I just, I mean I just drove and shut my mouth. And boy we were really going tooth and nail. So when I got to the sale barn, and we went all the way to the sale barn and (laughter), and that was one time I didn't shut up. He really had me going, as a rule I'd never say a word. But at the sale barn he got out and I don't know what he said was, but get out of here, get out of here. Yes, I'm getting out of here. I just yelled at him and I don't know if anybody heard us or not. (Laughter) Oh that time, just happened a few times, we really had it out. So next morning he didn't come over. Have me take him in. He was over there with Alec and Alec took him to town. (laughter) Course he hated to take Alec away from his work, he always had plenty to do. So later on Alec said, your Dad told me that you ran into a car the other day. I said, no, I didn't. I said, I got real, I said, I was just moving very slowly and got real close to it. Then I told Alec exactly what happened. Next day he was back again. (laughter). Oh, it was a great life, it was a great life.

TJK: In some ways then, your father was old fashioned.

ALV: Well, he was very independent, very independent. And he was sure of himself and he was a good businessman. People admired him. Now, a lot of them said he was very tight. At a certain point he was but he was also very, very generous in many, many ways. You know this land where our new church is built? He gave three acres to the church. They were looking around for property. When they started talking about building a new church, he said they don't need a new church, the old one is good enough. Then when they finally decided they were going to go ahead and build anyway they looked around for property, for land. Well people were just asking a fortune because they knew the people wanted to buy. Well they fiddled around for quite awhile and they were gradually asking everybody to give so much a week for three years, about three years before they started building. They gradually started building up this savings. So frankly he just gave them three acres. Dad had that farm and there was a house at the corner, and a barn and corral and everything. They needed a house. And where the preacher's house is now that's where the corral was. So he just gave them the 3 acres. And then after they had the church built it cost a lot more than they had planned, because prices kept going up. So one time they had a big family doings at the church, they had this great big hall and they had a big doings, a dinner and everything and they had a speaker from Denver, a minister from Denver, he gave a wonderful talk on family life. It was, after this was over Dad said, now, we have some, we are so much in debt and he said, I am going to give a check, I will write up a check and give it to Mr. Fisher, who is our teacher and we'll have him hold the check. Now if the congregation will collect so many thousand dollars within a certain time in so many months, I will pay them the same amount that they have col...a certain amount, I mean he set the amount, if the congregation will collect as

much money as I've made out this check for, I will pay half of that. So he alone paid as much as the whole congregation did together. That counts, I mean cut the debt down very, very much. A year or two later he tried it again and that time they did not come up with their money so he didn't do what he had promised because they didn't keep their end of the bargain. They finally, a few years ago I think it was before or right after he passed away, it was just a few years ago now they finally paid up. So they did pretty good considering the expenses they ran into. Now they built that home there for the senior citizens. My gosh, it came to a terrible price. It was terrible what that would cost, and it isn't anything like our church. Just think what it costs nowadays.

TJK: Are the uh, oh I heard years ago, stories about your father, that uh, that many times people would say that he would go to the sale barn and he would bid on cattle that probably didn't look so good with the intention of fattening them up later and in fact he fooled them.

ALV: That's the only kind he bought, that's something I wanted to bring up too, I thought of it a minute ago. He would buy these cattle, now a lot of these people they wanted good cattle and they spent, buy expensive feed and fatten them and they expected to make a lot of money. Well Dad would always buy the scrubs that nobody else wanted, and he got them cheap. That's what he did most of his business on. He didn't buy expensive cattle and feed them expensive feed. He would, weeds and everything, he would haul it back and grind it up with the feed. He didn't feed shell corn, like some people did. He, but weeds and anything he could get, he worked it right in with his feed and fellows from St. Jo, I know it was St. Jo, or maybe Chicago, they had an article in their cattlemen's paper about Dad feeding weeds to his cattle and being a successful cattleman. They marveled, they came out here to see what Dad was doing.

They used to stop in and see Dad and visit and I know I remember one time Mother had made some Kraut Bierock, if you know what that is?

TJK: Oh, yes.

ALV: Well the fellow wanted to know what that was. He came in and of course we gave him some and he wanted to know what it was. Well, I had been away from home a lot, you know, I had worked in the Hammel home for a few months when Mrs. wasn't well, and then after that I come home but then I would go, for about five years, I would go in and help her whenever she called me, with the house cleaning and special times like that. So I was really well liked in that family which I was very proud of. Of course Mr. Hammel was a cattleman, he knew Dad, and his wife was sick and he needed a helper. The girls were in school and so I was it. These people would come out here and visit, and well then of course I worked in other homes too after I went to Denver, well, I happened to be home then. When he came in he had some of that and he asked what it was called, well the family didn't know what it was called except the German Kraut Bierock. I said, well, I would call it cabbage dumplings, that's the nearest I could get to it. Now they call them cabbage pockets. Mother used to make them quite good, and oh he thought that was wonderful. But, anyway being away from home, working in other homes, I learned a lot of things that those at home didn't know.

TJK: Sure.

ALV: And so I was able to help out once in awhile (laughter). It was very interesting how these cattlemen from St. Jo and I don't remember what you call them, but they'd come out here and visit Dad and see him operate. They just couldn't believe that he was doing his work, feeding his cattle on weeds.

TJK: And these were his own ideas, for instance taking the weeds...

ALV: Yes, he didn't waste a thing, you know I read Heloise in the paper and I tell my daughter, I said while Heloise says this, and Heloise says that, I believe in reading these hints, I've done it for way, way back. Oh he said, to hell with Heloise, (laughter) [inaudible] cut out an article, send it to her. So, uh...

TJK: Your father being conservative.

ALV: Yes, he was very conservative. I learned from him, I used to haul him to town, I was his chauffeur therefore, oh, after we lived over here in the big house, I know there for a while he just didn't like to drive. So I was his chauffeur. I had to take the milk to town, I had to take him in to do his shopping, I had to do his shopping for him, get farm machinery and everything, go down to the John Deere's and get supplies and things. That's what I did in Denver too. I'd have to get [inaudible] parts up in Denver and he'd call them and tell them what he wanted and I'd go up and get them, while he was down doing his business. When he walked down the street or in the yard, he saw a nail or a screw or something he'd pick it up. Well, I do the same thing. (laughter) I walk down the street, I see a penny, I'll pick it up. My son one time said, I wouldn't pick up a penny on the street. I said, well, I do, believe me it comes in handy for the meter. But that's the way Dad was, he'd pick up everything. He never wasted a thing, everything had to...

TJK: Hum, do you think was something that carried over from the Old Country, because people talked about...

ALV: Well, they had to work so hard for what they had, you know when they first come over here it was so, they had to work so hard. They were poor, I mean they just got by the first few years. They were homesick, I guess, and they didn't like it at all, they wanted to go back. So they started saving their money with the idea of going back. By the time they had enough money saved up they liked it and stayed. But they had a

hard time of it, they worked hard for everything they had and so you can kind of see, now nowadays the people have so much and they don't save, they just throw, anything that isn't right they throw it out. Well, I taught my daughter not to. She said she lived with a roommate in California, said when she had, one time she bought a ham and she ate part of it and she was going to throw the rest of it out. She said, are you going to throw that out? She said, yes, I don't want it. She said, well, I'll take it. Believe me now that she's married and they have their own home, they bought an old home in Topeka, and Link is awfully good at fixing things and so they are, he's gradually working on it, believe me I'm surprised the way she is saving every little thing. They just have to be on their own and have to work hard for it, before they learn that it doesn't grow on trees. Of course, Barbara was Dad's pet. I came home when she was just a year old and she was the second granddaughter in the family. The others were all boys. Believe me he took to her like a duck takes to water, I'll tell you he had her spoiled. I used to, I had a few big rounds with him on account of her too. I really let him have it because he just thought she could do anything she pleased. Well, I couldn't and I was 60 years old. (laughter) I had to obey him. At least I did while I was driving. She'd get anything she'd want. Boy, I sure let him have it, and I [inaudible] I'd say boy, its a good thing you had a grandpa that spoiled you rotten, that's how she got started smoking, he furnished her with smoking money, but he didn't know it. I wouldn't give her any spending money when she went to college. I bought all her groceries, she come home every two weeks and I'd load her up, but he always gave her spending money. He figured since she hauled him around when she was home why she earned it. He didn't know she was buying cigarettes (laughter). I fought that all those years. I used to take them away from her and hide them in the furnace room. But a year later she was out of cigarettes so I gave them to her. I was

hoping she'd get real sick, but she didn't, she smoked them. Her husband works, he worked for the Lung Association when they came to Topeka and now he works for the Health Department, which is a different, job, a little better job. Last October when I was over there, a year ago, they have a screened in back porch, a real big one. Course he had quit smoking when they still lived in California, cause he worked in a hospital out there in the records department. I came in the room, and I said, where's Barbara? He said, oh, she's out on the back porch smoking. He says, she isn't allowed to smoke in the house. (laughter) So I went out and there she sat in the chair and had a little tray in front of her with her ashtray and was smoking. She tried to quit once but she started again and then later on she said, mama, I think I quit. And later on she joked and said, by golly, it was just too darn cold on that porch to smoke. (laughter) She said, I decided it wasn't worth it. So she quit, thank goodness. And Alf is trying very hard to quit. So far he hasn't quite made it. I said you get (your piano?) up here, I said, and I'll bet you you'll quit. You'll come home and every time you want to reach for a cigarette, I says, reach for the piano, he loves to play and he just, [inaudible] he just plays by ear.

TJK: The grandchildren must have been fond of your father then...

ALV: Well, a lot of of them were. My children thought a lot of him. Expecially Barbara. Heavens, you didn't dare cross grandpa. Some of the others, that they weren't around him as much, but he worshipped all them. He just, when they came, and he'd take them all out to dinner, oh he loved that. I used to tell some of them, why don't you have the girls when they could drive come in and take grandpa over to dinner and he'll, I mean he will take you to dinner, but you drive him. After Barbara was in college somebody had to drive him because he couldn't drive anymore and I didn't want to do it all the time and Mary didn't want to do it all the time. Mom was at home

and but they wouldn't do it. But if they did happen to be here in the evening they had to go out to dinner with him, they had to make special tables, long tables, maybe 12 of them at the table and boy, he'd pay for all of them. He just loved that, he enjoyed it.

TJK: Let's talk a little bit now about yourself. You went to school now your early years here in Sterling. Up to the 8th grade, or...

ALV: Yes, I went through the 8th grade here. I went to Lincoln School for a while, parochial, between Lincoln School and parochial school one year I had to go to Franklin because we lived on the north...south side of the highway. That was in later years, that was after the war. Anyway, for some reason I had to go to Franklin school, I don't know why, I was in the 4th grade there, I think, or the 5th grade...4th grade. Then I went to junior high school in the 5th and 6th grade. Well, by that time they started the parochial school again. In the 7th and 8th grade I had to go to the parochial school, the folks wouldn't have it any other way. That was it. Of course in those days after you was so old you stayed at home and worked. Work was a big word. Well, then I always run it, now my sister didn't get much education, not any of us older ones got more than the 8th grade. In fact I don't think she even got quite through the 8th grade. Later on they started business college here in Sterling. My sister she wanted something so the folks let her go to business college. Well, I stayed home then and I, course she helped milk the cows in the morning and even if she came home, but there were some times I know because she'd call up and say she was staying in to fix a lunch and take it in to her and she'd stay from 9 in the morning till 9 at night. She had very little education, I don't think she had over about the 6th grade. They was awfully hard for her so she, they gave her special help. But she got through with the business college. She got a job downtown and of course all that time I was at home. I wanted something too, but because of a speech problem I did not want to

work in an office, I was very self-conscious and very, well felt very self-conscious about it and I just didn't like to be out in public and the older I got the more conscious I became of it (starts to stutter). But I did want some kind of an education and I didn't know what. But I did want to go someplace where they could help me with my speech. I didn't know where but I finally, when I was twenty-one, I asked Mother if I could go to Denver. A friend of hers which, they grew up with in Denver, suggested I go to Denver to work, I could make much better money. So I asked Mother and she says, oh, absolutely not. She needed me at home. There was a big family and Mary had her job now and I don't know if Anna was married then or not...no, she wasn't married yet then. Anyway, mother had a lot of work so she couldn't spare me. So I waited until I was almost 26. So finally I raised a few chickens, I always took care of her chickens, I raised a few of my own and I saved the money. I used to go in occasionally and help Mrs. Hammel, a day or two house cleaning or if she had a special dinner I'd help, and I got \$2.00 a day and I saved whatever I could. So finally, I told mother I'd like to go to Denver. She didn't say yes or no, so I figured I could take a chance. I started getting ready. I got myself some suitcases, two suitcases, ordered them through the mail order catalog and I made myself some dresses and aprons and all I knew was how to work in beet fields and milk cows, and went up and stayed with these people then, another lady I had met--I stayed with her part time and stayed with these friends of the folks part time. That was just during the depression. This man said you might as well go home, you'll never get a job. The first day I was there at the employment office--that place was packed with people looking for jobs--they sent me out on a job. I--turned out to be a Jewish home, they were very dark people and they had a black girl in the kitchen. We had only one black person in Sterling all those many years, you know. But I wasn't used to these people. I talked

myself out of it. I went back to the employment agency the next morning and the lady asked me why I didn't take the job. I told her, I told her the truth. I had a recommendation from Dave Hammell which could get me a job in any part of the world. It was wonderful. I had no trouble getting a job. I saw the woman at the employment office write something, she held her hand, and when she wasn't looking I looked. Well, it was her, what she thought of me as a person, seeing me the first time, that I was neat, and I guess that helped too. So I had to wait a week to get another job. This was working for a janitor at a big apartment house. He and his wife lived in the basement and he took care of the rooms and a lot of these people were bachelors and people lived in the place and they just hired him to clean their apartments in the morning. So I helped him for several weeks and finally some of the people moved out and he had no more work. So I went down and got another job. Ended up being in a Jewish home. I thought it sounded German and it wasn't until after I promised to take the job that I asked the woman what nationality she was. She said Jewish. Now, this isn't very nice but that's the way I felt about it. So I took the job and I went out there and until the 2nd day I just cried all day. Oh, I was so miserable. I just about died. It was, that job--they were very Jewish--everything was so greasy, they didn't use soap. The cook was there, I didn't have to cook, but she was always gone and I had to keep stirring the stuff she put on. The corners were so dirty, and oh, I was getting, she offered me \$20.00 a month. I asked for \$5.00 a week, which added up to just a little bit more. So yes, she promised me \$5.00 a week. I guess the 2nd day, I told her I couldn't stay. She asked me why. I was cleaning their refrigerator and she watched me. She said would you stay if I paid you \$30.00 a month? And that was good pay in those days. \$30.00 a month. \$20.00 was about what the average person got and \$30.00 was good. I said no, if she'd give me \$50.00 a month I couldn't stay. I

just told her I didn't like it. I told her the truth, I had to, she wanted to know. I told her. So I called, what was his name, I called him--Smith was his last name--I called him. I said this is Amelia, I said would you please let me come down and work for you for my board and room until I get another job. I said I can't stay out here. I got down there somehow, I don't remember how. So I worked for him for my board and room and I went to church every Sunday and I met some people there at the church. I told them I was looking for a job. I got into a family that went to the church there. Their mother was an invalid. She had tuberculosis and they had an older brother that wasn't well. The girls were all nurses. The younger brother was a medical student, I'll tell you I worked hard for \$5.00 a week for that family, but I was one of the family and I got to go to church every Sunday, which was very important to me. After their mother died and their brother died, why they gave up the big house. They thought they'd just get an apartment, just for the 4 of them. The boy was still going to medical school and Elsie had graduated from nursing school I think and then the 2 nurses, the 2 older girls. Well, one of the girls had died before, because she had been a nurse too. So I thought well, I had to look for another job. I got into a home, a rich home. It was a widow with an adopted daughter. She did a lot of entertaining. Well, I wasn't used to this fancy cooking. I had never liked it, and, but she told me she'd give me a chance. The other girl was still there and she'd get me started. Then she realized after awhile it was just too much for me. All this, and at Christmas time she would do a lot of entertaining. She, she found out about this speech problem and I used to go down on my days off and take cooking at Opportunity School, just in order to try to learn what I had to learn. She told me she realized that I had a speech problem. So she told me that she knew of somebody that could help me. She said would you stay through Christmas? I'm going to have this other woman come in and help her, cause I'll be

entertaining. I said, well, I'd like to go home for Christmas, I always have. So she said okay, but she gave me the name of this teacher that was working in the public schools in Denver, helping with the speech problems of the school children. I went to see her. She says well, I don't possibly have time, but I can, I know of a young student--she is just graduating. She is going to open up a studio and do private work. When I went back to Denver I got ahold of a job in a home for \$2.50 a week because I was going to take these private lessons. Five children in the family. Course she did most of the cooking. I told her I was going to take these private lessons three times a week, private speech lessons. I did this for about 9 months, \$2.50 a week. I spent-- let's see--car fare was 3 slugs for a quarter, so I spent 50 cents for car fare. A dollar and a half for lessons, 50 cents a lesson, three times a week. That was \$2.00. I gave a quarter to church and I had a quarter left for spending money. (laughter) I did that for 9 months. Then I realized it had helped me a lot but I was still very self-conscious. I realized I had to get out in public, out where I had to face people and talk to them. That was something that always just scared me to death. I'd be petrified, I'd just become paralyzed. I knew I had to do something else. Now, I always wanted more education. I didn't know what. I found out, of course I knew about, had learned about Opportunity Schools, and I learned they had a high school there. I thought well that's it. So I started going to high school. I told this woman, well I'm going to go to Opportunity School every day now. Because I'm just going to have to do it. Oh, she was so upset, she was so hurt to think I was going to leave. She just couldn't have me do that, she needed me. I said well, I just can't do it. So I went to the school and they had an employment office there. I explained to them my situation and I got a job in a doctor's home. It was a doctor and his wife and the daughter, she was about my age. I got \$3.00 a week. It was just about walking distance. I could walk home. Coming

down, I had to make breakfast and clean up the apartment, and I couldn't go to school until 10:00 so I missed that first hour. And by golly I worked my way through in 4 years. I tell you, I was tired. The last summer I quit and went up to the mountains to work.

TAPE 3, SIDE A

ALV: Since I was able to go to school only from 10 till 3 I couldn't get my full credits for the three years that I had gone. It would have taken me at least another year and a half going at that rate. I quit my job during the summer and went up to the mountains. [word cut off] the employment office and got a very good job up at Phantom Valley Ranch. That's about 13 miles from Grand Lake towards Estes Park. It was a beautiful place. I thought I was in heaven, oh it was wonderful. But did I ever work hard. Oh, it was hard work. [I?-word cut off] took care of all the cabins. They had log cabins. I took care of the, the ah, what they call the living room--the lounge there. After the people came in for breakfast I took care of the cabins. Then I did the laundry and I worked awfully hard. I saved my money. I just bought the clothes I needed. The girls wore jeans and plaid shirts and silk neckerchiefs, so I got that up at [Grand?-word cut off] Lake and I went up to Grand Lake and danced with them Saturday nights. I saved all my other money. When I came back to Denver I got me a little one room apartment right near school and by golly I finished that year and a half of school in a year. I worked hard. I said I was so tired of being tired I never wanted to be tired again. (Laughter)

TJK: You didn't meet the beet fields then or anything I take it? (laughter)

ALV: No, I didn't. Not at all. It was very different. But I graduated. Then in class, I'll tell you, it was rough, to get up in front of the class, a room full of people and have to talk. One teacher had the habit of going alphabetically. So I knew when my turn was

coming and I would be petrified till the perspiration would run off of me. I would be so petrified to think I had to face the class. But when I once got up and walked those few steps to the front and faced the class I calmed down and started to talk. After 4 years of this I still knew I needed something else. I was still self conscious. I just couldn't overcome that for some reason. But my speech was much better--still I was scared. So I talked to Mrs. Norton, my English teacher, and I said, "What will I do now?" I said, "I just need something else." She said, "Now you go out to DU and talk to Dr. Murray. He has a speech class out there, and you talk to him. He'll get you fixed up." So I went out and talked to him. It turned out, I heard from others, he had had the same speech problem. He turned out to be a college professor. He had his own text book. You had to take breathing exercises, voice exercises, and we had to work together. We would meet at each other's homes. Two and two of us would work together. Then he would divide the class. He had assistants--they were speech majors and they would help him in the class. When we had just minor assignments we would do it all, there was over 40 in the class, he would divide the class into three, three or four sections and they would go to different rooms. Each assistant would have this major assignment and work with that. It turned out I, there were just a few left of each group, and they put them all together for the last day. I was one of them. The others all got out. They were supposed to give their, recite their assignment, whatever it was, and then criticize themselves. And then the class was to criticize them. When it came my turn I thought oh, my gosh. I think he was scared more than I was. I was scared but I got up in front of the class--I did what I had to do--and so—one thing I sometimes wish he had done this. I think I was supposed to criticize myself, but he wouldn't let the class criticize me. He was afraid that it might upset me. I'm not even sure that I criticized myself. But he, when I got through, he explained to the

class why I was in the class. Here I was in my early thirties, and these were all college kids. He explained why I was there. He said, "You know, we all more or less have a speech problem, anybody." You know you listen to people they say, ahhh, and they just have certain, I mean, habits, it's just habits. But mine was a problem. It was an emotional problem really. He explained to the class why I was there and that helped quite a bit. But sometimes I wish he'd let them criticize me, I think it would have made me stronger. Then the very last thing, I remember when I was in grade school, the eighth grade, my teacher, Miss Ida Benwer, she gave a play and she wanted me to take part and I refused. I cried and everything else. I wasn't about to get up there on that stage and face an audience. I'd rather die and I wouldn't do it. Here, our last major assignment was a play. Of course my assistant, there were about a half a dozen girls in the one I was in, we had to go to this girl's home to practice. I had to take a street car clear across town over where the Jewish section was at that time, West Colfax. We'd meet at her home and we'd practice. I'll tell you I'd get so petrified that I could hardly talk. I'd just be paralyzed. I just forced myself. I just thought to myself, by golly, you gals will have to suffer with me until hell freezes over. I just forced myself to do it. Of course they knew what my problem was, they'd explained it to them so I didn't hesitate. To this day I cannot remember having the play in school. I cannot remember, I mean how our play was presented, that I've forgotten. Some things are completely blank in my mind. To my amazement and shock a week or so later I suddenly realized I wasn't self conscious anymore. It just hit me like that and it took all those years for me to work on that till I overcame...

TJK: What do you attribute that to?

ALV: It's mostly emotional, now they call it stuttering, but it isn't stuttering, it's stammering. There is a difference. You know stuttering is a constant repetition and stammering is

an emotional problem, you are uh, well now a person can sing and join in with anybody else, but when you have to speak up somehow you get paralyzed, not paralyzed but, not that extreme, but you feel tense and you just can't say what you have to say. Certain letters especially. I notice usually that certain letters bother a person. Well, it was more or less in the family, I don't know why. Uncle Fred had just a little bit, and Dad had some of it. Now people didn't realize it, because he had a way of controlling it. I mean I sensed it occasionally, but he had a way of getting around it, but he had that problem, but he got a way around it. Now the boys, some of the boys had that problem. They went up and took the same class I did and it did not help them as much as it helped me. Now August went up there and took the same class, it didn't help him, but he finally somehow managed to get an, like somebody told me, he learned to use a Texas accent and he talked slower and with that. I think he has it under control that way. Now...I know Johnny went quite a few times different places, and I don't know that he went to Denver to this Dr. Murray, but he tried awfully hard, he just had it all of his life, he just simply didn't have what it took to overcome it. Now this Dr. Murray, I don't know if anybody else knows that, but I had been told that he had the same problem and here he turned out to be a college professor in speech because of his problem. There were times though in class I noticed it. He would stand there talking and all at once he'd stop--like that--and uh, he'd sort of start over. I don't know if anybody else noticed it but I did, I'm very speech conscious.

TJK: Sure, sure.

ALV: I know it hurts me when I see them laughing at somebody. Now this guy that's been on T.V. a few times, he sings, but they had him on this Tony Orlando show awhile back, but when he talks he has certain words he has trouble saying. Next time Tony

Orlando said, "Well, we had Mel"--somebody, I should know his name, -it's on the tip of my tongue—said, "we had him on our program and we had a lot of letters people objecting to this. They wondered if he was just putting this on, pretending, or whether he actually stuttered." They still called it, stuttering, it's a common word, when it really isn't. So, but uh, so he asked, well it happened Mel was on again. He asked, he said "Do you, I mean, stutter naturally, or are you just putting on?" So he started saying something and he couldn't say it. Said, "Well, now are you convinced?" He said, "Well, I have stuttered professionally for 18 years and all my life, the rest of the time." Here, he's just making a show of it. But I know when I hear him, now I try to get used to it now, because he is good. I've tried not to let it bother me. Here before Christmas one morning I got up around 8-8:30, or maybe 7--I got up a little bit earlier. Had a record on of stuttering. I've never heard it before or since. It was terrible. It was terrible. It was an insult for anybody that had a speech problem. I know how I used to be laughed at, and other people were laughed at, and I'll tell you it hurts. Especially when you can't help it, you have no control.

TJK: Um hum.

ALV: By golly, I got right to the phone. I said, "Are you the announcer?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Will you break that record? It's terrible." He didn't like it. He said, "Well, we play anything we like here and if you don't like it you can turn to another station or turn it off." I said something else, I just let him know I didn't like it and so I said thank you and I hung up. I haven't heard the record since. I told Barbara about it and she said, "Mama, why didn't you just tell him off? And ask him how he'd feel if people laughed at him?" I said, "Well, I wasn't about to argue with him. I was afraid I'd start having problems." (laughter) He didn't find out who I was. But I mean it upset me just that much. Now once in a while it hits me for no reason at all, I don't

know why. But very seldom. Not enough that it bothers me. The only thing, it aggravates me.

TJK: Oh, my.

ALV: After I worked all those many years, that it still comes back occasionally but Mrs. Norton said, you'll have that all your life. And she was right.

TJK: Oh, throughout this interview you've been very articulate though.

ALV: Well, once in awhile I kind of feel myself...but, I have found out that if I kind of feel like it's going to bother me I just use, if I start with a word I think might bother me like it used to...I will kind of start with something else, or something like that, or just with a syllable of some kind, just to kind of get me started. When I stutter. It's amazing what you can do if you learn. But the thing is, like this teacher that I talked to first, she said well, I can't help you. By the time I found someone I was in a hurry. She said, well now, you listen here, she said, you waited all these years you can wait a little bit longer. I just couldn't wait. Said that one thing with your problem is you have to have help, but you also have to help yourself. It works both ways, you can't do it alone, and somebody else can't do it for you. I'll tell you I worked, well then later on I went back and took what they called choral speaking, which was very nice. Just to kind of stay with it. For I worked for five...seven years. I went out to the university one hour a day. About, I think it was three days a week. Just to kind of stay with it to kind of help me more. Of course, the course cost me so much, but the lady I worked for, where I did my housework, and she paid me a little bit more. Those people were wonderful and understanding. I never would have made it without those people.

TJK: Now, when did you marry?

ALV: Well...(laughter) That was quite some time later. I got married pretty late. (pause)
Let's see...about '40, 1940. Yeow. Alfred was born in '42, and Barbara '44. But 40
or 41. I was up there, by golly.

TJK: You met your husband in Denver? Or...oh, I see. Humm. Now, was he German?

ALV: He was Italian. Full blooded Italian just like I was full blooded German.

TJK: Oh, I see.

ALV: His family were these real hundred percent Italian. They lived over in North Denver,
what they called, you know, Little Italy, they lived over there and they were very, his
father was a very quiet man, but his mother was very religious and the boys had no
use for church. But she convinced him that uh, I know when Alfred was baptized we
lived right near my church, I said I want to be near my church so I can go to church.
So we had a little apartment right near there, and we walked over. He went to church
when Alfred was baptized. But then when Barbara was baptized he refused to go.
But on the way over he was worried. His mother told him that Martin Luther was just
a bad man. (Laughter) And he was afraid to go to church. He was just on needles and
pins when he was in church. He went very very few times, but when Barbara was
baptized he just wouldn't go. I said I'll never forgive you this, but I did. (Laughter)
But he just wouldn't go, but we were close enough so I could walk. But I couldn't get
him interested. His mother had convinced him Luther was a bad man. (Laughter) So
he was afraid to go to the Lutheran Church. (Laughter)

TJK: How did your father view the marriage, that you didn't marry a German? Did he...

ALV: Well...

TJK: Did most of the others in the family marry Germans?

ALV: Uh, yes.

TJK: Did they?

ALV: Uh, I think they all did. Let's see. Helene is married, I mean Frieda, divorced Porky, you know, years ago. She's married to a man, his name is Black, I don't know what he is, he's really a nice fellow. She got herself a nice husband this time. And uh Helene married a German, no...uh, Bertha didn't. She married Chuck Morlatt. I don't know what nationality he is. Not even after all these years, I don't even know. And Martha, she married uh, you know, Clem Quint. And uh Annie, Rudy Miller, the folks knew each other from way back. And of course Mary never married and I ended up marrying an Italian. (Laughter) Well, they said they figured I was old enough to know what I was doing, but I guess I didn't because I sure made a big mistake. (Laughter) It didn't last. Like somebody said one time about these young kids marrying, and with so many divorces. I said, Well maybe they are, the younger ones can do better than the older ones, like me. (Laughter)

TJK: When did you come back now to Sterling?

ALV: To Sterling? When Barbara was a year old. We were back and forth. He went into the army and he was just back and forth and he just wouldn't settle down and finally it just came to an end. Barbara was just a year old. I came back really to work at the sugar factory. I had worked there one time when we were down here and I worked there for a short time. Then he moved me to Denver again. He just didn't know what he wanted. So I had a little experience and so of course when it ended why I wrote to my sister and she worked there in the office and she said well there was a possibility I might be able to get on so I come on home when the folks came up. You know when Dad shipped his cattle Mom always came up to see me, she'd take the street car. So I came home with them, and uh, well just brought part of my things along, course the rest I never got. And worked for six weeks. I was home just a few days and they called me. Sacking sugar. Then when I was through I didn't know what I would do

but I knew I'd have to go back to Denver. But I guess when he figured I was about ready to come back he got rid of everything. So I was stuck. I had no place to go. All I had was what little money I'd saved from the factory. I saved most of that and that's all I had too. But I had no place to go back to and he got rid of everything. There was nothing I could do. So I waited two years. I thought well it's impossible to ever live with him again. I hated to get a divorce. Finally, I thought, well, the only thing to do is go ahead and get a divorce, I'm completely free, so he cannot, and I insisted on full custody of the children. I said I won't have it any other way. He even complained to the lawyer that I wouldn't write to him. I said, well, why should I write to him? I said, He doesn't want us. He doesn't want to bother with us. I said, why should I write? I mean to both lawyers I said this. So they didn't tell me I had to write to him. (laughter) Well it was after two years, I was ready two years before I finally decided I'd better settle the whole thing. So he was under court orders to support the children but he never sent them a penny. But before that he sent a few dollars once or twice and sent the kids a couple of gifts and that was all.

TJK: When did you move out here now? Shortly after that?

ALV: You mean here in this house?

TJK: Yeah. Right.

ALV: Well, I lived with the folks for 9 years.

TJK: Oh, that's right.

ALV: Yes. I was there a long time. Dad uh, I worked down to Scotts for over 12 years, well, I worked in the factory for a while, then when the boys came back from service they didn't need the women. They had the women only during the war. So I was out of a job then. So I went downtown a couple of places and thought well I'm going to have to do something else. So I went over to Scotts--they'd just been here less than a

year, and I got on right away. I'd never touched a register in my life. That's a job I'd always wanted but I knew I could never have. I went in there and this was 9 days before Christmas, right at the Christmas rush. I had to know all the departments. Had to learn all the departments, we had to list them on our sheets as we rang up the register. Every item the different department had to be listed. So he come over once in a while, what department is this in? He'd test me. But I loved it. I just loved it. I was there over 12 years. In the meantime I tried very hard to get Dad to help me find a place. I wanted to be with the children. Of course by that time Alfred was in kindergarten. The last job was the factory, he was in kindergarten. Well, I worked at the tear house that fall, just through harvest, and he started kindergarten. Then of course then I was through. So I worked there then. Then of course Barbara was still at home. Then I just, I wanted to take care of my children myself. I didn't like this idea at all of relatives taking care of them. They were my responsibility and I waited so many years and I, it was hard. So I told him then after Christmas I told him I just wanted to work part time. I said I have a daughter at home and I just cannot work full time. So I uh...he said, well, he said you came in at 11:00 and he walked away. That way I came in at 11:00 when the girls started lunch and I worked till 5--or 5:30 at that time, and I had a half hour for lunch. So I managed it that way for about 2 years. Then when we got the new manager, and about that time Barbara was at school, he said you come in at 9:00 period. So I worked full time from that time on. Then with 2 kids at home, then of course after we moved over here--but the kids were awfully good. One evening I came home and Mother was gone and they were sitting in the kitchen on one chair. They had made themselves some uh, they called it uh, melted toast. I would toast the bread and put butter on it and put it in the oven and melt the butter and they had made themselves some melted toast and were eating it. They got

along real good and they still do. Oh they kind of have their ups and downs which is only natural, but much better than most brothers and sisters. So they did real good, but, she didn't get to go to kindergarten because she was just a few weeks too young, they wouldn't take her. I begged them, I said I have to work, and I begged them. Then they started a second class, that's when all these war babies were coming in. They said, we just haven't got room for her. So of course the next year she went to parochial school, so she, when she got to high school she was a year younger than all the other kids because she got started a year sooner. The other kids, by that time you had to be 6 years old to go to kindergarten and she got to go in the 1st grade when she was 6 years old, the year before. And so a few times she said, why is it I have to be younger than the other kids, or be ahead of the kids that are my age? She didn't like it very well, I didn't see why. I thought she should be proud of it. But that's the way it was.

TJK: Your folks passed away when? Your mother preceded your father, right?

ALV: Yes. Dad passed away, I think it was 4 years in November. And Mother passed away about 2 years before that. So it hasn't been too long. Then about living over there. Dad did that to help me. He just couldn't see it. He figured there was plenty of room in that house--he loved my kids, he thought he had to take care of my kids, and they just meant a lot to him. So I begged, once in a while I tried, to look for, I was always looking for houses. Thought if I could just get a good place with an apartment I could live in the apartment and rent the rest and stay at home and take in sewing. I like to sew and things like that and make enough money and get some out of the rent and make my payments on the house. Well, I went to the banker several times, he was a good friend of Dad's. Well, he just absolutely talked me out of it every time. He said you cannot make it. He figured up the taxes and the interest and everything and he

said you cannot possibly do it. So I just had to give up. So finally, this house, one day built uh, it's been here, I knew the woman real well, the woman that uh, she was a real good friend of the family's, that lived in the house. Well, she sold it to these people and she told me that they were going to move the house and build something else there. So I told the kids, he picked them up after school all the time, I said, I told the kids, well, he wouldn't listen to me. But he'd listen to the kids. So I said, when Grandpa picks you up after school you drive by this house, you tell him that this house is for sale and has to be moved. Well, they told him and well the man had bought it and was going to move it out south of town. I knew who it was and so I talked to him about it and uh, well then, I always fix his breakfast. That was the one time I caught him when he couldn't run away from me. He was at the table and he couldn't just get up and leave, because that's the only time I could talk to him. Otherwise he'd just run away, he wouldn't listen to me. I was just one of his kids. So one morning I started in again about the house. I said, this house is for sale. "Ja, ja, ja. I know all about it, I don't want to hear about it." I just, I used to just cry my heart out so I said, well, I was all in tears, I said, Just go and look at it. I said if you don't like it you don't have to buy it. He said, Well, we'll see, we'll see, we'll see. Then my sister told my children, You tell your mother to stop that bawling, Grandpa is not going to buy her a house. So well, I bawled many times (laughter) so that morning he said, Well, well, we'll see. I said, just look at it. If you don't want to buy it you don't have to. So that afternoon I took my lunch along and I'd eat it in the car. If I came home it was a rush and I'd be so tired, so I'd eat my lunch in the car and rest a little bit and go back to work. So that noon I was parked there by the Presbyterian Church and I was eating my lunch and I was praying. The tears were rolling down my face and I was eating my lunch and I was praying. Pretty soon I just felt like somebody lifted a

great big weight off my shoulders. I could just feel it. I could actually feel it. A great big load lifted off my shoulders. But I felt good. It was gone. I came home that evening. Dad had a man out here to put in a footing for the foundation. If that wasn't a prayer answered.

TJK: Certainly.

ALV: And after all those years of begging him, I didn't beg too often, I was careful, I did just occasionally, I knew better. After all those years well he just couldn't see it, why he was so happy, he was so happy, that he got this house for us. That was as far as I could get out of that big house. (Laughter) That was as far as I could get away from the family. (Laughter) And believe me...

TJK: And you're what, you're about 250 feet? (laughter)

ALV: I don't know how many feet but I at least was out of the house. (laughter) I know that some of the family were very unhappy about it to think that, like I said one time, well, they hated me because I needed help, and they hated Dad because he helped me. The others just never stopped to think what he did for them. They couldn't see that at all. They still throw that at me. Before he, well after mother passed away I asked him for the deed, he said, that's your house. One time I had to have some repairs done, well that year I couldn't get back, after I, let's see how was it? I worked at, after I quit at Scotts I was home for one year I think, and then they called me back to the sugar factory, they hired women again and so I worked two years, two campaigns. The next campaign they had only 2 women so that left me out. So I was home, so I was doing all the repair work around the house. I'm pretty good at that. So I took down all the screens they were falling apart and repaired them and painted them aluminum. And painted around the windows and I did a lot of work and he saw, me do it. Well, one time he said uh, when I chauffeured him he'd give me a little money, you know. So

well do you need any money? I said well, I could use a little bit, I'm doing a lot of repair work on the house. Well, that's your house, that's your house. Well, I had to get money out of my savings. When I wasn't working I had to get money out of my savings to pay my bills. It's a good thing I had sense enough to save or I don't know where I'd ended up. So he said that's your house, that's your house. So, it was my house. (laughter) Well, I had nothing to show for it and so after Mother passed away, I spent a lot of time over there, I went over and stayed with him, he had another little stroke and he wasn't feeling good, he didn't want to be left alone and May couldn't see sitting with him, she was there in the house, but she couldn't see being right there with him, and so I went over, two or three times a day at first until he felt better. Then I'd go over almost practically every day, either in the afternoon or evening and sit with him, and uh, answer his questions, he got where at times his mind would just fade and come back and so one time when I caught him in a good mood when I thought his mind was clear I asked him about a deed for this house. He said well that's your house. I said no, I don't have anything. So finally I convinced him I had nothing to prove it was mine. I thought, well, if he dies I'll have to move, where on earth will I go? I had nothing, except what money I had saved those years. I said will you, uh, I said, I just, I would like to have the deed, so finally I convinced him that I was right. He said alright, alright, alright. He used to say I can't do anything, I'm helpless. I said, well, just give me permission, I said just tell me what you want me to do. I said, I'll go in and talk to the lawyers and what ever has to be done. He said, so, I said, well, how much of the land will you give me? He said about 3 acres. Well, when I told my sister that she said, Wow, he didn't know what he was talking about. Well then she talked to him and she gave me only 2 acres. Well, I didn't argue, I thought maybe he just didn't remember, or he had changed his mind so I [end side of tape]

TAPE #3, Side 2

ALV: Of course now, that I got the deed for this, well she gave me only 2 acres, well I didn't argue about it, well then I found out later on it was her idea, I wanted to buy a little bit more and they wouldn't let me, so I don't know what's gonna happen. They are so bitter because Dad gave me a deed and they didn't get deeds. But they never stopped to think how much Dad helped them all those years. I was away from home for so many years and got nothing, absolutely nothing. They don't look at that at all. Now the boys got to buy their farms. Con bought his farm and August bought his. All I want was one or two acres here and they said no, you can't have it. They just don't want me to have it. And then they say, well, you got something and I didn't. So...(laughter) oh boy, this estate thing is a mess. (laughter)

TJK: Oh, yes.

ALV: I just stay away, I have to. So I don't know whether they'll ever settle it. They just, they sold some things, but, there's still a lot to be sold. So, it's just one of those things.

TJK: Oh, my. Well, this afternoon we've covered a lot of years--from Russia to Galveston.

ALV: I'm glad I remembered that watermelon syrup (laughter)--that [inaudible] Rüge Mus, because I thought that was very important...

TJK: That is.

ALV: That is something that should be included. I was so glad I remembered that.

TJK: Um hum. This is all very helpful because, as you know, your father and mother were two perhaps of the best known German pioneers from Russia in this area.

ALV: Yes, in Logan County, because we came here--I remember when you could look down Main Street and see houses clear down, you know where that little shoe shop is on West Main, on the other side of the church, well the church was there all that time,

people didn't want to go to this church, that's the reason they started their own. I think that church was, I think they went a few times but they never joined, but they started the Trinity Lutheran Church. My folks. And they were some of the beginners there. But we could see clear past that church, the houses on West Main. When we arrived here. It was just all so open. There was nothing out south, where all those homes are, south, that was Bluebird Acres, there was a man here by the name of Blue, he built that great big home--Cody's live out there now. He made all of South Sterling into lots and planted trees, and then later on they left. He started all those lots, the blocks, streets, trees around it --many years ago. So now there's all homes in there. It's all filled in with homes. So it's amazing.

TJK: Oh yes. And amazing too, I think, is the fact that so many of the descendants, as well as the children themselves, of these early German immigrants, who started, for instance, in the s'Russe Eck, or started in the beet fields have gotten where they are today.

ALV: I know. It's amazing how, I remember after I lived in Denver 14 years, came home, and a lot of these kids, they were little kids when I left, and they were grown up when I came back, I didn't recognize a lot of them, I found out who they were and what they were doing, I was amazed—why, they were just those little old German-Rooshuns (laughter). See, years ago, when we were growing up, you know, why, it's amazing how some of them have worked themselves up, really they are smart people. Like they talk about the negroes, they've been held down all these years, and now that they are free just how smart those people are some of them. How they're coming out, they really are being themselves. That's the way with these German people. They get out and they get an education and they, it's amazing what they can do, if they have the opportunity. All they need is a chance. That's the way, of course, with everybody.

That, a person they want to take the chance. Of course, you find some that don't care, but that isn't necessarily Germans, sometimes it's a lot of the others are worse than the Germans.

TJK: Um hum. Well, sure. Well, like I say, we've covered a lot of years, and we have a few seconds left on the tape and I want to ask is there anything else that you wanted to say, or...to say in closing?

ALV: At the moment, I don't know...I think I have everything on, talked about everything I have on here, there's uh, now I got this book out last night. I think I read that when I was going to high school. It's *The Education of a Princess*. But that starts in the late 1900's. That started about the time after my folks were born. That was something about 1905 by the time I was born, it was, but it was not the German princess. And it was Swedish and Russian, and uh, it tells how she was educated. She became of a Russian. She had something to do with Russian, I just uh, kind of glanced through it and I'd have to read the whole thing. But I thought it might help, but it didn't give anything that we needed about the German people.

TJK: Ah, I see. Well, that's what we're doing now, is we're trying to, like I say, talk to as many people as we can and then eventually some day in the near future to put all of this together and write the story that should have been written so long ago.

ALV: Yes. Well, now my daughter has been interested in this. I sometimes wonder, now all this personal stuff that I mentioned, if you could put that on paper, the important things, if I get too personal you don't have to do that, but if you could put that on paper, make me two copies for my kids.

TJK: Oh, well, surely. Surely.

ALV: I mean there's no hurry about it, but I think they would like to read it.

TJK: Oh, yes. I think so too.

ALV: I mean, just you know lots of times I just said a lot of things that weren't necessary, but bringing out the history of their grandparents and their mother, and so on.

TJK: Well, this is one of our aims, to preserve, you know, these stories, and these recollections.

ALV: I mean just my personal...

TJK: Well, sure.

ALV: I mean what I personally remember. I think they would like to have that. If you can work it out conveniently sometime.

TJK: Okay. Surely.

ALV: I thought I would ask you about that.

TJK: Well, okay. Thank you very much then.

END OF INTERVIEW