

Interview with Wilma Pauline Kurth Lancaster
September 29, 2009
Conducted in the Lancaster Home, Edwards County, Kansas
Interviewers: Interviewer Weaver and Rosetta Graff

Interviewer: What is your full name?

Wilma: Wilma Pauline Lancaster. I was born in Ford County, Kansas, February 20th, 1930.

Interviewer: And this was close to Offerle?

Wilma: Yes, not too far.

Interviewer: Was it a little bit over the Edward's County line?

Wilma: Well, it was a little bit further than that. The Edward's County line is right after you turn this corner. So, I'd say about six miles from where I now live.

Interviewer: And what were the names of your parents?

Wilma: Now, they had nicknames. My mother was baptized as Maria (now that's the German for Mary) Magdalena Weiss. My dad was baptized Albert Carl Kurth. And he never used his name, he always went by A.C. Then my mother went by "Lena", and those are the names on their gravestones. 'Cause they never used their real names.

Interviewer: And who were your grandparents on both sides.

Wilma: The grandparents Weiss were, and I'm not sure about their middle names, Herman and Christina Weiss. The other side was, well, we knew him as Edward, but in German it was Eduard. Eduard and Bertha Kurth.

Interviewer: What brought your family? Were your grandparents the first to come to this area? Who first came here?

Wilma: The Weiss's, the Herman Weiss's, he came from Germany. He met his wife...I'm not sure where he landed, but then he met his wife in Pennsylvania. So she was from Pennsylvania. Now, on the Kurth side, it was a generation back. It would have been my grandparents' parents that would have come from Germany. So, my grandfather, which was Eduard, I think he was born here. (*Interviewee later corrected that he was 14 years old when they came to America.*) I think they lived here-- you probably got that from Cordelia, I'll bet. If you asked her these questions, she knows she's got that Kurth blood. It would be the same on her side, because that would have been her mother Ida's parents.

Interviewer: They were in this area?

Wilma: Yes. So her grandparents and great-grandparents would have been the same as mine. I don't know, I've probably got that genealogy somewhere, but I didn't look it up.

Interviewer: The grandfather who met his wife in Pennsylvania, did he stop there and farm or something?

Wilma: No, I think he just stopped for a little while. Then they came west looking for something better, I guess.

Interviewer: And they were farmers, both sides.

Wilma: Yes. But when he first came here, I remember my mother didn't always say that much about history. But my father was a real historian. He said my Grandpa Weiss told him they came out here, and see, he gave the property where our church is right over there, and the homestead is just a mile down the road, where Everett and Phyllis Weiss live. Both he and his wife worked in Dodge City when they first came here. He was a stonemason; I believe was what he was. I forget what she did up there, but I can remember my dad saying in the stories that they went up there to work, and my grandmother would walk over the dead bodies in front street. It was kind of interesting

Interviewer: Would they have gone to Dodge on the train?

Wilma: I bet they went by horse and buggy, I'm guessing, is how they got there, back and forth. That would take quite a while, because it's about 20 miles from our church, which would be about the same, maybe 21 miles to Dodge. And they'd have to go clear up here to Offerle to catch it, so why would they want to do that? So I'm just guessing. They probably went by horse and buggy.

Interviewer: That's interesting...

Wilma: Oh, and by the way, they said they weren't sure who burned, their house. Grandpa Weiss's did, just in the time before my mother was born which was 1893. She was born in the barn; they didn't have a house! So, that would have been between 1890 and 1893, when my mother was born. Somehow the house was burned, and they weren't sure if it was cowboys or Indians. I don't know if I've ever heard for sure what it was. Anyway, it got burned. Some of the cowboys coming through with cattle and stuff were pretty nasty.

Interviewer: That would have been a little late for Indians, wouldn't it?

Wilma: Yeah, it probably was. It was probably those cowboys that had a grudge or something.

Interviewer: The wild west! Okay, did you have brothers or sisters?

Wilma: Yes, there were seven of us. Only two of us left.

Interviewer: And where were you in the birth order?

Wilma: I was the last.

Interviewer: Another baby. How many brothers or sisters did you have?

Wilma: Okay, four brother and two sisters and then me that made the seven.

Interviewer: What was life like in your household with seven children?

Wilma: Poor. We were always poor. But it was fine.

Interviewer: Did you have chores?

Wilma: Oh yes, by the time I came along, I had two brothers who were already (*corrected: they were studying to be*) ministers. And we had what we called a prep school in St. Johns in Winfield, Kansas, so they did their high school years in there. So they left home when they were like 13 or 14 years old. Something like that. So they were gone when I was born.

Interviewer: So they went to the school there, you had a parochial school at the church.

Wilma: Well, yes. Also, at our church. Cordelia probably mentioned that.

Interviewer: Yes, she mentioned that. And after that they went to Winfield to a prep school (*and 2 years of Junior College*).

Wilma: Yes. To prepare for the ministry. So they had already made up their mind when they were little kids that they wanted to be pastors.

Interviewer: Or did they not want to be farmers?

Wilma: (laughter) They knew. But what was crazy, when they went through that prep school and then college and then our seminaries and they went to the one in St. Lewis. Then they'd come home every summer and harvest and try to make some money working for the richer farmers around here. And then once in a while they'd bring some of the other sem. students along, which is how my older sister met her husband, who also ended up being a pastor. They brought him home to work too. And he was from Salt Lake City, so that was his home. So he came home with them to work and make money too.

Interviewer: A lot of ministers in your family.

Wilma: A lot. And then I still have...well, it was Woodrow and Homer who were the ministers. Woodrow's son also is one. He is now in Cleveland, Ohio. He's still in the ministry, but he's getting close to 65 years old, so he'll probably be retiring. But we still have one in the ministry.

Interviewer: What were your chores as a girl in the home?

Wilma: Well, we always milked cows. And like I said, Vera and I were kind of at home by ourselves there at the end, because the rest were older. And she liked to do inside, and I was an outside girl. So I was always outside feeding chickens. We had everything: turkeys, hogs, everything to supply our food, plus gardening.

Interviewer: Did you do any of the wheat farming?

Wilma: No, Red and, these are nicknames. The twins were Reinhart and Gerhart. So, they were still at home kind of when I was growing up. So they helped my dad with the farming, but we all had to help milk cows.

Interviewer: How many cows did you have?

Wilma: Oh gosh, I can't remember. Always a herd of Holsteins. I suppose we always milked, what, 12 or 15. Then of course, the skim milk was fed to the hogs.

Interviewer: That's twice a day going out to milk.

Wilma: Yes, right.

Interviewer: Then did you take care of washing all the creamers and separators and all that?

Wilma: Oh yes, and that smelly separator. I'll never forget that. Well, I was doing that after I was married. It never changed.

Interviewer: And you helped with the gardening and everything.

Wilma: Oh yes, to make it. And carry water into the house.

Interviewer: Okay, so you just had the outside pump and no electricity. So you were cooking on a woodstove?

Wilma: Yeah, I've got one like it. I don't have our original one; I've got the one that was left here by my uncle and aunt when we moved up here, in the wash house. It's one of those old cook-ranges. I've got it out there in the little house over there. It's now a garage.

Interviewer: And then the boys did more of the heavier farm work? Were they expected to milk?

Wilma: Oh yeah, they helped milk too. We all had to do that, plus my mother and father.

Interviewer: Now, that was more milk than your family could use. What did you do with the extra?

Wilma: Well, we sold the cream. See, there was a creamery. I think my dad was on the original board that got the creamery going in Offerle.

Interviewer: Then it was put on the train and...

Wilma: Yes, I guess that's where it went from there.

Interviewer: I'm trying to think. You said you were a teenager in the dustbowl days was it?

Wilma: No, I was a child. I've got one of the pictures downstairs of the dirt rolling in 1938 in Dodge City. I was eight at the time.

Interviewer: What do you remember about it?

Wilma: Really, just having to clean house and they'd put sheets over the windows. Like I said, I was little, so I don't remember all that much. I was doing ornery, naughty things instead of paying attention to what the weather was doing. But my brother had a (we called him Red, that's Reinhart) he got mastoiditis or something from all the dust. He was deaf in one ear from then on. He'd have been like a teenager when he lost the hearing in one ear. At that time you know, the doctors, they probably didn't know what it was.

Interviewer: Somebody told us about locusts and things too.

Wilma: Oh yes, the grasshoppers, and the stories they tell you about the great big pictures of grasshoppers and jackrabbits that came out. But you know, they had those rabbit drives...

Interviewer: Did you ride a horse?

Wilma: No, we never did. We never had horses. My dad hated them. You see, he had to work with horses. He was kicked by a horse, oh I don't know if it was when he was a child or after he was still working with them, they were married in 1912. He had a bum knee, it was probably broke, is what it was, but they never took him to a doctor. So he kind of had a limp all his life.

Interviewer: So you were farming with a tractor then?

Wilma: Yeah, from what I can remember. They might have a couple of the old work horses when I was real little, but I just don't remember that much about it. Yeah, they had the old W30 tractors. I can't remember all the names of them.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about the Depression? You would have been a bit young then too. You said you were always poor, so...

Wilma: Yeah, so it didn't make much difference. Poor but happy. With seven of us. I remember in the evenings, in fact I got our original gas lantern that we would hang on a hook or something, and play pinochle or all kinds of cards. There was enough of us.

Interviewer: So it was happy memories.

Wilma: Oh yeah, it was always happy. You know the main thing it revolved around, I don't ever remember going to town as a kid. Our whole life was family and church. We were always in church every Sunday and every time there was a service we were there. You see, a long time ago we used to have the Lenten services, the Advent services and all the special occasions like Ascension Day, and all those. Most of the churches have now dropped those. But we were always in church.

Interviewer: So the church provided your social activities. Did you have pot lucks and that sort of thing?

Wilma: Yes, I remember those. Mission Festival used to be a big day, where all the collections went for missions. We'd exchange services with Kinsley, we've always done that, and now we are a dual parish, we'd drop our service on that day and then we'd go to Kinsley. It was always a big thing. When I was a child I remember, because the church was out in the country. Do you know where that cemetery is? Peace? Well, the church was there. And then we go, I forget how many miles, by that corner west to the old George Krupp place, which is now gone. See they didn't have a place to have their meal. I don't remember if that church had a basement, I don't think it did. So we'd go over to the old George Krupp home. I remember, we'd go down to the basement on one end and come up on the other end. I was little kid then, but I remember. It was always a big day with a big meal and guest speakers. Like I say, so many of those things are already gone. The church is moved into Kinsley and the George Krupp home is leveled. Not too far from that is the one cemetery where the young Billy Lippoldt is buried. It's right close to there. I think we called it Krupp Cemetery, but I don't know what the real name is. I should remember because Little Skeeter Raymond (*Wetzel*), the one who gave that talk, I think he takes care of Peace cemetery, or the Lutheran cemetery. I think this was called the German Methodist Cemetery. I'm not sure, but it's got a name. I think Little Skeeter even mentioned it.

Interviewer: Yes, Ray takes care of that one too. It's part of the North Edwards Co. Cemetery district.

Wilma: We learned to know Skeeter real well because when he was in high school, he worked for Duane.

Interviewer: Skeeter is Raymond Wetzel. We'll put that on the tape.

Wilma: Raymond Wetzel Junior. There is a senior. I've always known him as Skeeter.

Interviewer: You were talking; you remember church services in German?

Wilma: Oh yes, I had to sit through both. You know, my parents always had the same seat, and my parents sat and I sat beside them on the right hand side. See, Grandma Weiss was killed, I forget what year that was, up here at this crossing.

Interviewer: You mean hit by a train?

Wilma: No, it was with the horse and buggy. The train scared the horse and she was thrown off. She died shortly afterwards. But anyway, I remember Grandpa Weiss would sit next to me and I thought I was rich, he'd give me a penny to put in the collection. And that old collection plate, the old *klingenbeutel* which is German. It is in the museum, we donated it. I just saw it the other day. It's a little bag on the end of a long stick and they passed it down there. And he'd give me a penny to put in it. You should ask Cordelia how to spell it.

Interviewer: Do you speak German?

Wilma: No, I came along too late. My parents didn't really learn English a whole lot until they went to confirmation instructions. And that's where they learned English. Neither one of them had much education. I was trying to think how long they went to school, like maybe 4th or 5th grade was as far as they went. Of course, they learned a lot when they went to their confirmation instructions. The pastor of course taught them in English. But I remember sitting through two services as a little kid.

Interviewer: And you went to confirmation too. Was that a two year program?

Wilma: Yes. We memorized Luther's Catechism; it was about that thick, every word in it. Which I don't think they do quite as much today. Which they should.

Interviewer: Did you graduate from high school?

Wilma: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you go on after that?

Wilma: No, nothing other than our schooling we had through...when I worked at school, we had all these cook schools. Then I went to a thing on refinishing furniture which I think was out of Dodge City Community College. Other than that, nothing.

Interviewer: And you went to high school where?

Wilma: Offerle. That's where I met Duane. Because we'd never been to town. See, we lived way over here and he lived right where Bret lives.

Interviewer: So where did your parents go to trade:

Wilma: I think they went to Offerle.

Interviewer: So you just didn't go with them?

Wilma: Once in a while we'd get to go, but I just don't remember going to town.

Interviewer: Well, you would, because it would be quite a trip back then.

Wilma: I just don't remember. Well, we didn't have any money to spend, so why go? They bought the bare necessities to feed us and take the cream and eggs to town.

Interviewer: So you met your husband in high school and you graduated in what year?

Wilma: '47.

Interviewer: And he graduated in...

Wilma: No, no, no, you see, they took him out of school after his junior year. He probably should have been a senior, because he missed a whole year of high school, he was sick with the mumps. So he missed year, but he should have probably graduated '43, and he had his class rings. He took them both and had them melted down and made a...his parents didn't care about their wedding rings. He took them and made me a gold nugget out of all those rings. I wish I had his class rings, but it was his decision what to do. So he had two class rings. They gave him one from the class he should have been in when they took him in his Junior year.

Interviewer: He was actually 18?

Wilma: Right. He turned 18 in July and they had him by August.

Interviewer: And you were going with him at this time?

Wilma: Yes, I'd gone with him all through my freshman year. Well, maybe half of it, after I'd learned to know him. It would have been his junior half year.

Interviewer: Where did he go first, do you remember?

Wilma: You mean in the service? That boot camp was at Farragut, Idaho. It's no longer there, but I think they called it Camp Farragut.

Interviewer: Were you going steady or engaged or just friends?

Wilma: I guess friends.

Interviewer: But you corresponded...

Wilma: Well, yes. I'll have to show you the letters. You can't read them because something got into them. I don't know what it was. It wasn't the river. I think at one time I had a termite problem downstairs and they ate up a lot of them. I kept them though because of the stamps and the return address which was his ships and things. Some of that is ate up too; I'll show them to you. It's a mess, but I kept them.

Interviewer: And he was away. Did he come home after?

Wilma: He had some furloughs. He'd usually come on the train. And you know, at that time they'd kick him off right here at Offerle. After Camp Farragut, I was trying to think, then they sent him to Camp Elliott. I'm not sure, but think I saw it on the envelopes. I think maybe that's now the regular training base at San Diego. Anyway, he was based at San Diego. But then when he would leave, he would leave out of San Francisco. Usually it would say on his letters, "Fleet Post Office, San Francisco."

Interviewer: What did he do on ship?

Wilma: He was a gunner.

Interviewer: Did he see action?

Wilma: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And you said he went around to all the islands?

Wilma: Oh a bunch of them. He mentioned the Caroline Islands, the Christmas Islands, the Philippines, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. He saw all those, but a lot of times the Navy would come in and kind of clean up. He's got a couple of Jap swords that he took off of dead Japs. I had given them to Bret, but I went and got 'em. So they're downstairs. And of course, Hawaii. He was in Hawaii.

Interviewer: I skipped a question. Let's see. They drafted him, would that have been after Pearl Harbor?

Wilma: Oh yes, see, he didn't get old enough. It was '44 when he went in. Oh yes. I remember Pearl Harbor. We were on our way to church. It was early in the morning in December of '41. Believe it or not, we had in a car that had a radio in it. And we heard it on the way to church.

Interviewer: I bet that was the buzz at church.

Wilma: Oh yeah, I was 11. So that I do remember. Then of course, over the radio then all day long and in the newspapers. I can't remember if we got a newspaper or not. Probably not. We were probably too poor. But the radio was where we'd get our information.

Interviewer: And then you had older brothers. Did they go in the service?

Wilma: No, because the two older ones in '41 were, well, my oldest brother had accepted a call, that was his first parish in Palmer, Alaska. He was up there when the war broke out. Their first child was...at that time they couldn't marry at our seminaries until they got out. So I think he was married in '40 and him and Lucille went up there. He got his call in '41, and I think their daughter was born sometime in '41. She had come back here to visit, and I think that's when the war happened, and she couldn't get back. She had come by boat, and that's how she went back. She got stuck here for like, I can't remember, three or four months before they'd let her go back.

Woodrow was up there, and beings as he was a pastor, he was pastor at Palmer and served Anchorage. Anchorage is a big airbase. So, he really acted as a chaplain, because I'm not sure they had one up there. So he did minister to the boys in service up there, and I'm sure he got real close to one and

he went back a couple times in his later years to visit this guy. So he ministered to them.

Okay, my other brother was, in '41, where was he, I think he was pastor over here at Meade. No, that would have been later; his first parish was over at Greenleaf, Kansas. In Meade, I know he was over there when I got married, in like '46 or '47. Meade was his second parish. And they didn't take pastors *in the service*. And Red, you know he was deaf in one ear, and he did get a farm deferment. And the other twin, Gerhart, lived with us for 15 years after my dad died. He was mentally retarded. You know, it probably was one side of his brain, that because he had such a fantastic memory. I always went to him when I wanted to know anything about the grandparents or anything. He'd remember everything. But I think he was born first. As I've said, this Dr. DeTar delivered all of us. And I think it was probably...of course in those days they didn't test them or nothing. He had a brain injury, he was born first and Red was born second.

Interviewer: So he didn't have enough oxygen while he was being born.

Wilma: He was 4F, so...

Interviewer: Once your husband got on the Pacific Coast, was he able to come home in those two years at all?

Wilma: Oh yes, like I'd say he got three or four furloughs in that time, I think.

Interviewer: So he wasn't stuck out there in the Pacific for long.

Wilma: Well, lots of times they were out there at six months at a time. Because I've got some things downstairs that he made out of steel and stuff they had on board, I've got some of that.

Interviewer: What are they?

Wilma: One's a bracelet. It's like a snake, so I didn't wear it that often. It has my name on it. And I think it's a ring he made for himself. But that's what they would do, I guess, when they were out there for a long time. One of his ships had a D.E. in front of the ship, and that meant "destroyer escort." So maybe at those times they were escorting. Of course, like I said, they had guns, he was a gunner. There were times when maybe out there in the middle of nowhere there wasn't that much action. If they were thousands of miles from anywhere. Then they'd have some time to goof off. They played a lot of cards. He was a real card shark!

Interviewer: And you were back here finishing high school. Were there other girls that were going with service men? Or were you the only one?

Wilma: At that time? I was trying to think. In my senior class, no, well they could have been. That Mercedes Finrock that was our mail carrier's daughter married Bucky (*Raymond Jr.*) Kleysteuber. His real name was Raymond, but I don't think he was in the service yet. I just don't remember her talking about it. And of course, they're all dead now. I happened to be lucky. I'm the only girl in my class who is still living from the class of '47.

Interviewer: Were you engaged?

Wilma: I don't know. He gave me a diamond once when he was home. I don't remember.

Interviewer: You didn't tell your parents!

Wilma: I probably didn't.

Interviewer: Did your parents approve of him?

Wilma: Oh yes, they never did object.

Interviewer: So, when did you get married then?

Wilma: '47, after school. He came back in May of '46 and then he finished his senior year. You see, he got paid for that. I don't know, it was something like \$100 a month for continuing education. And then, after we were married, he still had time left, I guess, that the government would pay for some school.

Interviewer: Like a G.I. Bill kind of thing.

Wilma: They had what they called "On the Farm" training. And Hunk Anderson taught it. He drove down there to Kinsley. I think it was maybe like one night a week and I don't know how long that went on until the end of his payment, whatever it was, to go to school.

Interviewer: So you ended up graduating in the same class?

Wilma: Oh yes, he came back, so he was a lot older than everybody else in the class. We gave him a hard time that it took him so many years to graduate.

Interviewer: So when did you get married?

Wilma: In September, of that same year, '47, but we graduated in May.

Interviewer: And then you were married in the Zion Lutheran Church, I assume. What was your wedding like?

Wilma: Oh, it was a pretty big wedding. Of course, not expensive. I think my dress cost \$25, and I thought that was horrible. And then, of course, at that time, they always had just the receptions in the home, which would have been over there. No, it wasn't either. It was here, because my dad...see, this was originally Kurth ground. My great-grandfather Gottlob Kurth came out from Illinois and bought it. There was nothing here. See, this was railroad land, what was it, every other section from the railroad was railroad land. He came out here and bought this as an investment, and then the next section was homestead, so the Lancaster ground is homestead. But anyway, he bought it as an investment. And then my dad re-bought it, it had been out of the family for five years. But I've got my hundred year award for it, because it still had 100 years under the Kurth name. It came up for sale in 1945 and he bought it, and then they moved from Ford County up here, in 1945. I was married in '47, so the reception had to be here.

Interviewer: In this house?

Wilma: Right. It didn't look like it does now. I mean the kitchen is about the only thing we changed. You can look in there; it's got the original wallpaper. Like I said, my house is a walking history book.

Interviewer: That wallpaper's done very well, it's on the ceiling too!

Wilma: Yes, but see, my dad, him and Gerhart, after my mom died in '70, they lived here alone. I already lived right down there, so I'd come and I'd clean house every week for them. But they were always outside too. My dad planted a garden till his dying day. My dad had put a chicken on the stove to boil and cook and it just burnt to a crisp. It smoked up this whole house. So, that's how old this wallpaper is. It would have been like in sometime after '70, when my mother died. It was just black all over the house. That was a mess, so I had to repaper that. And see, I had bought this ground, so I had to do it. My dad wanted to convert everything to cash, because it is so much easier when... He always looked ahead. So, he sold the farm to us, I think I bought it in '73. So sometime after that is when he had smoked up the whole house blackening the chicken. So that's how old the wallpaper is. By the way, Lois Behnke did it.

Interviewer: Well, she did a good job!

Wilma: I know it! It has stayed just pretty good. Well, there are a couple of places that's showing wear and coming loose. Duane never wanted me to do anything. He was happy with it the way it was and it would have upset him if I'd done anything...so...

Interviewer: And it is vintage now.

Wilma: I guess, whatever, I don't care! I'm too old now, I don't care. My kids are always after me because my house is like a walking history book.

Interviewer: How do you think the war affected Duane? Did it?

Wilma: Well, he was real jumpy like all the rest of them were when they came back. We had an alarm clock at the river, and when it would go off, it would remind him of the sirens that go off when a Jap plane or something was in the area. It would really set him off, it really got to him. I got to where I could wake up on my own and didn't need that. And of course, he was shooting one of those big guns, I don't even know what they were, I've got pictures, his ear things fell off, so he had a hearing disability. He never did apply for anything. He just thought, well, that's just tax payer money if I go for a disability, so why should I do it? So he never did. That's okay. I remember delivering to people on the route that I couldn't see had any disability that were getting a VA check. But that's okay; he just didn't think it was worth it, fighting with them.

Interviewer: Well, during the war, you're a little bit older than the Depression; did you see any changes in the county or in your life or anything that the war affected? Or your high school? Did it change things at all?

Wilma: Well, yes, they did come and take all the metal. I was thinking that one time they took all the typewriters out of our school. I guess for scrap metal. I forget when that was, because I remember when I was in there. I took typing under Leona Erickson Butler. And also, her mother was my teacher.

Interviewer: And they took the typewriters, but they weren't taking them to be used as typewriters.

Wilma: I don't think so; I think it was scrap iron, metal.

Interviewer: Yes, they were a lot heavier back then.

Wilma: Oh yeah, in fact I had a couple that I finally got rid of.

Interviewer: Did you know of anybody that had family that was killed?

Wilma: Oh yes, my first cousin Otis Kurth. He was the only son of Uncle Otto and Aunt Ellen. He was shot down over Germany. And they tell me that his first cousin, who was also Herman Weiss was a pilot, flew like 17 missions over Germany. He saw Otis' plane go down. That's what they tell me. Of course, that's just what I heard.

Interviewer: Now, Cordelia told us a story about sending packages to German families in Germany during the war. Do you remember the church sponsoring that?

Wilma: No, I don't. Course, you know, it was probably the lady's group that did it, and I was like 11 years old. Somewhere between 11 and 14. If they did it, I don't remember it.

Interviewer: And she indicated that this was enough of a German community that you felt no reprisals from your German heritage during WWII. In other areas, Germans were...

Wilma: And I think in WWI, I can remember my dad talking that they did feel some of that, in like 1918. Well, really '14 was when it started, but we were in the thick of it. And I think there was some looking down on. I can't remember, but maybe that's when our German services quit. No, it can't be, because I remember those. So, it had to be like in '34 or '35, I was real little, when they quit the German services. But no, I don't think that there was anything different that I noticed. But you know, this was a real German community. Of course, Windthorst was too.

Oh, now one thing I remember about childhood that is so different from today. We'd go visiting all the time. That was part of our social life. Our neighbors just right across from that place just over there was the Gring's. And I always loved them because she had a real brogue. We'd play pinochle with them. Their daughter Eleanor, I still write to her. She lives in Hutchinson. We would just walk across. We were real close, maybe half a mile, and pick mulberries with her. She was quite a bit older, I was trying to think, she was probably in high school and I was in grade school. But she always played with us. She played dolls and everything else with us.

Interviewer: No when did you get electricity?

Wilma: I'm thinking it came up here in like '45. Oh yeah, because it was here when we got married. Oh, but we had a light plant, it was in my old cave.

Interviewer: So you had a generator and batteries. The REA hadn't come through.

Wilma: Well, I was trying to think. Maybe the REA did come through in '45. But I was thinking that I remember the light plant here.

Interviewer: The REA may have been a little later to get after the war.

Wilma: Yes, I was thinking it may have been in '47, because they had electricity up here at this place and that place before we ever got it. We were the last; we were the tail end down there at the river. So when they got it up here in like '47, then Duane got his dad's generator. So then I had electricity and didn't have to put up with a gas light down there.

Interviewer: How about indoor plumbing?

Wilma: Never.

Interviewer: Now, you have it today!

Wilma: Now, my parents did, and I had it up here in '45 when we moved up here. But then I got married and moved down there in '47 and I didn't have it. I got it in the year Bret was born, in '60. So I raised three girls without indoor plumbing. 1960 was when we got a bathroom.

Interviewer: So you used the washtub on Saturday night on the kitchen floor?

Wilma: Yes. I remember doing that when I lived over there as a kid. So my life didn't get much better.

Interviewer: Heating the water...

Wilma: Love is blind. That's all I can tell my kids.

Interviewer: Do you remember VE or VJ day at the end of the war. Do you remember hearing that the war is over?

Wilma: Yes, I remember, is that when they dropped the bomb?

Interviewer: That would be VJ day.

Wilma: Yes, and I can remember Duane talking about it. They were out on the ocean somewhere and I guess they all got so drunk that they thought he was going to die. I think they knew their next mission was going to be the invasion of Japan. So you know how they celebrated. So thank goodness for Harry Truman that he had the guts. I still think he is one of the greatest presidents. I just read a piece in, I get the Alma, Missouri, newspaper (you may wonder why, but that's where my brother Homer is retired from the ministry, and he sends it to me). There's a real good piece in there about this guy's feelings about how good it was to have somebody up there in Washington that said, "The buck stops here." And he made the decision and then that was the end of the war. I don't know why we can't do that today.

Interviewer: How soon after did Duane come home?

Wilma: Was that in '45 when they did that?

Interviewer: He didn't have to go to Occupied Japan did he?

Wilma: Oh no, then they were just, what they did a lot then, I think this U.S.S., and I got a piece out of an old paper, no that was the Adabelle Lykes had come and to get the refugees and some of the 900 servicemen (I think it says in that article) they transported them to different places. I know one of them, and I don't know if that was after the war, but I think it was on that same ship, so maybe it was, he took 1,200 women and children aboard. And one of the little rascals came down with smallpox. So they ended up getting the vaccine up at the Aleutian Islands, so that was an experience. I remember him telling that. So they done a lot of transporting, you know, taking refugees and service men different places after the war ended.

Interviewer: Do you remember if Offerle celebrated with any communal way after the war?

Wilma: I don't remember if they did.

Interviewer: What did you do for Duane when he came home? Was there a family party or?

Wilma: Well, if there was, maybe I wasn't invited. No, I just don't remember anything.

Interviewer: That's what we've been hearing. They just came back and went back to normal life.

Wilma: And they were ready to go to work and get back into farming and the stuff that they missed. I know that when he was discharged, I think it was at Norman Oklahoma, they were begging people to stay. They said to just stay 15 years and men would have full retirement. When they got done talking to him, they just said, "You just get your butt home." He didn't want no part of it.

Interviewer: Did most of the fellas come back to the area and go back to farming? Or did some at this point leave and go back to the big city?

Wilma: Well, I was just trying to think if I knew of any. Ernie came home. But of course, he had a wife and kids at that time. I was just trying to think. You know the ones in my class that I remember, you see, they were too young. They were my age. So none of them, if they were in the service, they would have been like the Korean War. I was trying to think, Ethan Rabe, that just died, he was in the service. He was only a year ahead of me in school, but he was two years older. I was too young, they sent me to school at five to get me out of the house. I'm kidding; they just let you go to school. There were no age limits. So I was 16 my senior year until February, when I turned 17. That's too young. I tell them now that kids shouldn't start school until they're about 10 and have some sense when they get out of high school and know what they want to do. Yes, I just don't think there were any celebrations you know. Everybody really acknowledged them. I remember telling, seeing it later then, about the big celebrations they had like in New York City. They really gave the service men what they were due, they really celebrated. Which they didn't do after the Vietnam War.

Interviewer: Right after the war, like on Memorial Day, have services at the cemetery and things for the vets?

Wilma: Yes, I think there were.

Interviewer: Well, we've been asking this question of everyone, just because we're curious. It doesn't have much to do with WWII. Were there minorities that lived in or around Offerle? Hispanic, Black?

Wilma: Oh yes. When I was in high school, I remember the old, we called them the Mexican Shacks, that were along the railroad. That gal that worked at the hospital for so long, Lupe?, Yes I think Duane remembers. See, Duane put in all his years of schooling in Offerle. He went to school with some of those. But I didn't know 'em, I was trying to think. I started to high school and went in '43, and were those Mexican shacks still there? I kind of remember them in my mind. But I don't know whether they were there when I was in high school.

Interviewer: And they were near the elevators?

Wilma: Yes, and along the railroad track.

Interviewer: Which side of the elevators? east or west?

Wilma: I think it was east of the elevators where that road is now going into the elevator. I think that's where they were, in that area.

Interviewer: But you're living out in the country, so...

Wilma: Yes, like I said, those things didn't mean anything to me. And I heard Duane talk about them because he went all his years there.

Interviewer: So some of the kids did stay in the community then.

Wilma: Yes, see that Lupe was the only minority that I knew, and of course her brother that worked at Elmore Chevrolet. Yes, Duane knew those and he probably knew some others. And I don't know, did some of those end up in Lewis? I know a lot of those have been here forever.

Interviewer: Castanedas and ...

Wilma: Maybe, I don't know because I didn't go to school there. I don't even know Lupe's and those last name.

Rosetta: Rocha

Interviewer: Did you remember any prejudice or hear of any?

Wilma: Oh no, never.

Interviewer: And black people were non-existent.

Wilma: Oh no, they didn't, I didn't know about them. Except the ones I heard about in Kinsley, and they were always well thought of, you know, the Winchesters.

Interviewer: What other questions do you have that you would like to know about Offerle?

Wilma: She probably got plenty when Galen was over here.

Rosetta: Zion Lutheran and Windthorst Catholic Church are only what, a mile or mile and a half apart.

Wilma: Yes, a mile.

Rosetta: Was there prejudice against the Lutherans?

Wilma: No, I can remember my dad and them always visited, and he knew a lot of their background. They visited back and forth.

Interviewer: Were they German Catholic?

Wilma: Well, a lot of them must have been; they probably talked German to each other. I don't know where some of those came from, and I do have the Windthorst book. I'm sure it's all in there. Oh yes, they visited. He knew all about the Highlands and the Tassets, which was Velma Liebl's maiden name. He knew all those and all their backgrounds. Yes, there was never...

Interviewer: Now, could you have dated a Catholic?

Wilma: Well, it probably wouldn't have gone over so good.

Interviewer: I grew up in a German community, I couldn't ...

Wilma: But they'd have probably tolerated it. My parents weren't just, you know, they had an open outlook on life.

Interviewer: Of course, by the time they got around to raising you...

Wilma: Yes, just threw up their hands in disgust. And then she married a dumb farmer. And by the way, my other sister married Gertrude a minister, and Vera married our local pastor's son. So, the only ones ended up in farming was Red and me.

Interviewer: Any regrets?

Wilma: No. It's the best place on earth to raise kids. Now when I hear all this gang stuff, it's just mind boggling, and all the trouble they have with minorities. I've got great-grandchildren living in Dodge City. They will not even let those kids ride a bus! And when I think our kids, they learned a lot of their major social skills riding the bus to school. They had to get along with those kids on that bus. And some of them, I can remember, I think Sharolyn just got up out of her seat and just whacked old Glenn Herrmann. Something he said. Sharolyn had her father's temper. I doubt if he remembers it. Ed Schwarz was such a good bus driver. He probably wasn't driving that day that she got by with that.

Interviewer: Or he said, "Kid had it coming." I think I had another question, let me look. I like that idea; I ought to write a paper on learning your social skills on a school bus. There's a topic there.

Wilma: And see, I didn't have the opportunity to ride a bus, because that bus didn't come over into Ford County out of Offerle. So, I drove my brother Red's car when I ended up over there.

Interviewer: Well, how old were you then?

Wilma: Well, that would have been from the time I was a freshman, so

Interviewer: You weren't very old!

Wilma: Oh wait a minute; I'd better say the last part of my freshman year. I'd been 14. I think it's been that 14 age limit to drive to and from school. And then after I moved up here, I was trying to think, I think I dated a boy that, of course Duane was in the service, and he lived over there where Kersting live. It was Harry Froetschner property, and this guy, his dad was a hired man for Harry Froetschner. His name was Bub, and he'd come by. I think he drove a Model T. He picked me up, and then I don't know how I got to school the rest of the time. Maybe, 'cause then I don't think they had the bus going anymore. I don't remember a bus ever leaving and picking up high school kids when I was in high school. I remember Duane talking about that he rode a bus, but at that time. I don't...oh, I bet it was during the war, and I had (by the way, all those teachers that we had had either an arm missing or something (*Wilma gestured a crazy sign*), 'cause our teachers were older, and at that time they didn't draft women or these disabled men teachers that were disabled or women. Because, they took everybody for WWII, unless they were physically unable. The principal had only one arm and just things like that.

Interviewer: Or they could have been older.

Wilma: Yes or women. So, like I said, our church was the main focus, and also after I was married my children were all baptized and confirmed in the same church.

Rosetta: That's very unusual.

Interviewer: What does that do to a community when you are so rooted in a church for generation after generation? What are the plusses or negatives...?

Wilma: Well, the plusses are, like our church today, Cordelia prefers to come out here, where she could go to Our Redeemer. She even has kids and grandkids that go there, but she just comes out here. If you've ever been inside our church and the old alter and everything. It's been there for years and we're all family oriented. I'm related to practically everybody, but still, those I'm not related to our new members we've gotten and stuff. We're just like one big family, and I think that's the main positive.

Interviewer: You're either family or like family.

Wilma: Right.

Interviewer: Are there any negatives?

Wilma: No, I can't see any negatives. Not that I've ever experienced. And we're all involved today. Sidney is, and you know, our church didn't used to let women become voting members, which also meant that we couldn't hold an office. Bret's a boy, but he's an elder. Sidney is the financial secretary. And I won't do any, I'm too old. But I'm an organist, part time.

Interviewer: Now, when did you learn the piano or organ?

Wilma: Oh, I started taking lessons at about eight, and I started playing in church when I was 11.

Interviewer: Who taught you, somebody at the church?

Wilma: No, his name was Milo Wright, and he came from Bucklin. Once a week we had music lessons, and of course Vera, my older sister, and I both were taking. It cost 15 cents a lesson. But my parents always fed him dinner. He was there at dinnertime.

Interviewer: So, in lieu of payment, he ate dinner?

Wilma: Well, I don't know or if they just did it for him.

Interviewer: Well, you said you were so poor, and piano lessons are an extravagance.

Wilma: Well, yeah, but they only cost 15 cents for each one of us. They always fed him dinner. We always cooked big meals. We never were starved; we had plenty of groceries. Poor didn't mean going hungry. Never did we go hungry, 'cause we had everything to feed us.

Interviewer: The organ you played on, was that a pump organ?

Wilma: I've got it!

Interviewer: The church organ?

Wilma: It's right in there in one of my rooms. My music room has my grand piano and ... My room's a mess, but you can go see it, it's the original pump organ out of Zion. It had to go the long way around. We got our pipe organ over here in, oh, it had to be in like maybe 1950 or thereabouts, and that time they gave this pump organ I have to Bucklin. At that time, we were a dual parish with the Lutheran church in Bucklin. So we gave our old pump organ to them. Then, that's where it stayed until they built a new church and had an electronic organ. My dad and my brother Gerhardt always went over to Bucklin to the Golden Age thing, and they learned to know all the people over there. One of the friends died that belonged to the Golden Age, and they were all still members of our church down there. So, I took my dad and Gerhart over there to the funeral. It was a big funeral, and they sat us down in the basement. And what do I see down in the basement? Our old church organ. And it was in bad repair. You know, when the pedals are depressed on an old organ, you know that the bellows are shot. So, I had learned to know some of the people too, and I asked one of the elders if I could buy that organ that came from our church. And he said, "Oh, we'll just give it to you." But to get it out of that basement, it was heavy. Bret and Duane remember it. Anyway, I got it. And my brother who was pastor then at Concordia, Missouri, he refinished it for me. He done furniture, and there was a guy, a good friend of his, at Higginville, who done pianos and rebuilt organs. He rebuilt the whole inside for me. And it plays, just like then, and I've got it. Of course, it cost me a little bit to get all that done, but I've got it. And I can't remember when they bought that organ at the church, and I don't know whether they have any records of that. If the records would be there, they would probably be in German, and I couldn't read that.

Interviewer: Well, Cordelia can.

Wilma: Yes, and my brother. He does a lot of that translating for all the congregations in that Missouri area where he is. He's now in a rest home in Concordia, he's 94. So.

Interviewer: Anything else? Did you do all the sewing of clothes for your children?

Wilma: Oh yes...

Interviewer: And canning and everything else. We were talking before the tape started that she made grape jelly today.

Wilma: When I look back, I don't know when...I'd stay up at nights, I remember that. Having three little girls, two years apart. I made them all dresses alike, and sometimes I'd make me one that matched it. When I look back, I don't know how I did it, and no indoor plumbing!

Interviewer: Did they have the little sashes?

Wilma: Yes.

Interviewer: We asked Cordelia about celebrating holidays. What was Christmas like when you were growing up and maybe in your house too?

Wilma: Growing up, we always at Zion had a big Christmas Children's Program on Christmas Eve.

Interviewer: When did you open your presents?

Wilma: Always on Christmas Eve.

Interviewer: And then your meal was always on Christmas Day? Was it turkey or ham?

Wilma: Yes, because we had hogs and we had turkeys. Oh yes, we always had lots of food.

Interviewer: Did you have stockings?

Wilma: No. I can remember coming home from church, and around our dining room table, and of course it was a big stretched out table, we'd come home ...and we didn't have candy,, we'd have a bowl of candy and nuts. As far as presents, I don't remember.

Interviewer: Did you have oranges in that bowl of candy and nuts?

Wilma: Yes, fruit was always...

Interviewer: But you don't remember presents? No. And you were still happy?

Rosetta: You didn't know any different.

Wilma: Maybe after, I just can't remember. I can remember playing with dolls. a little. Us girls had a room upstairs that was just kind of a room for ourselves, and we'd play dolls up there. I remember that. Maybe we did get a doll or something. It evidently didn't stick in my mind, 'cause I don't remember getting them.

Interviewer: Are there any other German traditions that have lasted in your family?

Wilma: Oh yes, we always had the day when we'd make pepper nuts, then *Pfeffernusse*. We'd make so many that, I've still got the recipe and I still make them, but my mother would fill a great big flour sack like that full of pepper nuts.

Interviewer: Indicating about three foot long...

Wilma: Yes, a pillowcase. And by the way, that's what the dresses I went to school in were made out of. Those flour sacks and feed sacks used to come with those colored, different prints. It was; I can remember it being a real coarse material. I've probably got some stashed somewhere. Like I said, I'm going to drive my kids nuts when I go.

Interviewer: That's how you get even with them.

Wilma: They'll have to clean all this stuff out. I'm a saver.

Interviewer: Anything else? Oh, when you were going to high school in Offerle, what was the community like? What business were there.

Wilma: Let's see. We had the drug store. I can remember after Duane came back, which would have been our senior year together, we'd go down to the drug store and have sodas or milk shakes or something. You didn't have to watch your weight then; I probably wasn't a hundred pounds. I couldn't do that today. Yeah, that was kind of our social gathering place. And then, see, my senior year, he had

an old car. I would have ridden with him. That's how I got to school my senior year. Yes, we'd always go down to the drug store. And then at the noon hour, they were open, or you could do whatever you wanted to. Although I had school lunches, I remember that. They'd run over to, and this was on this side of the railroad track, the old Joe Basgall store. We'd run over there and buy red hots and peanuts and mixed them together. Duane liked that to his dying day. I was never crazy over it, because I wasn't raised up on it. Yeah, they'd run over there and get some of that stuff to eat. After school, it was usually the hangout. A bunch of kids would go up the drug store. Harry Owston had it. And of course, Abner's was always there, Abner Offerle, the grocery store, which just burnt. That had a lot of stories in there; in fact, I worked in there for, well, way after the kids were older. I don't even remember what years it was. Now also, after I was married when the kids were evidently all in school, I worked also at the café in Offerle. I remember that was during the time when they were doing something in Offerle. I think it was putting in the (you know, Offerle never had sewers or water) it was during that time, but I don't remember when that was. I worked at the café for a couple of years.

Interviewer: Would that have been the '60's or '70's?

Wilma: Let's see. Bret was born in '60, and he would probably have already been in school, and the girls were in high school. And Sharolyn.

Interviewer: So in the 60's?

Wilma: Yes, Sharolyn graduated in '66. That was our oldest one, and she graduated from Offerle. That's when we unified with Kinsley.

Interviewer: And that's when you got water and plumbing?

Wilma: I was trying to remember. Well, sometime in that area, in the 60's it would have been. Offerle got it, 'cause I remember all those guys coming in and eating at noon. And the meal was a dollar plus three cents tax. The good old days, I guess.

Interviewer: Well, is there anything you've done since 1970, you know, the highlights of your life?

Wilma: The bad thing, I've gone to a lot of funerals. See, my mother died in '70, and Duane's dad in '71. My dad died in '81, and I can't remember when his mother died. It was in '90 something. And then of course, our daughter Sharolyn was killed on November 30, 1995. She was coming back from work; she was branch manager of Investor Savings Loan, which Mr. Austin down here had. She was the branch manger in Dodge City and Meade. She was coming home from work, and she met a Wilbert Vault truck from Kinsley. I don't remember if they were carrying a tire on a trailer or if it came off and went through her windshield. She was coming home and they were going that way.

Interviewer: A freak accident. That's too bad.

Wilma: It was between Wright and Spearville. I don't remember where the exact place it was. Maybe about three or four miles out of Wright. Well, let's see. What else happened in the '70's?

Interviewer: Or up until today.

Wilma: We celebrated our 40th anniversary in '87. The kids had something for our 25th. That's been too long ago, I don't even remember. Then they had something for the 50th, which would have been in '97. So. They were just gatherings, like locally, you know, everybody. I've got pictures of the 40th. I was working at the school evidently, and they let me have the cafeteria and the lunchroom. And that's

where that was. And our 50th, it was September 11th and I think it was still warm both of those days. We had it at Bret's horse barn area. I can remember it being hot in there.

Interviewer: Looking back over your life. Do you think WWII affected it in any way, from your husband's service? Do you think your life would have been different if we hadn't fought that war.

Wilma: Well, we'd probably all be speaking German if it wasn't for us. We saved France; we saved England, all those islands that now they've given some of them away. And I really don't appreciate some of our presidents that have done that, because we've lost a lot of boys over some of those islands, and then they give them away. I don't really know, like I said, since the 70's, Duane and I, after I started working for the post office, I'd get, like two weeks you know, vacation every year. So we did some long trips. I'd have to look up the dates, but I've done two trips to Europe.

Interviewer: Have you looked up your German ancestors?

Wilma: Yes, we visited some. That first trip, Duane didn't go. It was just my side of the family. It was my two preacher brothers, Homer and Woodrow, Gertrude, Vera and I. There was five from our family. What it was, was a tour. It was called the Luther tour.

Interviewer: Did Cordelia go?

Wilma: Not on that one. Of course, we visited everything that Martin Luther... I got pictures of Woodrow and Homer, Woodrow especially, up in the pulpit that Luther preached out of at his church. Of course, all that was over in the Russian zone. When I was over there, see, the wall wasn't down. So that was kind of scary. One thing I really remember, when we came back over from that zone over to the other zone, the free zone. They made us all get out of the bus, go through our luggage and the guards were there with their guns to make sure we didn't sneak any people back over. So that was scary. It was a whole busload of us, and they were all Lutherans, Lutheran pastors from the Concordia area and Alma where my two brothers lived.

And then, the next trip, that was another one. It was kind of a tour, but my brother Woodrow, it was good to have my brothers along, because they spoke German. But this time, it was just brother Woodrow and his wife, and the president who was a professor as well as a pastor at Concordia College at St. Paul's. It's our Lutheran college there. He was a professor there, so some of those went along. But anyway, that time, I'm thinking, is when Duane went along. I'm thinking that we did not go over to the... and I don't remember if that was late enough that the wall was down. But anyway, we stayed more in that area and we drove all over. We went to Switzerland, Austria, and that little country of Liechtenstein, and all over there. We rented a Volkswagen bus and Duane done all the driving. Woodrow was older and the one that was a president of our college, Dr. Mehl, was along. So they were all older. So they made Duane, the youngest, do all the driving. We went to all those countries. And the most impressive thing on that trip was our cemetery in Belgium. Beautiful. I never, and to see all those white crosses. The one guy that we had along, his brother was there. And he had never been back, I think he was killed in, I don't know what battle, Battle of the Bulge or something. Anyway, he was buried there, and his brother just broke down. But it's beautiful, and it's all our retired servicemen that keep it. There wasn't a blade of grass out of that big thing that wasn't perfect. Then later on, I remember one time we took a bus trip with Duane to New York City and Washington D.C. and we visited Arlington. And compared to what that was over there at Belgium, Arlington is nothing. Nothing was kept, there were trees falling over on stones and grass wasn't mowed. I never, I just couldn't believe it. And now they come on and say how nice it is. Well, it wasn't that year we were there. And of course, you know there's funerals going on all the time with our service men. And I just felt so bad

about that. Of course, we saw the Kennedy's graves and everything, but I was not impressed with that at all.

And then another trip we took, when Duane was in the service, he went to Hawaii several times. I can't think of the one focal point that the boys when they were out to sea and had been out there for months that they saw when they would come into Hawaii.

Interviewer: Some volcano or something?

Wilma: No, it's a big, and I don't know what it is, like a tower or something. But it was something that at that time was probably the tallest thing in Honolulu. Of course now it's a big city, when we were over there. But that was one focal point, and of course, he had to go see that again. But that's the only place we ever went back to that he had seen was Honolulu. So, he was impressed with how it had grown and changed from WWII to when we were over there.

Interviewer: How did Edwards County change after the war? What are some of the changes you saw in the '40's and '50's.

Wilma: Well, you know, Kinsley was, what, 2,500 to 3,000 people when I was going to high school. Look at it now, are you even 1,200? So, it's really gone down hill. I understand why, because all the young farmers, unless, like us, we helped Bret get started, Duane gave him the machinery when he quit and gave him the cattle. So he had a start. But if you don't help him, there's no way a young person can go into farming. So, that's one of the things you see. They can't afford to do it. And now of the farmers that are left, the average age is in the 50's and 60's. And even older... I think your husband still farms. That's one of the changes. And of course, the young people leave. Your kids go off to college out of Kinsley, and they don't come back, because there's no jobs. Of course, Offerle's the same way. Like I said, when I went to high school there was the grocery store, the drug store, I think there was a bowling alley at one time. There might have even been two café's. There was another café clear at that end, and we had the Mobil Oil Station and Augie (*August*) Kurth had a garage. Martin Riedl had a garage. But that's all gone.

Interviewer: Well, you had a high school.

Wilma: And two churches, and by the way, those two are still going, which is better than Windthorst, which they closed. Oh it is beautiful. They redone that you know. They started the same year as ours did, and our little church is still going.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is? Why did Windthorst close?

Wilma: Because the bishop they had closed it. He wanted them all to go to Dodge and build a big cathedral. I know there was some real hard feelings over that. Some of them said they would NOT let them take those windows. Oh, those windows are priceless. Have you seen them? They came from Germany, and Phyllis Indiek and us took a tour through, the Red Hats did, and she had the whole story. They came from Germany, and they had the guy's name that did them. They're priceless; they can't even put a price on them. And they wanted to take those. A few of those came out with their guns and said, "You're not taking them." So, they're still there. So that's why Windthorst isn't still there. And I don't know whether you know the background of the Catholic Church. They don't own their property. You see, this property (*Zion Church's property*) was given by my grandfather. We own everything. We're the democratic way, we tell them what to do; they don't tell us what to do. The people are in charge, and I'm hoping our government stays that way.

Interviewer: Well, is that about it?

Rosetta: Just one question, when you unified with Kinsley. I mean, I was there, and I know it was an unsettling time.

Wilma: I know. There was hard feelings then, but we knew it was coming, because, you know, there was...I was trying to think. Sharolyn was in the last graduating class, and there were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 in it.

Rosetta: So you just accepted it because you knew...

Wilma: Well, I did. Because there was no use fighting it. But, the thing I'm still upset about today is that Kinsley does not recognize us. All those articles in the paper, it's "Kinsley this, and Kinsley that," and that high school is not Kinsley High School.

Rosetta: No, it's Kinsley-Offerle.

Wilma: I've had a school board member right down the road from me, and I could not get it through her head that there is no such thing as a Kinsley School. When we unified, we done everything together. Except, they didn't let Offerle have any choices. But I worked with Mary Ley at the school all those years, and she said, "We get all the off casts; we never get nothing new for our lunchroom." We got what Kinsley didn't want. But that's okay. We managed. But, we've never been recognized, and we've given them how long now? 40 some years? And they still won't do it? I've written the superintendent. I've talked to him personally. I went to his garage sale this summer and had a little talk with him. Nothing does any good, and I want to know why.

End of audio.

Wilma Lancaster

Letter to Kinsley Library dated October 7, 2009

following an Oral History Interview conducted September 28, 2009

After talking to you at the library, I intended to come home and jot down a few things that I knew meant a lot to our kids – it really disrupted their lives. The 1965 flood went through our house we lived in down by the river. It was rental property and we knew the owners would never repair the house. It was really not worth restoring! It was built in the 1800's and we were told old M.W. Oliphant who had the hardware store in Offerle was born there (1878). The house had the old real wide wooden floors and they just erupted from the flood waters. We had been warned the water was rolling in and Duane was busy helping all the farmers along the river cut their wheat. At the time son Bret was 5, the girls Shelley 13, Sidney, 15, and Sharolyn was 17. The girls and I took all the furniture that we could handle upstairs in the house—there were 26 steps going upstairs. We stayed and worked as long as we could until a helicopter landed in our yard and said we had to leave or we would not be able to get out. Also to get our cattle out now – we drove them up to a neighbor – Harry Froetschner – as he was on higher ground and further from the river. It was scary as we all of us knew we probably would never live there again, and it is the only home our kids ever knew. We left and went up to Duane's parents and were there for some time. His parents had moved into Offerle in 1960, so the old Lancaster homestead, where Bret now lives, was empty. That house had sat empty and was in bad shape – so we had to do work on it before we could move in. Up there we could now have a phone, which we never had before –so the 3 teenage girls enjoyed that! We had lived down by the river for 18 years and farmed that ground for Ethel Speirs in Kinsley for 52 years.

I had bought my father's place – the Kurth farm in 1973 so I then lived close to him and I could clean house and do things for him and my brother Gerhart as my Mother had died in 1970. In 1981 my father died, and Bret was married and needed a place to live. So Duane and I moved to the Kurth place – and done some remodeling there. I then became the guardian for brother, Gerhart. I felt he needed a nice place to live in our home, so finished the basement, which was never finished. He could have his own TV, bathroom, etc. We cared for him for 15 years, until he had cancer of the colon and had to have a colostomy – I was still working – so could not give him the care he needed – so he went to the rest home in Bucklin and he loved it there.

Now one other interesting thing that Duane experienced and told me about while he was stationed in California. He was a very good skater, so at times when he had a weekend pass he would go skating. He said he was privileged to skate with June Allyson, the movie star. That was a big thing for an eighteen year old kid off a farm in Kansas!

When they put the skating rink in Kinsley – the Feldman boys had it. That is the recreation we had with the little 3 girls we had. We would all go as family entertainment. I made the 3 girls all skating outfits alike. By the way, I had never learned to skate, so I learned with the girls—I was 22 years old – and took a lot of falls!