

Marilyn Harriet Froetschner Kersting
March 30, 2011.
Kersting home, Offerle, Kansas
Interviewed by Joan Weaver and Rosetta Graff, Kinsley Library
Present: Jack Kersting, husband

Joan: What is your full name?

Marilyn: Marilyn Harriet Kersting.

Joan: And your maiden name was?

Marilyn: Froetschner.

Joan: When and where were you born?

Marilyn: I was born on what was called the Edwards Ranch, which was south of Ardell (*July 29, 1937*). I was actually born in the house that Mr. Edwards had built. I believe he was going to call that his summer home, as I remember, but I don't believe he ever got to live there. I think the first people that lived in it were my dad and his two brothers. They were called the Froetschner brothers at that time.

Joan: And they weren't married yet.

Marilyn: No, none of them were married at that time. My dad was the first to be married, then the other two boys left and my mother and dad lived in that house.

Joan: And Mr. Edwards lived in Kinsley, is that correct?

Marilyn: I believe, is correct. That's the man Edwards County was named for. Right?

Rosetta: Do you know which Edwards it is? There's two Edwards.

Joan: Do you know the first name?

Marilyn: No, I can't tell you. I don't know. I just think he's the man that Edwards county was named after.

Joan: Okay. We can look that up at the county courthouse, I bet because he built the house. We get that found. (*R. E. Edwards built the house and Edwards County was named after him.*)

Marilyn: Okay, that sounds wonderful. I'd like to know the complete history.

Joan: What were the names of your parents?

Marilyn: My dad was Harry Alvin Froetschner, and my mother was Clara Eva Wetzel Froetschner.

Joan: And what were the names of their parents, your grandparents?

Marilyn: My mother's parents were Charlie and Laura Wetzel, and my dad's parents were Alvin

and Sophia Froetschner.

Joan: And Sophie's maiden name?

Marilyn: Marting, it's spelled a little different. It might have a "g" on the end. I'm not sure.

Joan: Did you give the maiden name of your Froetschner grandmother?

Marilyn: That was Marting, and my Grandma Wetzel was a Krupp, from north of Kinsley.

Joan: What brought those grandparents to Edwards County? Was that the generation that came? Or the one before that?

Marilyn: The Wetzel side, I think, came from Germany. And they settled in Pennsylvania. Then they moved out to Offerle, Kansas.

Joan: And that was your grandparents?

Marilyn: Actually, Great Grandfather. (*Great Grandparents came from Germany. Grandfather was born in Eastern Kansas.*) Then my Grandfather met Grandmother. She was a Krupp from that local area. My grandparents on the Froetschner side, grandfather came over (from Germany). His dad (*came over earlier and*) was already in the Larned area. He came over, and he settled in the Larned area. (*After my grandparents married,*) they moved down to the Coldwater area. In 1919, (*they moved to a farm*) south of Ardell. Did he buy the land, Jack?

Jack: I think so.

Marilyn: Where Ernest and Gunilda (*Froetschner*) used to live.

Joan: So all your ancestors are German?

Marilyn: Yes.

Joan: What was the make-up of your household like? Did you have brothers or sisters?

Marilyn: Yes, I have three brothers. Kermit Froetschner lives (*on a farm near*) Spearville, J.D. lives north of Ardell, and Jerry lives in (*the Black Forest area near*) Colorado Springs.

Joan: Where were you in the birth order there?

Marilyn: I was the oldest.

Joan: What was it like growing up in your house? Was it a farm family?

Marilyn: Farm family. My mother never worked outside the home. She had a housekeeper at times, especially in summer. There would be some girls that would help with the harvest, especially when they had to cook for large harvest crews.

Joan: Were those other girls from the community?

Marilyn: One of them in particular was a Krupp girl; she was a relative. I thought she was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen. That was Dorothy Krupp. Then she had a...let's see, who was the man that worked for Dad, Cleo Katz and his wife (*Frances*). She would help mother and Cleo helped my dad. But they would have lots of hired help in the summer, and especially when the mothers would have babies. They would be bedfast for two weeks or so. Nowadays, they get everybody up the same day they have a baby. But after two weeks of being flat on your back, you could hardly get up and carry your baby. But they had nursemaids, or someone that would come into the...

Joan: What was that? Was that a German word?

Marilyn: No, actually I don't know that they even called them a nursemaid. It would be just a helper, but they also...the doctor would come out to the home and deliver the baby, and he'd bring a nurse. The nurse would probably stay for a short time, too.

Joan: So what were your chores in the household with all this harvesting going on?

Marilyn: Well, I drove truck some.

Joan: When did you start? How old were you?

Marilyn: I don't want to say, because I wasn't supposed to be driving!

Joan: We haven't had an interview yet that was of the proper age.

Marilyn: I think that I was probably driving at 14, probably. A lot of it was just out in the fields. But I think I probably made a few trips to Offerle when I shouldn't have been. I did help my mother, a lot.

Joan: With cooking?

Marilyn: Yes, and we had two little brothers. Kermit was more my age, but the two boys were quite a bit younger. If I wasn't helping with the cooking or cleaning, I was probably being a babysitter.

Joan: Did you have gardens, chickens, things like that too?

Marilyn: Yes, I did quite a bit with chickens. That was kind of a project. We tried to see if we could make money with feeding and then selling the eggs. The eggs would pay for what the feed would cost. Of course we had a lot that was used right within the family. We also had a garden, and the picking and canning. We did a lot of canning. I helped my mother a lot with that.

Joan: Did you have milk cows?

Marilyn: Not that I had to help with. I think my dad didn't do that too much. It was, I think, something that we probably were raised with until I was ten or so, but I don't have much recollection of...

Joan: You never had to separate cream or anything?

Marilyn: No, nothing like that.

Joan: And your mother sewed your clothes?

Marilyn: Quite a bit of them, and I actually sewed a lot of my children's clothes until they became embarrassed. I thought it was cute to dress all three of my girls alike at Christmas. I think they put up with it, but once they were junior high age. They wanted their clothes to look like their friends' clothes.

Joan: Have we said where, when you were growing up, the farm was located?

Marilyn: I was raised right there on that Edwards' Ranch.

Joan: So they actually stayed there.

Marilyn: Yes.

Joan: You were pretty young, but do you have any memories of the Depression or the Dirty Thirties?

Marilyn: I was young. I remember an uncle having to go away to war and how concerned the family was. That was Ernest Froetschner. News of the war, I can remember at school when they talked about the war being over. "Oh, Uncle Ernie gets to come home." He was the only real close family member that was involved in war, but it was really heartwarming when he got to come home. We would go to the train to see him off, the day he left to go overseas.

Joan: He got on the train in Offerle?

Marilyn: Kinsley, as I recall.

Joan: And you would see him off.

Marilyn: It was middle of the night when we came back home. I have this recollection of my dad and probably some of his brothers putting in a floor furnace that day in our house.

Joan: You were of German descent, and World War II involved fighting Germans. Do you remember anything that...

Marilyn: Well, Ernest would go, he made contact with some of his relatives in Germany. And really this was against all regulations, But he went into the house. He made contact with a relative, and on their buffet, or piano, was Ernest, his confirmation picture. It was just so unusual.

When my grandfather was down in the Coldwater area, there was animosity against Germans. My grandfather still had very close ties to Germany. He had a picture on his wall of Kaiser Wilhelm. The neighbors said, "You get that off your wall!" Well, he took that picture down and put a baby picture of my Dad and my Uncle Biil over the top of the Kaiser. We have that picture!

Joan: You have the Kaiser picture?

Marilyn: Yes, we can take Bill and Harry off, and Kaiser is under there. We can show that too, it might be one of the really interesting things.

Joan: Did you speak German in your family?

Marilyn: My folks understood it. My dad spoke only German until he went to school. All the Froetschner boys did. Maybe Ernest, the youngest, didn't because they did enough speaking of English by the time he was old enough. But the others, that's the only language I think they knew until they went to school.

Joan: Did you learn it?

Marilyn: No, I understand a few words, but I never learned enough to really speak.

Joan: Okay, so you went to school in Offerle. What was it like going to school? What building was it at this time?

Marilyn: Well, it's gone now. It was a lengthy grade school. I can still picture where the lunch room was.

Joan: It was close to where it is now?

Marilyn: I'd say pretty close. The high school was to the south. It must not have been in the identical spot because I think they built the new school...

Jack: The old school was still there when I came out and the new school was being built.

Joan: So across the parking lot or something?

Jack: It was right south of the present school, where the shop is now.

Joan: About how many students were there in your class?

Marilyn: Very small. The high school graduation class, I believe we just had six. When we were in grade school, there may have been a few more. One real tragedy, when I was a third grader, occurred during the summer months. One of the boys was accidentally shot by his cousin. That just tore us up, pretty much. Being a small class, we were real close to each other.

Joan: What other memories do you have of the school? Elementary or high school, either one? Because you went all through your school at Offerle? They weren't consolidated at this time.

Marilyn: Just the normal, probably small class. Good instructors. I felt like they were very good instructors.

Jack: You played basketball.

Joan: Tell us what basketball was like for women then!

Marilyn: Nothing like it is today. I would never be able to do what the girls do today. We were

half court. We had guards on one side, and the forwards on the other. We were fortunate to have a tall girl on our team, so we did well. I think we were undefeated for several years. But none of this up and down the court! I just am amazed at how sturdy the girls are.

Joan: You got two dribbles, didn't you?

Marilyn: I believe that's right. You know, it was just...

Joan: Did you play other schools?

Marilyn: Oh yes, in fact, there's still a lady from Hanston that I think I played against; her husband was a representative.

Jack: He retired. (*Larry*) Salmans.

Marilyn: Salmans, yes, but I know I played against a Marilyn Somebody, and I think that's her. I've often wanted to go up to her and ask her if she didn't play basketball back in the '50's. Yes, we played mostly the north and south league, like I said before. Windthorst, Spearville, Offerle, Rozel, Burdett and Hanston.

Joan: Did you play the same night as the boys? Or was it a different night?

Marilyn: I believe it was the same night. I think it was probably kind of like it is today, the girls play first, and then the boys.

Joan: And on Friday night, probably.

Marilyn: I'd hate to really say for sure. I've gone through several kids and grandkids, so I know what it's like now, but I don't remember what days or if we had a game every week.

Joan: And you graduated what year?

Marilyn: 1955.

Joan: And then you went to K-State. How did you pay for your college?

Marilyn: Actually, I was pretty fortunate. My parents pretty much supported my schooling.

Joan: So they felt the importance of education, and it was important for girls to be educated too.

Marilyn: Right.

Joan: What did you go up to K-State to study?

Marilyn: I studied home economics.

Joan: To be a teacher? Or in the home?

Marilyn: Actually with an education background. But I never have taught. You know, we got

married and had children. So I suppose the main thing that I've done with my education was planning my home. We had design classes, and so I've designed my house the way I wanted it.

Joan: And you built this home.

Marilyn: We built it. We put a lot of our own labor into it. Billy Wetzel framed it for us. He's gone, long time gone, but Rex Strate did part of it. Actually the basement was done by a man out of Dodge City. Rex Strate's man did the cabinet work. They questioned a lot of the things that I wanted. I wanted my kitchen cabinets on one side two inches lower and the other side two inches higher. "Why would you want that?" It's just things that we learned at college, so you don't have to bend over a sink and when you're rolling out pastries and things, certain heights are best for you. They stressed that in college. Rex Strate's man really...

Jack: Yes, they did good.

Marilyn: They were good at obeying what you wanted, but they questioned, you know. Why?

Joan: So how did you meet this handsome man?

Marilyn: Well...

Jack: She doesn't remember.

Marilyn: Oh yes, I do. Well, not really, I guess. I had a roommate, and it happened to be Valentine's Day. We got out of a class, and we were walking back to the dorm. She said, "Let's stop in at the Presbyterian Youth Center." She said they were going to have cookies or something there. People who were off classes come in, and so there were several people in there. I suppose I may have been introduced, I'm not sure. But actually it didn't soak in, you know.

Joan: Oh oh, you didn't impress her!

Jack: Not at all. But she impressed me.

Marilyn: So he calls my roommate and wants a date with me. I'm trying to figure out, "Who is he?" I remembered one other man there that I wasn't particularly impressed with, but I thought it must be the one that Jack told me later was Al Cervenka.

Jack: My roommate.

Marilyn: His roommate. No, I didn't have any recollection of who I was going to have this blind date with. Actually it was a double date. So it was the most expensive movie of the time, *Raintree County*. And the fact that they were going to take us to Raintree County, and it was going to be a double date, and I liked my roommate, Sharon. I accepted. So that's how we started. I was not at all knowing who I was going with!

Joan: How long before he popped the question?

Marilyn: Actually, that was February, and the next Christmas.

Jack: That was '57, so yes, it was 1958.

Marilyn: No, we met in February of '58.

Jack: Yes, you're right. 1958.

Joan: And then you got married when?

Marilyn: June of 1959.

Joan: Tell us a little bit about your wedding, it was back here.

Marilyn: It was at Zion. It was a nice, small wedding. There were quite a few people invited, just to invite our relatives. It made it a big event, but we didn't have the dance or the meal. It was just a wedding and then a reception in the basement. That was it.

Joan: And a traditional wedding dress.

Marilyn: Oh yes.

Joan: Flower girls and that sort of thing?

Marilyn: Right. My matron of honor and two bridesmaids, a flower girl and ring-bearer. I was honored that my daughter wanted to wear my wedding dress at her wedding. So it is now in her possession; she can care for it. But it was... talk about differences of prices. We went to Wiley's in Hutchinson to select the dress. There were cheaper dresses, but this one really impressed me and looked nice on me. But it was expensive. It was \$150 dollars. It was very expensive. But my dad said, "If that's the one she wants, we're going to get it." But now I see in...

Joan: It's good to be the only girl, isn't it?

Marilyn: Yes, it is! But now there are formals that are...my granddaughter was showing me a dress that she got on sale. She was so proud that she's going to wear it to the junior/senior prom. I think it cost her \$49, but it was a \$400 junior/senior dress. So I had to tell her the story about the wedding dress that cost my dad \$150, which was very expensive at that time.

Joan: Did you have a honeymoon? Tell us a little bit about that.

Marilyn: Yes we did. It was short, because Jack was working for the agronomy department (at Kansas State University) that time. So we left after the wedding on a Sunday afternoon, and were probably back by Thursday or so.

Jack: It wasn't very long.

Joan: And then you went back to K-State to finish your last year?

Marilyn: I was finished, in fact I was finished just two weeks before we were married. But he had to finish his master's degree.

Joan: And he finished in December?

Jack: Yes.

Joan: And so you lived in...did you have an apartment? Married housing? What was it back then?

Marilyn: Well, it was the apartment above the Presbyterian Student Center. It was just a little wood frame home. It wasn't a fancy office or anything.

Jack: A small kitchen, a bedroom, and a living room.

Marilyn: And a bathroom.

Jack: All we needed.

Joan: And then you came back here to settle when he was finished.

Marilyn: We lived with my folks for just a little bit, until the baby was born. Then we moved over to the Beeler Ranch. The house is completely gone now. It had two bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom and a kitchen. Pretty small. The Joe Schaller family had lived there. They had lots of children. I often marveled at how they could have all lived in this house.

Joan: We live in another Schaller house, a different Schaller, but I marveled at them too. Okay, you had your baby about three months after you came back here. I'm looking at your children's birthdays here, March of 1960. You talked a little bit earlier about how there was a confinement for two weeks for ladies. What was it like for you?

Marilyn: We were in the hospital five days. Then, no restrictions. I think that was more for bed rest and that type of thing. It was five days for all four of my children. That was...you weighed the babies each day to make sure they were gaining weight. I marvel at today's changes. I think they release them too soon. They should at least have a couple days, I think.

Joan: Now you just have the baby and go home.

Marilyn: Right. Some of them.

Joan: So in your lifetime, that is something we've never really brought up before, but you saw it going from two weeks to five days to now... The next generation, it's just overnight.

Marilyn: Right. And I marvel at how my mother had the babies in the home. I have no idea what type of circumstances that might have been under. Anesthesia, I don't know if they had any kind of... I don't think so. But I marvel at that. We had pretty much up-to-date sedatives and things.

Joan: What else do we need to... And you never worked outside the home?

Marilyn: Well, I have had some jobs.

Joan: What did you do?

Marilyn: I worked at the appraiser's office at the courthouse in Kinsley.

Joan: When did you start that? After the kids were grown?

Marilyn: Pretty much. They were probably...I'd say Laura was probably through grade school.

Jack: Made appraisals. That's what she did.

Marilyn: I worked for the appraiser, and then did appraisals. Then I worked for Kansas Crop and Livestock, which was kind of part-time. It was interviewing people, going out and checking crops. Then I worked at the Offerle Co-op for ten years.

Joan: Did you work to help supplement the farm income? Is that reason? Or to get out of the house?

Marilyn: Probably a combination. No, I think probably to supplement.

Joan: And then of course, you became part of the auctioneer that Jack has talked about (*see Jack Kersting interview*). You helped us out I think, with the discussion on consolidation. We didn't do this with Jack, so maybe he can help us out here. Tell us about the Lutheran Hospital. How that was run, time periods and you know you can both do this.

Jack: We were elected from our churches; the board members were elected from our churches. It was Kinsley Lutheran Church, Garfield and Zion. Byron Meek was our attorney at that time. I can't recall the last name of the administrators, but there were two Dons, D-O-N. One followed the other one. We met monthly, and we started out, I think we got mileage and maybe \$10 or something. Then as we went into it, the administrator said, "This is ridiculous. You people aren't getting paid enough." Then they started paying us \$100 per meeting a month. At that time, the hospital had a lot of money.

Joan: And the hospital was located where?

Jack: It was where the hospital is now. The old hospital was out on the east edge of town, and that was...I don't know who ran that one. I got on the board after the new hospital...but it had been remodeled. To me the new one now is...

Joan: So the new hospital, where it is now, started out as the Lutheran?

Jack: Yes, it was when I was on the board. It was the Lutheran Hospital. And when Marge Scheuffler, during her term as the county commissioner, they wanted to take it over. So the Lutherans said, "Fine. We don't have any problem with that." So the county took it over.

Marilyn: But the new, new hospital was built after the remodeling and everything.

Jack: But it's right in the same place. No, the hospital at that time was, you know the west wing of where the county health department is? That was the area of the old hospital, and that was where it was. So the new, new hospital, the county did that.

I remember people talking about the old hospital out east. The State came in, and they were complaining that the halls weren't wide enough and all these details. So, the State basically forced them to build a new hospital. When that was built, I don't know. I know it was built when we came out here, because when I came out here one time, Marilyn's mother was in the old hospital.

Rosetta: It was built in the '50's, right?

Marilyn: One of my brothers was born in the old hospital. He was born in '52.

Jack: Jerry was in the new hospital?

Marilyn: Well, no. The old one.

Jack: Oh, Jerry was born there?

Joan: We're going to have to be somewhere else. Is there anything else you specifically wanted to ask her to supplement? We've covered a lot of Marilyn's on Jack's interview.

Rosetta: This place here, was it portion of the Froetschner homestead? This land right here?

Marilyn: This is what was called the Winkler Place. But some people still think of it as the Winkler Place.

Jack: It was owned by Wagoner. Dad got it through...he bought it on a deal where he bought the land, and then the people that owned it got some benefit from it and when they died it became Dad's. I think that was in '39, if I remember correctly. Dad told me, I think it was '39.

Rosetta: So it has been Froetschner or Kersting since 1939?

Marilyn: Pretty much in that era.

Rosetta: Winklers would have homesteaded it?

Marilyn: No, Wagoners.

Jack: Wagoner homesteaded it, Winkler just rented it. But apparently they were on it so long that people knew it as the Winkler Place. And they had a son that was stomped to death by a horse out here in the barn.

Marilyn: It had a huge barn that this last tornado leaned it so much that our son, during the summer months, well, he had one year at home. He took that barn down. The tornado also took off of the foundation the original Wagner homestead house. After we did a little reading on homesteading, it was the actual dimensions that a house had to be to be called a "homestead home."

Joan: And that tornado was just, like you said, three years ago?

Marilyn: Two or three.

Jack: Well, Kileigh was in Wichita. We were down there (*at the state track meet*). It was her sophomore year. It will be three years ago.

Marilyn: I think that's right. It was one year after Greensburg (*May 4, 2007*).

Rosetta: My husband lost some stuff.

Joan: What month was that?

Marilyn: Must have been May.

Joan: So May of 2009?

Marilyn: I think it must have been 2008 (*May 25, 2008*). Wasn't Greensburg 2007? I think it was one year after Greensburg.

Jack: It started down south of Everett's (*Everett Weiss south of the Lutheran Church*), that storm, and went clear up east of Kinsley. It hit here and there, tore up a shed, down here just a mile east. It veered out in a corn field and went and hit that house...don't you own that land right south of Kinsley?

Rosetta: It didn't take down Avery's house, but it messed it up.

Jack: That was the same one.

Rosetta: It took down Galen's shed.

Joan: Can you think of anything else you would like to add?

Marilyn: Something I think was really interesting, was when my Dad farmed the Edwards Ranch. The Santa Fe Trail went through some of the land he farmed. And he talked about how hard the Santa Fe ruts were to farm. I always thought that was fascinating because they'd been packed down. Then there was a man that came out from back East, I believe. He had heard about this buried treasure. I'm sure that everybody from around Kinsley is acquainted with the story. But he was convinced that it might be in that area close to the river. He had some type of a metal detector.

Jack: His car had a chain drive, that's what I was told.

Marilyn: But he had something attached underneath to detect metal. But there were...I guess this was sometime during the '30's. There were lots of thistles, and he was driving back and forth across the land and got thistles tied up in his chain drive or whatever. It got tangled up, so he had to quit.

Jack: Doggone it, he didn't find it.

Marilyn: He didn't find it.

Joan: Now where is the treasure supposed to have come from?

Marilyn: A wagon train. You probably know the story from just the library.

Joan: Yes, but I was just trying to get it on the tape.

Jack: Well, we heard it was a wagon train that the Indians were attacking. They had this treasure, and they buried it, supposedly, by a cottonwood tree, or a big tree.

Marilyn: In a Dutch oven, or some kind of kettle or something.

Joan: And it's never been found?

Jack: Unless the Indians found it and didn't tell anybody.

Rosetta: But if you think about how the river's changed its course. This was early, early. You don't know where that tree was. Lots of people had looked for it, and we have researched it several times. We have a file.

Marilyn: I'd like to read that file sometime because it was supposedly in this area. But when you talk to somebody from out of this area, and that treasure is supposedly in their area.

Jack: One time, we heard it was west of Dodge City.

Rosetta: I don't know, but it could have been on the other side of the river.

Marilyn: That's kind of what I'm thinking.

Joan: Is there anything else that we need?

Rosetta: I don't think so.