

Evelynne Juern Dilg

Oral History Interview

February 5, 1990

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| Narrator: | Evelynne Juern Dilg |
| Date of Interview: | February 5, 1990 |
| Place of Interview: | The home of Florence Juern, located at 8604 Fernald, Morton Grove |
| Interviewer: | Yvonne Ryden |
| Recorded for : | Morton Grove Historical Society |
| Transcribed for: | Morton Grove Historical Society |

INTRODUCTION

Evelynne has ties to two longtime Niles Township families. Her paternal grandparents had a farm on Milwaukee Avenue in Niles. Her husband's family has lived in Morton Grove since before 1850.

Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church has played an important role in Evelynne's life. She was baptized, confirmed and married in the church. She attended the school sponsored by the church. Even today, the church is important to Evelynne. She has sung in the choir for over 50 years and also plays now in the bell choir.

ED: Evelynne Juern Dilg

Q: Question Asked by interviewer, Yvonne Ryden

TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

Q: Today is February 5, 1990. This is Yvonne Ryden tape recording an interview for the Morton Grove Historical Society. Sitting across the table from me is Why don't you introduce yourself?

ED: I'm Evelynne Juern Dilg. My grandfather was born in Niles, as was his father. And my mother was born in Chicago. I was born on Elm Street in Morton Grove and moved to Callie Avenue probably when I was about two years old. One of the things that I remember is walking through the woods and crossing the river to go visit my Grandma and Grandpa Juern.

Q: Where did they live?

ED: They lived on a farm on Milwaukee Avenue and the house is still there today. I believe it's a tavern now and it was more or less across the street from the St. John Lutheran Church. And every time we'd go to visit Grandma and Grandpa, it was a fun day. Grandpa would always take us home with his horse and buggy because we were loaded with groceries. And we usually made that trip every Sunday. That was our ritual.

Q: Did you have dinner there, too?

ED: Oh, ye. My grandmother had a huge kitchen and they more or less lived in the kitchen. I remember when we'd stay overnight, the bedrooms were upstairs and there was no heat up there. So she would heat bricks and wrap them in

newspaper and put them at our feet and we would be covered with featherbeds. There were no inside facilities. If you had to go to use the bathroom, you'd have to go outside. I remember when my brother and I were older, she would allow us to have a little vegetable stand and people would come by and buy vegetables. And she always would see that we got spending money out of that. When we would do our walking—my father was quite a photographer; that was his hobby—he would always be taking these pictures of the woods. And almost every picture he would have us picking flowers or picking up trees, branches. He, himself, used to pick up all the wood he could manage to haul home in his arms and we would store that wood in our backyard and that would be our wood for the winter.

Q: No you mentioned “we.” You said you had a brother, I believe.

ED: Yes. My brother was seven years older, and his name was Arthur. I remember another thing we used to do on Callie Avenue. We had a big wooden barrel outside and we used to collect the rainwater. My mother would do the laundry with that and always washed our hair with rainwater and Fels-Naphtha soap.

Q: Oh, my.

ED: That was the ritual. And on Saturday night, too, I remember that I was the first one to get bathed and we would have our bath in a big galvanized tub in the kitchen. I don't remember too much of the living room or the rest of the rooms. I think we did most of our living in the kitchen at that time. That was the room that was heated anyway.

Q: When you talked about living on Callie, you mentioned some things. A playmate and some other things.

ED: Well, my best friend was a boy that lived next door, and he was blind. I believe his first name was Casper. I'm not too sure of that, but his last name was Hildebrandt and he was the brother of Christ Hildebrandt, the fire chief at one time.

Q: Now, you don't remember where he went to school or anything? He was just a playmate?

ED: Yes. I think he was little older than I was, but he always sat on the front porch. And it seems to me that he used to play the accordion. I can't remember too much about that, but it seems to me that's why I would sit there and listen to him play the accordion.

Q: Now, you mentioned that your brother was older than you were.

ED: Yes, he was seven years older.

Q: He was so much older that he wasn't really a playmate or anything.

ED: No, he wasn't. He had his own special friends. And he was active in sports. He played baseball and later on golf and even still later he even went into the Little Leagues as umpire for the children.

Q: Can you think of anything else you want to say about living on Callie Avenue?

ED: Well, I remember Gene Fink was a very good friend of mine, too. I don't remember any other playmates.

Q: All right. And then your parents built the house on?

ED: On Fernald Avenue. We lived there quite a few years. In 1923, my father got very ill. He was an inspector of baking flour. The dust from the flour settled on his lungs and he had an abscess. He was sick for over a year. And so he had to give up that work and then he became an interior decorator and painter. He did that for several years. I attended school at Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran School all eight grades. My brother attended for six grades because they only went to six grades at the time that he was in school. So he graduated from the public school.

Q: For the last two years...

ED: The last two years.

Q: ...he finished at Morton Grove.

ED: Right. And two of the friends that I still have started school with me. They are Ruth Husen and Rhoda Heidtke.

Q: Are those their maiden names?

ED: Yes. I remember when I lived on Fernald Avenue. I remember going to the airport and I think I must have been maybe only twelve years old when I had my first little plane ride. We didn't go up very high, but I sat in the plane and was scared stiff. Catherine Stegmeier had a little stand in the airport—a lot of people would come to the airport—and she's sell ice cream and sandwiches, so I would help her. I became quite acquainted with her and at one time, she and I even played instruments together and we entertained. She played the accordion and I played the guitar. Just kids stuff. We thought we were big, you know. We could do this. We'd bring our instruments with.

Q: Let's talk about your school days at Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran.

ED: Well, we had all eight grades in my class.

Q: In one room?

ED: In one room with one teacher. I had to have German and catechism was required besides the regular reading class and arithmetic. And if anybody was naughty, the children were sent into the boiler room. We had no other room. We just had this one room and so to separate the children, they would have to sit in the boiler room until they were given permission to come back into school. I was baptized, I was confirmed and I was married in that church. I've belonged to the choir for over fifty years, I joined the bell choir the last three, which was very exciting for me.

Q: You've been telling about your elementary school. Now tell us about high school.

ED: Well, our town seemed to be divided. Half of the children had to go to Carl Schurz in Chicago and the other half had to go to Maine Township. And I think the dividing line was the railroad tracks. So I went to Carl Schurz for two years on Central and Laurence Avenue in portable schools.

Q: That must have been like a branch of the ...

ED; Of the big high school. Yes. I had to take the train to Mayfair. And my allowance for the week would be a dollar and the streetcar would be seven cents, so many the time I walked it in order to save the seven cents so I could buy my frozen chocolate banana. Then after I graduated, my father decided I should go the other two years, so I went to the Carl Schurz High School on Addison and

Milwaukee and graduated from there. So I had two graduation diplomas from the high school.

Q: When you went to the portables or the branch schools, were you included in sports or in activities or anything like that?

ED: I don't remember that I ever was in sports there. But when I went to Carl Schurz on Addison, then we did have sports there. I know we had a hockey team that I was on.

Q: Yes. I see.

ED: But I think that was the only sport that we had. But there were a lot of other things that we could do. We had flea clubs and it was much nicer than the portable school.

Q: Yes, I can see that there wouldn't have been any room for anything.

ED: It wasn't just one room. It must have been about ten different portable—what would you call them—rooms.

Q: Buildings. They're like mobile units no.

ED: You had to go to different ones for the different subjects. So it wasn't pleasant going those first two years.

Q: Aren't you glad you had that other experience then at the real high school?

ED: That's right. It was real nice and then, of course, we got off at Grayland and we'd walk from Grayland to Addison, which wasn't too far. After high school, I don't remember.... Well, before I started working.... Did I mention the airport?

Q: Yes. You mentioned there was somebody that had a stand.

ED: Yes. Well, after I was through with high school then, I worked for Walter Poehlmann in his real estate office, which was the old Morton Grove Bank.

Q: That's up at Lincoln...

ED: On Lincoln and Callie. Soon after that, I went to a birthday party—a sixteenth birthday party—in Dilg's big hall and there I met Henry who was a cousin of Herb Dilg's. He became my boyfriend. I remember spending time in front of the Lincoln Tavern listening to the music.

Q: Now where was the Lincoln Tavern?

ED: That was on, I believe it's Georgiana or is it Austin? Right across the street, more or less, from the Dells.

Q: Oh, the Lincoln Tavern was actually up on Dempster then?

ED: Yes, it was on Dempster. They used to have the big bands playing there, and we would enjoy that. I used to go bowling at theThere used to be a garage on Dempster Street that was renovated and made into a bowling alley. It was there for several years.

Q: Other people have mentioned that, too. And I think that was on the site that's now McDonald's.

ED: Right. I can remember being involved with the politics in the village. Dick Eckhardt and I had written a song that he would sing at the different functions. And some of the meetings were quite heated. Whenever the election took place, the way we would find out who had won was by the cars that would come by honking their horns with their big banner alongside of the car.

Q: Well, I could see why. Was there a paper or even a weekly paper in Morton Grove?

ED: There probably was, but we never got a paper. The only time we ever got a paper was when there would be an extra and they would call out “Extra paper” and we would buy it to see the news—usually about some hoodlum. There were a lot of hoodlums going on at that time. The only paper we ever got was the *Abendpost*, which was my grandfather’s paper. Though he was born in Niles and lived all his life in this country, he never spoke English.

Q: He didn’t?

ED: He never spoke English. My grandmother was born in Germany, and she never spoke German. She insisted on speaking English.

Q: How did they communicate?

ED: In English and German.

Q: You mean, she spoke English ...

ED: English, and he spoke German.

Q: But they understood each other.

ED: Oh, yes. They understood each other, but it was odd that my grandfather would not give up his language.

Q: Now you mentioned that they gave up the farm when your father became ill about 1923. They gave up their farm in Milwaukee Avenue in Niles?

ED: Yes. And then they came to live with us for a while. And then my father and grandfather built the homes that we’re living in now, which is just onee house away from where we originally lived.

Q: Can we have addresses here now? You're talking about....

ED: Well, our first home was at 8612.

Q: All right.

ED: And then my father built a home at 8604 and my grandparents lived at 8600.

Q: I see.

ED: I know when my brother married and they had their first son, it was noted in the little weekly paper that there were four generations of Juerns living in the 8600 block of Fernald Avenue.

Q; That's interesting.

ED: Another interesting thing on this block was Grandpa Browder going to work. We used to watch him. He worked at the railroad station as a guard man. And when he'd leave in the morning, his goose would follow him and it stayed with him all day until he came back home from work again.

Q: That's interesting. We talked about how you met your husband and what you did dating. But you didn't mention where you were married or anything about your life.

ED: I was married on Christmas Day and we had a beautiful church wedding.

Q: What year?

ED: You're dating me. 1936. December 25, 1936. We had a very happy married life, we had one daughter, Carol-Luanne. She went to the same Lutheran school that I did and graduated from high school and then went into nursing.

Q: Now, did she graduate from Niles Township High School at that point?

ED: Yes.

Q: Would it have been one building? Would she have graduated from Niles West?

ED: No, she graduated from the original building.

Q: It became Niles East.

ED: Yes. And then she went to Grant Hospital and graduated from Grant Hospital and became a nurse. She worked at Grant for a couple of years and then she married a fellow from Chicago, Daniel L. Johnson Jr., and they had three children. When the youngest was about ten, then Stephanie was born, their fourth child.

Q: Were the other three boys or girls?

ED: Two girls and a boy. And then Stephanie. She worked up until the time that Stephanie was born. She was supervisor at Bethany Terrace and she was president of the nurses association and she wrote out all the blood certificates to recognize blood donors. So she was active in the village. In fact, she was on the environment control board, I know, at one time.

Q: So they moved here into Morton Grove?

ED: Yes. They lived here most of their married life. I guess they only lived away from Morton Grove maybe the first two years of their married life. She passed away in 1987.

Q: That must have been very difficult.

ED: It is.

Q: You told me that you were married in 1936. Did you continue to work after that?

ED: Yes. I worked part-time for Walter Poehlmann. Then later on my husband became a milkman and he had his route in Morton Grove here.

Q: Did he work for a local dairy?

ED: He worked for Bornhoff Dairy in Northbrook. He made a lot of friends in Morton Grove. He did a lot of favors for people. People would go on vacation and they had a cat that had to be fed. He would go in the house and feed the cat every day and lock the door afterwards. I know whenever I would go out in public, someone was bound to come up and say different nice things that my husband had done for them. He had taken the laundry off the line for one of his customers when he saw that it was going to rain.

Q: He took the laundry off the line.

ED: And put it in the porch.

Q: So he was a very thoughtful person.

ED: Right. Then, I remember, too, he found someone had thrown out a hospital bed on his route, so he called up the nurses association and told them about it and asked if they would like to have it for their use.

Q: For like a lending closet?

ED: Right. So he brought that bed on his milk truck and it was a very heavy bed. I remember that when he went to take it out of the truck, it fell on his toe and he broke his toe. So he was always trying to help people out. He was a very loving person.

Q: Did he retire before..?

ED: Well, he retired in 1981 and...

Q: Is he still living?

ED: No. He died eight months before my daughter did.

Q: What a bad year!

ED: It was a bad year for us.

Q: Was he ill or was it...?

ED: Well, he had been ill for eleven years. But it wasn't bad enough that he couldn't work part of the time. He really originally got sick in 1971, but he worked until 1981. And at that time, in 1971, he left the dairy and he worked for O'Hare Airport as the cashier in the parking lot. One night when he was collecting the money from the different booths, he noticed that the light was out in one of the booths and he usually collected the money around midnight. So he went to put the light on in the booth, and when he did, someone was in there and they hit him over the head with the telephone and he had seventeen stitches in his head and I think that also was a factor with the way he felt.

Q: You told me a lot about your family and now let's just talk about you, yourself. Do you go on trips, do you stay here in this Morton Grove area through the winter? You told me about the bell choir.

ED: Yes. And I belong to the Grandmothers Club and I also belong to the Thursday Seniors Club. And I did take my first real airplane trip to Georgia in October when we went to see my grandson graduate from Basic Training. It was supposed to be a beautiful time in Georgia at that time of the year. My sister-in-

law, Florence, went with me and my granddaughter, Vicki, and we got down to Georgia and it seemed pleasant enough. But in the morning when we woke up, it had turned cold. We had rented a car. The car was all full of ice. We had no ice scraper, nothing. We used a metal comb to clean off the windshield and we went to the graduation. It was held outdoors. They put on like a ceremony with the big tanks and a dress parade. There were even units of soldiers dressed as soldiers in past wars, like the Civil War. It was so cold there that the army put pillows on the seats. And that wasn't enough. They put blankets on the seats, too. And we had a blanket to cover us, but just one blanket for the three of us. We froze. And it was the coldest day that they had ever had there in their history. It was, I believe, twenty-nine degrees.

Q: What a shame that it was so bad.