

Narrator: Walter Lindemann
Date of Interview: November 10, 1978
Place of Interview: Narrator's home, located at
8737 Narragansett, Morton Grove
Interviewer: Denise Rossmann Christopoulos
Recorded For: Morton Grove Historical Society
Transcribed For: Morton Grove Public Library
Tape Running Time: 56 minutes

INTRODUCTION

Walter Lindemann was born on a farm in Niles Center (now known as Skokie) and moved to Morton Grove with his family when he was fifteen years old. He describes his life as a young boy on a farm and chores of weeding, hoeing and working in the fields. The Lindemanns spoke German while Walter was growing up, and he also remembers fun times with his six sisters and brothers.

Once he came to Morton Grove, Walter Lindemann worked for V.G. Supply Company. He also talks about the Depression years, the many roadhouses on Dempster Street, the part of town called "Ducktown" and the hobos that used to frequent the area along the river.

WL: Walter Lindemann

Q: Question asked by interviewer, Denise Rossmann Christopoulos

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: We'll start the interview with biographical data on yourself.

WL: On myself?

Q: Right, so that when we go back through the tape, people know a little bit more about you. If you remember your grandparents' names, we could start there.

WL: Well, let's see. It would be Mr. and Mrs. Christ Guenther from my mother's side.

Q: And what were your parents' names?

WL: My dad's name was Edward Lindemann.

Q: And your mother's?

WL: Well, Guenther. I mean, that's her maiden name.

Q: Right. What was her first name?

WL: My mother's? Alma.

Q: Alma. Did your grandparents come over here to this country or were they already here? Do you have any idea at all?

WL: No, the Guenthers came over.

Q: They came from Germany?

WL: Yes.

Q: Do you have any idea what year?

WL: No, that's beyond my knowledge.

Q: But they came over here, and then, of course, you parents were born here.

WL: Yes.

Q: Do you know what occupation they had?

WL: They were farmers.

Q: Your grandparents were farmers?

WL: On both sides.

Q: Where, in Illinois?

WL: Yes, in Skokie and . . . well, both of them were in Skokie. Right.

Q: And then what did your parents go? What did your father do for a living?

WL: They were also farmers.

Q: He was also a farmer, and he met your mother and they married and they then had another farm? Or did he go into a different business?

WL: No, I'd say up to the time I was fifteen. Let's see, it would be until I was fifteen. Have to go back. (laughs)

Q: I know.

WL: Twenty . . . (pauses) . . . 1927. I think they farmed up until 1927.

Q: And then what happened?

WL: And then he worked for a coal yard in Skokie. And my mother, of course, was playing housewife after that.

Q: She never had a career?

WL: No.

Q: How many sisters and brothers did you have?

WL: I had four brothers and two sisters.

Q: What were their names in the order of age?

WL: Well, I'll have to say that the youngest brother was lost in the submarine service. So, all right, my oldest brother -- he's still living -- he's going to be 68.

Q: And his name is?

WL: Elmer. I'm second, which would be 66. Then comes Herbert; he's 63. Alvin, 60. Dorothea -- wait a minute. Well, Clarence came in between Alvin and Dorothea. So, she's 56, and I think the youngest one is 52, which is Lucille.

Q: Big family.

WL: Yes. Right.

Q: Then we'll get into a little bit of data on yourself. Your birthdate is when?

WL: January 2nd, 1913.

Q: And where were you born?

WL: I was born in Skokie.

Q: Approximately where? At home?

WL: At home, but the house is still standing yet.

Q: Really? Where's that?

WL: On Niles Center Road in Skokie. Just east of Lincoln on Niles Center Road.

Q: Your mother had all you children at home?

WL: Oh, yes.

Q: Really. Who was your doctor at the time?

WL: Midwives.

Q: Really?

WL: (laughs) Yes. I think for her to have me on earth, it cost her ten dollars, I think.

Q: What do you remember about your first home?

WL: Well, the first part of it would be in Skokie, and then, of course, then my father was working for a grocery store. I think it was Klehm's Grocery and Market.

Q: Do you remember what the inside of the house looked like?

WL: No, nothing.

Q: You were too young?

WL: All I know is that I spoke nothing but German up until about eight years of age.

Q: So your whole family spoke German then?

WL: Oh, yes.

Q: Oh, really?

WL: Oh, yes. Sure. So when we went to grade school, why then we naturally . . .

Q: You never went to any German school or Sunday School, anything like that?

WL: No, just for German confirmation hours.

Q: But you spoke German up until that time?

WL: Oh, yes. Now I can't speak a word of it. (laughter)

Q: Well, you were pretty young.

WL: Well, I can speak some yet, but, you know, it's forgotten. All those years.

Q: What do you remember about your early family life at home?

WL: . . . then I have to swing over to the farm . . .

Q: How did you amuse yourself on the farm? Did you make up your own games?

WL: (laughs) I won't say. I won't say what . . . We played baseball and we used cow dung for bases.

Q: Oh, no! (laughter) Really?

WL: Yes, dried cow dung.

Q: Just with your brothers and sisters?

WL: That's all. (laughter) I shouldn't say that on this tape.

Q: No, it's good. How about household chores? Did you have anything specifically you did for your father?

WL: Yes. Each week one of us boys had to do the housework while the other ones worked out in the field, because my mother had to be the leader out in the field.

Q: What kind of chores in the field? What do you remember specifically?

WL: Oh, hoeing and weeding and when your crops became ripe, such as corn, you broke the corn. Tomatoes, you picked the tomatoes. Peppers and et cetera.

Q: What did you do for a water supply at your home? Did you have a well?

WL: A well, yes.

Q: Cistern and . . . ?

WL: Yes. Cistern and well.

Q: Where did your mother go shopping when you lived there? Did she stay in Niles Center?

WL: No, they never got out. They just had it mostly at home. They used to buy flour by the hundred-pound bags. Potatoes by the hundred-pound bag. And the other necessities, I think my dad brought home when he went to the market. After he took the vegetables, he picked up the essentials like coffee, and, well, salt, sugar, et cetera.

Q: What kind of crops other than the corn did your father grow?

WL: Oh, I'd say corn, tomatoes -- if you can memorize some of these -- eggplants, you know. Peppers, radishes, carrots, beets, onions, parsley, German celery, leek.

Q: About how many acres did he have?

WL: Twenty acres of farm. He had one cow for milk. We made our own butter, and you'd have your cottage cheese. That's when the whey of the milk is right.

Q: Did you ever go to the market day in Niles Center?

WL: Never.

Q: Never?

WL: We were never allowed to do that. I know they used to sell pigs and rabbits, et cetera, in Skokie.

Q: Your parents wouldn't allow the children to go?

WL: No, they were awfully, awfully strict. I mean if things happened, they were strict. Yes. If we had an ice cream man come with his horse and wagon down the street, well, we never even got a bowl of (laughs), a bowl of ice cream for a treat or something like that. Once in a while, my dad would bring bananas home, but. . .

Q: And that was a treat.

WL: That was a treat.

Q: How often did he travel to Chicago to sell his vegetables?

WL: I got to say about three times a week.

Q: And he always went by himself?

WL: Yes.

Q: Where did he go in Chicago?

WL: Down on Randolph Street. That's where they sold their produce.

Q: By Knoop's there on North Avenue?

WL: No, this is, when, when you say Randolph Street, that's further . . .

Q: Was it a market place?

WL: Yes, it was a market place where all the farmers brought their produce in there by truck. And they sold it.

Q: Did he ever ship out anything by train?

WL: No.

Q: He just went to Chicago?

WL: No, no trains were used in those days. You had passenger trains and freight trains.

Q: I see. Did you have a vegetable stand connected to your farm?

WL: No, no.

Q: You just strictly sold it that way?

WL: Right.

Q: Do you remember what kind of farming tools you used?

WL: Well, hoes and rakes. Mostly hoes -- the ones that kind of break your back working with them. (laughter)

Q: I bet!

WL: Weeding, weeding. I think nobody liked to weed. Carrots and beets and pull the weeds out along side of them. Cultivate alongside the rows, and . . .

Q: That's terrible.

WL: Yes, right. (laughter)

Q: Who were your neighbors when you were growing up? The other families?

WL: Well, our landlord lived right across the street. Their name was Harkey (?).
And to our right were the Karlovski (?) families. Two Karlovski (?) families.
This is about as far as we went.

Q: Mainly stayed at home?

WL: Yes.

Q: Do you remember anything in Morton Grove here by the train? Did you ever come into Morton Grove for anything in particular or did you just stuck within Niles Center?

WL: Right.

Q: I see. How old were you when you moved out of Niles Center yourself?

WL: Moved from the farm to Morton Grove?

Q: Yes.

WL: I was fifteen.

Q: And why did you move here?

WL: Well, my mother had sort of a breakdown, I think we'd have to call it. She had seven children, had to work hard and then they gave up farming.

Q: What did you do when you came here at fifteen?

WL: I worked at the V.G. Supply Company. I started nailing boxes and crates.

Q: And is that your uncle now that owned V.G.'s?

WL: Well, he was the manager.

Q: In your schooling, where did you go to school?

WL: Niles Center. Started in one school and finished in it.

Q: What was the name of the school?

WL: Just Niles Center School.

Q: Where was that located?

WL: At Main Street and Niles Center Road.

Q: Do you remember your teacher or anything about the school?

WL: No. You can't remember names no more. (laughs) No.

Q: You said your mother had a midwife when you were . . .

WL: Right.

Q: Did you ever see a doctor when you kids were ill? Dr. Klehm?

WL: No. No, I wouldn't say so. I think they had their own homemade remedies and she would rub your chest with goose grease or something like this. (laughs)

Q: I head a lot of people say that.

WL: Yes.

Q: As a young boy, what did you do for entertainment other than playing baseball?

WL: Marbles. (laughs) That's about all.

Q: Did you pal around with anyone in Niles Center?

WL: No.

Q: Any particular boy?

WL: No, just back and forth with the neighbors.

Q: Once you came to Morton Grove, did you go to any of the dances or picnics that they had in town here?

WL: Well, we did, yes, but we never knew nothing about dancing from a farm. We never learned it.

Q: Did your whole family move here then?

WL: Yes.

Q: Oh, I see. Where did you live when you came to Morton Grove?

WL: Well, our home still stands where my mother is. This is on Elm Street in Morton Grove known as "Ducktown".

Q: "Ducktown"?

WL: This part of town was known as "Ducktown".

Q: Why was that?

WL: I don't know why. (laughs) I don't know. That part of town across the tracks to the west was known as "Ducktown".

Q: Elm Street is over by the depot?

WL: By the depot. Yes.

Q: Do you remember any of the parades in town or the movie theater down Ferris?

WL: Yes. They had one here on Ferris Avenue. I think we maybe got once or twice to see it, and I don't think, what would you say? In those days, I don't think it was too profitable for him. Not enough people went. They had to kind of watch their money in those days.

Q: How about the gravel pit behind Poehlmann's where different fellows would go swimming?

WL: Oh, yes, that was . . . one of their, sort of their water supply, back -- Plant A and B here, Plant C . . . they used to go swimming . . . (pauses) . . . well, naked, yes, in the river. (laughs)

Q: Were you one of those?

WL: Well, I have to say yes. (laughter)

Q: How about the river over here? Did you ever go fishing or skating?

WL: Skating we did.

Q: A lot of people have mentioned "hobo island". Were there really hobos here?

WL: Oh, yes, they had shacks where they lived during the winter. Well, summer, too, but . . .

Q: Did they ever cause any trouble in town here?

WL: Not really. No, because the majority of them, they worked for Poehlmann Brothers Greenhouses.

Q: And they'd come off the train?

WL: Yes. Right. They found this "hobo island" or hobo whatever you want to call it, yes.

Q: Who named it that?

WL: I guess that's where the hobos settled. It was in a sort of a low spot where it would be out of the real bad weather in wintertime.

Q: Oh, that's really interesting. What do you remember about Christmas and what was Christmas like as compared to today?

WL: They had no -- we'll start with ornaments on trees. They had their, seemed like they kind of made their own ornaments out of candy, such as squirrels and birds, et cetera.

Q: Did you have the candles hanging on the tree?

WL: Yes, you did.

Q: I've often wondered, how come they never caught on fire a lot faster?

WL: Well, that you had to watch. You had to watch very carefully. Maybe they lit it up for twenty minutes or half an hour, and then they would all be blown out.

Q: Yes. How about Halloween? Did you pull any pranks when you were a boy or do you remember anything like that?

WL: During the latter part before we moved to the village, we used to dump over outside toilets, and put buggies up on sheds, and . . . (laughter).

Q: Nobody trick or treated?

WL: Dumped -- oh, no. dumped over corn stocks or what do you have them in bundles, you'd dump them over.

Q: Pumpkins -- smash them.

WL: Yes. Pranksters. Pranksters. (laughter)

Q: How about the church? What church was your family involved in?

WL: Well, first of all we started off in Skokie. That was on Niles Center Road. St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

Q: Was your mother involved in the women's organization or anything?

WL: No, she . . . was mostly a homebody.

Q: Was anyone in the choir or anything in particular?

WL: No.

Q: Were you confirmed there then?

WL: Yes, in Skokie.

Q: At that church?

WL: Right. And I would go to the one here in Morton Grove.

Q: The Jerusalem Evangelical Lutheran Church?

WL: Jerusalem, yes. Yes.

Q: What do you remember about transportation in Niles Center and Morton Grove?
About the roads? A lot of these roads weren't built up.

WL: Dirt roads. This is the way back when I was about six and seven. We had to walk
the dirt roads into Skokie and . . .

Q: What did your father use to get around? Did he have a horse?

WL: Horse and buggy it would have to be at first. After a while, he had to go in his
truck to haul his produce to the market.

Q: When did you get your first car?

WL: When did I get my first car? I didn't start too early. I'd say I was about 26.

Q: Really? What did you use for transportation in the meantime?

WL: My feet. My legs. (laughter)

Q: Good reliable source! (laughs) Do you remember the bus route? Some people have been telling me about it. It was called the jitney. It would go through Niles Center to Morton Grove. It was an open-air bus.

WL: No, I can't remember that one. I can remember the regular, I don't know what it was called. It was a regular bus company, but it went from . . . (pauses) . . . I'd say it went from Morton Grove up to Lawrence Avenue, I think, I don't think they went down to the Loop at that time. I'd say Lawrence Avenue.

Q: Well, when you moved to Morton Grove here when you were fifteen, were all these streets paved in this section here?

WL: The majority of them was, yes.

Q: Did it look pretty much like it looks today with the houses and everything?

WL: Not the houses. No, . . .

Q: They weren't up yet?

WL: Oh, no. No, no.

Q: It was still kind of farm area?

WL: Homes were scarce. Yes, there was farms. Oh, sure, down around Church Street and Beckwith Road there was all farms out there. People were still farming.

Q: When did it start to really build up around here in your estimation?

WL: I got to say. . . (pauses) . . . '33, '34. After the, sort of Depression what they had.

Q: After the Depression?

WL: I would say.

Q: Do you feel that more farms were maybe lost or lost their mortgage?

WL: No, I would say in the village here, it was kind of the, sort of building boom at that time.

Q: I see. How about communication? Did your family get a particular newspaper?

WL: Well, they called the German newspaper *Abendpost*. I think that's the only one that they had.

Q: Do you know who put that out by any chance?

WL: No, I think the fellow called Paddock. I think it was published out west here somewhere. Arlington Heights or somewhere.

Q: I'm trying to find out more about that paper. Was that written in German?

WL: Yes.

Q: Do you ever remember reading the *Interocean*?

WL: No. I don't recall that.

Q: Did you ever get the *Daily News*?

WL: No. when we came to Morton Grove we were strictly working in, well, let's see . . . (pauses) . . . I'd have to say we did go back on farm later on when, like I say, when the Depression was. Couldn't find no work, so they had to go back to our trade, farming. Rented twenty acres in, from forest preserve, and . . .

Q: Your family did after the Depression?

WL: Yes. They just couldn't find any work anywhere.

Q: Oh, really?

WL: My brother was first married. I think he was dusting in the library or something to start off his life after he was married.

Q: You mean your family moved all the way here to Morton Grove to start something else and you had to go back to farming?

WL: Right. I mean because you couldn't find any other kind of work.

Q: Did your father still take the crops to Chicago? Is that how he still continued to sell?

WL: Oh, yes. Yes, because they had -- what would you call them? C.C.C. camps.

Q: Oh, F.D.R.'s Plan.

WL: Yes, and the Works, W.P.A. -- Works Projects, whatever it was.

Q: Did he work on any of those?

WL: No. No, like I say, we just went to the farm like what we're used to doing.

Q: What do you remember about the police in Morton Grove? Was there a big police force or do you remember any crimes in town?

WL: No. When our folks bought their first house -- that was on Fernald Avenue here in Morton Grove -- there was a policeman downstairs.

Q: A policeman?

WL: Well, he was the one who had the foot beat. Henry Hylleberg (?), I think his name was. He used to walk the streets, and then they had one or two motorcycle policemen and that's about it. (laughter)

Q: Well, when you lived over by Elm, did you go into Dilg's Tavern quite a bit there to do your shopping?

WL: Well, no, they had National Tea and A & P here in Morton Grove, I think,

Q: You were over by where Dohl's is and the Morton House, that section there?

WL: Right.

Q: I see. How about the volunteer fire department? Was anybody in your family involved in that?

WL: No. I don't know how you're going to ask this, but I was going to say my first home here in Morton Grove . . . this was bought almost like the Indians, you got to say. The fellow said, "If you want to buy my home," he says. I said, "Well, I don't have much of a down payment." So, he says, "Well, how much money you got in your pocket?" I says, "Ten dollars." He says, "Well, give it to me. That's

earnest money.” That, of course, is how I started buying the first home.

Q: Where was your first home?

WL: Right in the back of where the Morton House now stands. This was the Boemmel residence. Their first home, so this goes way back. It was his home. Big, big rafter of, like railroad ties down in the basement, holding up the floor.

Q: Did you buy it after you got married?

WL: Yes.

Q: When did you meet your wife?

WL: Well, this goes back into Depression times, too, again. We had to look for work, so her father hired us. You worked almost like for peanuts years ago. So first of all, my brother, he started working for the Schaul family. Then I did. And, of course, they had a couple of daughters, so (laughs) we got to know the daughters. And we both married those girls.

Q: Oh, that’s kind of neat.

WL: So my brother is my brother-in-law and . . .

Q: (laughs) That’s really interesting.

WL: Yes.

Q: Were any family members involved in World War I or any friends? Did any go off to war?

WL: No, World War II.

Q: Second World War.

WL: This would be in 1941 about?

Q: First World War is 1914.

WL: No, no. Nobody in there.

Q: That's too early. Okay, then we'll go right on to Prohibition since that followed this time. Do you remember the roadhouses in Morton Grove along Dempster here?

WL: Well, I remember one right next to where I live here now. It was called The Bridge. It was still standing here when we moved here.

Q: Did you ever go in The Bridge?

WL: Yes, like I say, it was -- what would you call it?

Q: A roadhouse.

WL: No, it was all dilapidated, or whatever you want to call it.

Q: Oh, when you moved here?

WL: Yes. The business wasn't there then. I can remember the Lincoln Tavern, The Dells, Club Rendezvous. This is where the fire was that so many people were trapped in. Yes, but I didn't get to see it, thought, but they were all trapped inside.

Q: How do you think it started?

WL: I don't know how it started, but they claim the door opened inward instead of opening outward.

Q: And people couldn't get out?

WL: And this way the people all went for their clothes and that . . .

Q: It must have really been panic.

WL: So I guess that's what they have now -- all doors opening outward in taverns or roadhouses.

Q: They must have made an ordinance or something since then.

WL: Yes, right.

Q: Was there a band or music in these places or were they just restaurants?

WL: No, there was music. Oh, popular music. Ted Weems and I don't know just who all they were but we used to sometimes walk up there and just listen outside to the music.

Q: Just down the street?

WL: Right. Yes.

Q: Did they all have liquor?

WL: Oh, yes.

Q: Under the table?

WL: Yes, on the side. When Prohibition came in, yes.

Q: Were they ever raided any of them?

WL: Well, we didn't find out too much. We weren't allowed to roam the streets in those days. I guess you had to say they rolled the sidewalks in about eight, nine o'clock, and . . . (laughter).

Q: Do you remember the airport in Morton Grove? Let's see, what year did you come here when you were fifteen?

WL: How old was I? When I was 15, that would be 1928.

Q: Yes.

WL: See, that would be just in the Depression years.

W: The airport was still around at that time?

WL: Oh, yes . . .

Q: It was here until about '33 or so.

WL: . . . we had -- yes, that's another thing. We used to work -- there's a fellow by the name of Fred Hammerhenn (?), and he held the concessions for ice cream and pop.

Q: In town?

WL: No, in all these, like St. Paul Park, they had a pavilion. Wayside Inn that would be right next to where the airport was. They had a pavilion, and they had airplanes flying at Lehigh and Dempster. There they had a little shack and they sold the ice cream and pop in there while the people were there watching the airplane flights, you know.

Q: Did they take up local people in these planes?

WL: Oh, yes, whoever wanted to go up.

Q: Did you ever go up?

WL: No.

Q: Was it expensive?

WL: I did go up once, but this was out at Palwaukee Airport. I went on a ride somehow or other. Went up in the open cockpit. You put on the helmet and goggles.

Q: Was it a big deal in Morton Grove to have the airport over here?

WL: Oh, I would say so.

Q: Did a lot of people go watch?

WL: They used to have parachute jumping and people would all come out to watch the parachute jumpers. Sure.

Q: Now we're into the Depression years, and you've talked quite a bit on that. I was going to ask you how it affected your family life, and obviously your father found it better to go back to farming financially for the family.

WL: Yes, we didn't know any trades. In those days, they didn't have any. We came off the farm, and that's all what we really knew.

Q: Did the Depression affect your life in any other way than financially? Was it particularly hard on you with all the children?

WL: Well, not really. We were kind of getting out on our own, you know, on our own.

Q: You were all still living at home?

WL: I worked part-time at the department store in Evanston doing stock work and stuff like this here. This goes back into the Depression years here. To save carfare, we found a place to board and room. And this was our first venture away from home, I would have to say.

Q: How long did this go on?

WL: This was only about a year, I'd say.

Q: Did you do it with your brother?

WL: No, myself. It was all new, and I used to run the post office part in the department store . . . weighing packages and shipping them out and stuff like this here.

Q: What kind of an effect would you say the Depression had on Morton Grove?

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

WL: As I say, the majority of the folks, they worked for Poehlmann Brothers.

Q: Did anyone in your family every work for them?

WL: I have to say no. None.

Q: Was there any particular reason why you didn't work at Poehlmann's? You seem to have been living close enough . . .

WL: Well, we were on the farm. Well, as I say, I don't know just when Poehlmann's folded up, but . . .

Q: Wasn't it in the '30s?

WL: About that, yes.

Q: Do you remember any stories about having Poehlmann's there?

WL: No, I recall that they used to haul their flowers over to the train depot. They had a mule that wouldn't back up unless they were flagging him with a newspaper.

or something in back of it. You know, if your train didn't get quite up to where you were, you'd have to back up.

Q: I was going through some old newspapers, and I read some articles about a problem that they were having in town with Poehlmann's and the soot that was coming out of their chimneys. Do you recall anything with that? You might not have been here yet. It was in the '20s.

WL: No, I don't seem to recall that. No.

Q: With the W.P.A. and building of roads, was anyone involved in that in your family?

WL: No.

Q: When the bank closed, were you one of the sorry people that were . . .

WL: No, I didn't have . . . (laughter). We may have put our money in jars at home or something, but not in a bank.

Q: It's interesting. A lot of people that grew up on the farms always kept their money at home.

WL: Yes. Well, they pay any kind of interest anyway. Maybe about four percent or something like that. Maybe even two percent. That was next to nothing, you know.

Q: Now we're on the Second World War. You thought someone was involved in that?
Who?

WL: That was my brother?

Q: The older brother?

WL: No, the youngest brother. The youngest brother, Clarence, was. I think he enlisted. I think just on his 21st birthday. And I think a year to the day he was reported missing in action. This was over in a Japanese harbor they say. This was on the submarine Wahoo. I think they got books up in the library there.

Q: And he was reported missing in action?

WL: Yes.

Q: And that's the end of that story?

WL: Yes. A lot of other boys from town, too, I guess, lost their lives in the Service. George Schaldt (? Or Stejskal ?). Clarence Sesterhenn. I don't know too many of them, but I knew their names.

Q: What kind of effect did the war have on your life here back at home? I realize different things were rationed.

WL: Well, I worked out at Douglas Aircraft for one year. It was either go into the Army or work in defense work. I think we had two children by that time.

Q: What year did you get married?

WL: Oh, now you got me. (laughter)

Q: I hope she's not home! (laughter)

WL: Oh, no. There's the wedding picture right up there. See it?

Q: Oh, yes.

WL: I don't think there's any year on it. I'll take a look.

Q: What are your children's names? Just for the record.

WL: Well, let's see. Norma Jean would be the oldest, and it would be Terrence, the second. He's the boy, the only boy. And then Linda, and then Peggy.

Q: Four?

WL: Four. I have a date down there. (looking at picture of bridal party)

Q: March 1st, 1938.

WL: There. That's when we were married.

Q: There's the handsome devil! (looking at wedding photo)

WL: They're all living except one.

Q: So, '38, and the war here was in the '40s. So you had two children already.

WL: As I say, we had two children. Yes. So that was just about right.

Q: So you don't remember it affecting your home life too much?

WL: Well, I was living up in Wisconsin at that time, and we had to come back here, because -- we lived with my wife's folks first after we were married, and there wasn't too much work to be had up in Wisconsin, so I came back down here. Then I went back, went to work for the V.G. Supply Company for a second time. First time I started when I was sixteen.

Q: It must have been nice to have your uncle over there. You could kind of fall back in.

WL: Well, you still had to work. (laughter) Well, we had a lot of piece work nailing boxes and crates, so usually by two, three o'clock in the afternoon, we thought we had earned money by hand nailing, so we called it a day at that time instead of going to work until five o'clock.

Q: Was your wife's family, the Schauls, from Niles Center then? You said that you had worked for them.

WL: Her folks had a greenhouse over at Evanston. Then they came out to the farm in Skokie.

Q: Do you remember any particular reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

WL: Well, no, I just was kind of surprised at that time.

Q: But nothing really personal?

WL: No, and shortly after that -- I don't know just what year that was . . . Pearl Harbor. It wasn't too long after that, that's when my brother, Clarence, enlisted.

Q: Do you know when V.G. Supply Company was formed?

WL: Well, it was formed in Rogers Park before they ever moved out here. I didn't start working when they first settled here in Morton Grove. I didn't work there. It was just prior to that. This was supposed to be a pickle factory before V.G. Supply got it, and . . .

Q: Was that Henning's Pickle Factory that was there?

WL: Henning's, yes.

Q: Who was the owner at the time they moved out here? Do you remember?

WL: Well, these were stockholders. There were so many folks invested in -- stockholders.

Q: So your uncle didn't become general manager until 1926 and he was already living in this area.

WL: Yes. And then next door south to V.G. Supply was Vaughn's Onion Factory, where the farmers brought in their onions.

Q: Were they packaged and sold?

WL: I remember they put them up in crates in winter, and in the spring they sold them to different farmers here.

Q: So when you worked there the two times, your job was mainly making the boxes?

WL: Oh, yes.

Q: Is that the kind of business it was -- just making the supplies for vegetables?

WL: Yes, to start off with. I got to say I worked maybe one or two years nailing boxes and crates, and then I went to night watch. And after about a year of night watching, my uncle had fired somebody -- I don't have to say. "Well,

there's a place up here in the office. If you want to take that, why come on up and give it a try." So I gave up the night watching, and . . .

Q: When you worked there the first time, you were fairly young. Do you remember what your wages were?

WL: (long pause) No, maybe about twelve, fifteen dollars a week. But doing piece work, you made more. The faster you nailed and kept the straight ends and so forth, the more you made.

Q: Right.

WL: So I took that job, went upstairs and I done bookkeeping.

Q: That was during the Second World War, about that time?

WL: Yes, right.

Q: How long were you over there then?

WL: Forty-one years. I just took the time off for defense work for about a year. And four years, we went and opened up a florist shop. Outside of that, it would be 41 years that I worked there.

Q: Where was the florist shop now?

WL: Right here in Morton Grove. Called Brooks Floral Shop.

Q: You're talking about down here on Lincoln?

WL: Yes.

Q: Wasn't Joseph Brooks the owner?

WL: My wife worked for the lady who -- it wasn't Brooks there when we got it. There was another man -- we went in on a partnership. And we were living over on Marmora at that time and he wanted a designer. So my wife went over there and she started designing. And she's been doing that ever since.

Q: Well, when the 1950s came, do you remember when they were building Edens highway? Do you remember that going up?

WL: 19--. I don't recall too much of it.

Q: There was a water shortage in town here in the '50s that I've read about.

WL: I don't recall that too much.

Q: Were you gone from here?

WL: Well, I think we were so engrossed with working that we didn't have too much

time to notice these things. They progressed right underneath your nose, I would say.

Q: When did you move to this home here?

WL: Oh. (long pause) First of all, when I moved here, I was partners with my brother. And I moved out and went into the flower business. We lived up on top of the flower shop.

Q: What did you do at the flower business?

WL: Drove a truck, raised geraniums, and, of course, book work. I was quite a hand at that. And, of course, after this, the, my lease ran out, and my children didn't want to continue. So then I went back at the V.G. Supply again. I left my foot in the door, you know.

Q: Right. (laughs)

WL: To get back in. So, it was nice. It was ideal. My wife could have three girls for helping make corsages and stuff. My son started driving the truck and et cetera. But that was long hours for me. Too tired out. So then we gave it up.

Q: Do you know when you got your first telephone? Did you have a telephone in your home over there on Elm Street?

WL: No, the only place that I first started handling a telephone would be by the V.G. Supply Company.

Q: Did your mother have a washer when you were on Elm Street or was everything by hand?

WL: Well, on the farm it was. On the farm it was all hand work.

Q: Here you had a little bit more.

WL: Yes.

Q: Did your family belong to any kind of organization in town other than a church organization? Any civic or political group or German club?

WL: Oh, I guess at your churches and that there were, but they didn't -- my mother didn't even join this here, what do you call it, "Gold Star Mothers". You know, this is when you lose your son in the war or something like that.

Q: The Women's War Working Circle?

WL: Yes, she didn't join that even. We were more homebodies in those days.

Q: Well, I knew there was a Luxembourg Association here in town, and I just wondered if the Germans had any group.

WL: No, you have your, like you say, Luxembourgs had their fall festival. Mostly we went to church -- they had a church picnic in the summer and this is about all we had.

Q: You mentioned before the ice cream wagon that used to come through town when you were kids . . .

WL: This was Skokie, not Morton Grove.

Q: Yes. Who drove the wagon?

WL: Well, it was somebody from Chicago that come out from Chicago and he would be ringing his bell and letting people know that he's coming down the road with his ice cream.

Q: What did he sell it for?

WL: I don't recall. Yes, you'd come out with your bowl and . . .

Q: Oh, and he'd fill the bowl.

WL: Yes.

Q: Do you have any other remembrances of life in Morton Grove? How do you think it's changed from when you were growing up here as compared to now?

WL: Well, that's what I'd just say. Yes. Progress. Of course, now you have your Nortran Bus Service. For a while, I thought they didn't have any bus service.

Q: This town has really grown fast.

WL: I can't think of too many outstanding things. Building a new bridge here on Dempster Street. That caused my basement to flood.

Q: I found it interesting that Poehlmann's seemed to have had so many people from Morton Grove employed there, and it made Morton Grove famous in a sense. How long was Plant C by Harrer Park over there?

WL: That was there when I came to Morton Grove already.

Q: Do you remember when they tore that down? Was that after it failed or was it down before then?

WL: No, that was after it failed.

Q: Why did they have two greenhouses here and then one plant over there?

WL: Well, it all depends how you could maybe purchase land, you know.

Q: Where exactly was it located? Do you know?

WL: Right where the Park View School is back there. Because they got cement and benches laying out in the woods in the back of there.

Q: Today?

WL: Yes.

Q: Do you remember anything else about the restaurants down Dempster?

WL: No, just like I say, they had the three roadhouses. The Bridge there was abandoned or something like that. There was somebody shot there. That's the reason that it closed up.

Q: Was Dempster paved when you came here? Dempster and Lincoln? How about these little side streets like Crain and Capulina?

WL: Yes, those . . .

Q: . . . Georgiana? Those were all paved, too?

WL: They were all paved. Yes. That's back when I was fifteen, so that's 51 years ago.

Q: So you've been in the area all of your life except for the times you went to Wisconsin?

WL: I would say so.

Q: And you've enjoyed it?

WL: Except my early, early childhood. I lived in Skokie.

Q: But both your parents were also born in this area. Is that correct?

WL: Skokie. My dad was born in Chicago.

Q: Oh, and then came out here.

WL: Yes. I would have to say that America would be the greatest nation where opportunity was. Yes. That was the reason that they came over here.

Q: Do you know where they were from in Germany? What section or town?

WL: No. I have to say my father-in-law was born in Luxembourg. He wasn't born here.

Q: All these Luxembourgers seem to have gotten into the greenhouse business.

WL: It seems that way, yes. Well, when you worked in the V.G. Supply, you found out that all these, like you say, Luxembourgers were greenhouse men. The Germans were more farmers.

Q: Who did V.G. Supply sell to? Did they sell wholesale or retail?

WL: It was wholesale. They're still in existence yet.

Q: Yes, right. Did they sell to mainly the greenhouses in the area here or did they move into Chicago, too, selling different things?

WL: Well, right now they deliver to, oh, gee, they deliver it to Wisconsin and Rockford and I don't know how far south. They go to different states.

Q: You say that originated in Rogers Park?

WL: Yes. I don't know who started it. As I say, I go back 50 years here, so . . .

Q: You gave me a different idea of what farm life was for a young boy growing up in this area. You know, it was hard. It was hard on your mother.

WL: Oh, yes.

Q: Especially with the kids. It must have been very hard on the women.

WL: Yes.

Q: You know, and I try to bring that out, because I think a lot of times they're forgotten . . .

WL: Well, I think sometimes the mother had the bigger part of the farming . . .

raising the children and doing all the outside work and all the farm chores and so forth. Milking the cow after my dad had gone to market.

Q: But he never took any of you boys with him to market?

WL: Maybe once or so. We'd have to hide in with the vegetables somewhere and . . . Well, when you'd get down to the market, you'd have to sleep for a while before the morning opened up and with the -- what would you call them -- these store folks would come around and purchase our produce.

Q: Did they always pay in cash?

WL: Always cash.

Q: Did your mother and father sell their eggs and things, too? I think you mentioned that.

WL: No, eggs, they used that for our family. Eggs and the cow for milk and butter, and the chickens for the eggs and . . .

Q: So would you say in a way when the Depression came that had an advantage having a farm because you had the food there?

WL: Yes, you at least had food.

Q: Did your father ever trade his food for something else in return?

WL: No. They used to take produce down to Chicago, and then if they didn't sell it, they didn't dispose of it at that time, they were starting to move home again, you know, for the next way. They'd have to take it back home and dump it or something like this.

Q: Did your mother do all her own sewing for you children?

WL: Sewing and washing and everything. No, she never bought. We went to school with button shoes then. (laughs)

Q: Did you? Did you walk to school?

WL: Yes. Never missed a day!

Q: Really?

WL: I don't think we ever missed a day in the whole seven or eight years we went to school.

Q: Where did you go to high school?

WL: I never did. I passed two grades in one year. I went to V.G. Supply and worked for a year. I still work there today yet -- part-time at the bank -- the First National Bank of Morton Grove. Counting all the money! (laughs)

Q: Well, you've had an interesting life here. I thank you for the interview.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS