

Narrator: Christine Sesterhenn
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6027 Crain, Morton Grove
Interviewer: Denise Rossmann Christopoulos
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INTRODUCTION

Christine Sesterhenn's maiden name was Schladt, and she married into the Sesterhenn family. These were two of the oldest German farming families in the area. Mrs. Sesterhenn tells of everyday life growing up on a farm and being a part of a large family. Since her mother died at an early age, Christine took on the added responsibility of washing, cooking, cleaning and caring for her ten brothers. She discusses schooling, church and recreational activities as well.

CS: Christine Sesterhenn

Q: Question asked by interviewer, Denise Rossmann Christopoulos

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: We're going to start the interview with some biographical data about yourself.
If you could tell me your parents' names?

CS: Fred Schladt and Mary Schladt.

Q: And what was your mother's maiden name?

CS: Barbara Dunfurd.

Q: What was your husband's parents' names? The Sesterhenns.

CS: They were Hausans. My husband's -- they were Sesterhenns yes. Gangolf
Sesterhenn and Barbara Sesterhenn.

Q: When did your parents come over to this country?

CS: They came from Germany.

Q: Do you have any idea what year they came over here?

CS: No, I really don't. My mother -- her father and mother came over here to the United States and then they wouldn't let her there, so she came with them. Well, then he (Christine's father) had made up his mind he was going with them. So that's how he came over.

Q: Do you know why they came to this area once they got to the United States?

CS: No, I don't.

Q: For farming?

CS: Well, they were farmers then right away, because my grandfather . . . and they lived on Golf Road way up on Golf and Emerson Street. They had a big farm there.

Q: And your parents' occupations, they were all farmers?

CS: They were all farmers.

Q: Do you have any sisters and brothers?

CS: Oh, I had eleven.

Q: Eleven!

CS: Yes, I had -- let me see -- I only had one sister. She's still living. And then . . .

Q: What's her name?

CS: Anna. The other ones were all brothers.

Q: And where do you rank? Are you the youngest, the oldest?

CS: Well, my mother was 45 years when she passed away. And then I had a little brother three years old that I had to raise. I was fourteen years old then.

Q: And you had to raise him? It must have been hard.

CS: Oh, yes.

Q: You were his mother for the time he grew up?

CS: Yes. And then, well, he got married and then he only lived a short time. Passed away.

Q: What is your birthdate?

CS: It's October the second. I'll be 84 years old this October.

Q: And where were you born?

CS: I was born right over here on Dempster Street.

Q: In Morton Grove?

CS: Yes.

Q: Can you explain a little bit further where your farmland was where you were born off of Dempster? The location?

CS: It was on Harms Road and Dempster, right on the corner. That was where our homestead

Q: And you were born there?

CS: Yes.

Q: Did your mother have a doctor at the time when most of the children . . .

CS: No, a mid-wife.

Q: Do you know who that was?

CS: Dr. Klehm from . . .

Q: She was the doctor.

CS: Yes, and then there was the midwife -- oh, now I can't remember her name.

Q: But all of you children were born at home?

CS: Yes. They were all born at home.

Q: What do you remember about your home? Is there anything that stands out in your mind about your home.

CS: (pauses) Oh, not necessarily.

Q: Didn't have many of the conveniences of today -- the appliances and things . . .

CS: Oh, well, we didn't have anything. We had to have wash outside in washtubs. I had to scrub the clothes and then after while, then they had an auction some place and my dad bought a washing machine. You know, one that you had to turn and turn and turn. Then those days we boiled our clothes in the boiler. All our white clothes was boiled. And then we had to go to work and take it our and that water we used again for the colored clothes.

Q: How about cooking?

CS: Well, we had a cook shanty. A brick place where we did the cooking. I got a picture of that, but I can't find it right off hand. That's where we did all our cooking and baking.

Q: Did you have to do all the cooking and baking for all those brothers?

CS: Yes.

Q: You had to grow up fast.

CS: Well, yes, then after a while, you know my one brother, John, he was working at Poehlmann's and then he roomed out. He didn't come, but the other boys I all raised. They all were always home.

Q: Concerning your early childhood, living on the farm, is there anything you remember about that? Did you have household chores and chores in the field?

CS: Oh, yes. I had to help in the field, and then I had to come in and did the cooking. And I made their sandwiches and packed them in baskets so that they could take them to the other ten acres over here. And then we had five acres over by Harms Road. I always had to do all the work.

Q: What did you children do for entertainment? Were there particular games that you played on the farm?

CS: Oh, well, we had games, you know, that we played like hide and go seek and we played jacks and . . .

Q: Were all the clothes made or were most things bought?

CS: Oh, no. We never ironed any sheets or nothing. That was too much, because I had to change sheets all the time. There was, let me see, one, two, three, four,

five, six beds to change. And then after a while my mother was an invalid for three years.

Q: And the youngest child?

CS: After the youngest child, then I had to take care of her. Then she died when she was 45 years old.

Q: That's young.

CS: Yes. Well, I was only fourteen then.

Q: So for medical attention, you used mainly the services of Dr. Klehm from Skokie?

CS: Dr. Sintzel was her doctor when she died. But Dr. Klehm was always her doctor. That was my doctor, too. She delivered my first baby.

Q: Do you remember any home remedies you used to use on the farm or when you were first married?

CS: Well, the only thing that I can remember, we had a fellow come with his big suitcase. And that's where we bought near all our medicines from him. My dad, he'd always doctor us up with his liniment that he had. (laughs)

Q: Did he make it himself?

CS: (laughing) Yes.

Q: I wonder what was in it?

CS: I don't know.

Q: That's interesting. (laughter) Where did you go to school?

CS: Skokie.

Q: What school?

CS: Right on Niles Center Road and . . .

Q: Sharp Corner?

CS: No, not Sharp Corner. We walked through by the cemetery, two cemeteries. And then we walked through the field. Maierhoffer's field. And there was a brick school there. Yes, it was on Niles Center Road.

Q: So you had to walk from over here to over there.

CS: All the time. It made no difference if it rained, poured, or . . . but, see when it was time to go start in the field, then we had to quit school.

Q: So you only went to school . . .

CS: Maybe two, about three months out of the year.

Q: You went to school only then?

CS: Yes. Just through the winter months.

Q: And then when it was time for harvest or working in the fields . . .

CS: Then we had to help.

Q: Do you remember your teacher?

CS: No.

Q: Was there one teacher for all different grades?

CS: I don't remember. I don't remember any.

Q: Do you remember what you were mostly interested in when you went to school?

CS: Well, I was more for sewing and doing things like that.

Q: The necessities for you in life, right?

CS: Yes.

Q: Do you remember any games that you played at school? Was there a playground?

CS: Well, we jumped the rope. (laughs) There was no playgrounds then.

Q: As far as communication in early Morton Grove goes, do you remember what newspaper most people in town subscribed to?

CS: Well, my dad always got the *Abendpost*.

Q: It's a German paper, yes.

Q: Was that more of a paper for rural country folks on the farm?

CS: Yes.

Q: Were there any other local papers that you can remember or flyers that used to come out?

CS: Not that I can remember.

Q: How did most of the news travel in town in your opinion besides the paper? How did news get around from one neighbor to the other? Just by word of mouth?

CS: Well, that's all we had. We didn't have no telephones or anything like that.

Q: Was there one particular place that most people gathered at?

CS: No, not that I can remember.

Q: A store or anything?

CS: Because we always used to go to Ahren's, that was my cousin, and Witte's (?) -- they were all related. And then we would walk there, and the next time they would come to our place. And they would be working in the field and we'd wave, and then they'd come. That night they would come over.

Q: That must have been real nice.

CS: Sure.

Q: Do you remember what kinds of crops your father raised?

CS: Well, he raised corn, potatoes and, and all kinds of vegetables. He didn't raise wheat or anything like that.

Q: Did all of the boys work in the field until they were of age to have families of their own?

CS: Until on their own, yes.

Q: And then you helped in the fields?

CS: I helped in the fields, and I had to go home and do the cooking. (laughs)

Q: Oh, that's incredible for one person to do all of that.

CS: Yes, well, I did.

Q: Do you remember what kind of livestock you owned? Did your father have farm animals?

CS: Only horses and cows. That's all.

Q: Chickens?

CS: Oh, yes, we had chickens and geese. And ducks.

Q: Do you ever remember any incidents where wild animals from the woods caused any problems in the area?

CS: No. We never had any trouble like they have now.

Q: What did your father do with most of his crops? Did he trade them, sell them or were they mainly used for your own use?

CS: We'd go to work all day and get them ready, and then the next day we would pack them in boxes or whatever. The carrots and everything we had to wash them. And then they would load them on a big wagon. The heavy things at the bottom,

like the potatoes, and the tomatoes, radishes or spinach, that would go on top of the load.

Q: And then where did he take them?

CS: Then he would hitch up the horses and then he'd drive down about four o'clock in the afternoon down to South Water Street.

Q: There was a market there in Chicago?

CS: Yes. That was the market. There still is a market there.

Q: Did he go with other farmers in the area?

CS: No, he always went by himself.

Q: And was this once a week?

CS: Sometimes it was once. It depended just on how much crops he had to take along.

Q: Did your father ever sell any crops where he had to ship them out by train?

CS: No. No. He always took them himself.

Q: Do you remember what kind of farming tools your father had used on the farm?

CS: No.

Q: Was there a type of get-together when it was time for harvest when different farmers would get together and help one another?

CS: No, . . .we didn't raise wheat and things like that, that depended upon threshing or something like that. But we didn't have that. We only had hay, so he'd have to mow that. Of course, then we would have to help him load it and haul it in.

Q: That's a job.

CS: I worked hard!

Q: What church did your family belong to?

CS: We belonged to the church in Skokie. Detzer's, at that time. It was a Lutheran church.

Q: Was your family actively involved in activities with the church?

CS: Well, they had church picnics and things like that.

Q: Did they have a girl's club or some type of women's organization?

CS: No, no, they never had anything like they have now.

Q: For recreation, what did you do?

CS: (laughs) We had to find our own recreation.

Q: Were there sports?

CS: No, we went to Riverview Park or things like that, but we never had any otherwise.

Q: How about swimming?

CS: No, they didn't have any. There was no place in town. We didn't know what swimming was. (laughter)

Q: As far as entertainment goes, were there different dances in town?

CS: Oh, yes, that we did when we got older, big enough. My dad, you know, he was kind of -- he always thought that I would meet somebody and he wouldn't . . . (laughs)

Q: Oh, he wouldn't have anyone at home?

CS: No, he didn't want me to . . . (laughs)

Q: Is that mainly how the young people got together at that time?

CS: Oh, yes.

Q: Where were most of the dances?

CS: At Riverside. Then Klehm's had a dance floor. There was another one -- I don't know who that one was across the street from Klehm's. They had dances.

Q: What type of music?

CS: Oh, well, they'd have all kinds of music. They played German music.

Q: And picnics?

CS: Yes. Picnics we had a lot of. There was always picnics somewhere that we . . .

Q: How, did the church organize the picnics or how did most people find out about them?

CS: Now like Klehm's, they had their own. They had their grocery store and their saloon right there on the corner. And then they had a picnic grove right next to their store. They would run the picnic.

Q: Were there any special events in town where people would get together on a different holiday or any particular day?

CS: The only thing that I can think of is that from our church they always had a summer picnic. That was only once a year.

Q: How did your family get most of the meat that you ate?

CS: That was Mr. Loutsch with the wagon and two horses. (laughs) He had a big bell and he would ring the bell, and then we knew he was coming.

Q: He went from farm to farm?

CS: From farm to farm. He had it all in the big wagon. I don't know how he kept it on those hot days, but he did it.

Q: Did he come by once a day?

CS: No, maybe twice a week. So we'd have to buy enough meat, you know, to -- of course, then we had our own, too, from our pigs and we had chickens that we killed. We had ducks and geese, and the pigs that we killed, see, they would smoke that. Then that would keep, so we had our own bacon.

Q: Transportation in town. I know that was . . .

CS: Our feet! (laughs)

Q: What were the streets like? Were they just dirt roads?

CS: Oh, they were all gravel. They didn't have no cement sidewalks or anything like that.

Q: What did you use to get around in?

CS: Walk!

Q: Did your family have any type of vehicle?

CS: Well, we had a horse and wagon, and buggy, that we could go, but my dad, we never could take it to go anywheres with it unless it was important.

Q: When the First World War came, did that affect your lives in any way? Or would you like to talk about your marriage first?

CS: When the First World War came, I had one brother that had to go to war. The other ones were all too small.

Q: Did it affect your family life other than just your brother leaving?

CS: No, no.

Q: Things went on pretty much the same?

CS: But my dad never was in the war. But I have brothers. I had John -- of course, he's gone. And Fritz is gone. He was in the war.

Q: Which is the one that was in the First War?

CS: That was Fritz.

Q: And were the other brothers in the Second World War?

CS: No, there was none in the Second World -- not from my brothers. Then my boys were in war. In the Second World War, I had one boy that was killed. The oldest one, Clarence, he was killed.

Q: What year were you married?

CS: Gosh, I don't know. (laughs)

Q: Do you remember how you met your husband?

CS: Yes, on the dance floor. (laughter)

Q: Did you? All your father's worrying!

CS: Yes.

Q: How old were you when you got married?

CS: Eighteen.

Q: And what was your husband's full name?

CS: Nicholas Sesterhenn.

Q: How many children did you have?

CS: Seven.

Q: And did you live on the farm?

CS: No.

Q: Did he have a farm?

CS: No. I didn't live on the farm then. When we got married, we lived in Gross Pointe. And from there we moved to Skokie. You remember Sile's -- they had a bakery shop?

Q: I'm familiar with it.

CS: That's where my husband worked.

Q: So the farm life ended when you got married?

CS: Well, there was nothing for us no more. Then my dad was off of the farm because he lost my mother and then he got married, and -- he build that house on Harms

Road, and from there he went to Evanston. That house is still standing there, too.

Q: So after your mother passed away, the farm was left behind?

CS: Yes.

Q: He sold that?

CS: He only was on the farm maybe two years after that when my mother died. I wasn't married yet when we had these little packages of seed, like flower seed, and then you would have to sell so many packages of flower seed and then they gave you one of these phonographs. You know, with the horn on. And they had round, just like hard paper. You had to stick it on there, and they had a big horn on there. You had a little round piece that had a needle on there, and you put it on this round thing. You'd have to wind it first. And then you put this round thing on, with the needle on. The thing would go around and around and around and around.

Q: When did you get one of those?

CS: When I was home. I earned that. I went and sold seeds to different. . .

Q: When you were still on the farm?

CS: Then I said to my dad, "Well," I says, "I'm going to go and sell seed." And

he said, "You got enough seed home here." I said, "Well, I want to get a phonograph." Then after while, he used it more than I did. (laughs)

Q: You must have had to sell a lot of seeds.

CS: Oh, yes.

Q: A lot of packets. Do you remember the airport in Morton Grove -- the place where they used to fly out of off of Dempster there?

CS: There was no airport. We didn't have no airport at that time. They didn't know what airplanes were.

Q: This was about 1914 through '32, 1932 . . .

CS: No, the first airplane was when we were in -- where were we living? In Harms, yes, at Harms Road. That was the first time that we ever heard of an airplane.

Q: Do you remember anything about the Depression years? Were you married then?

CS: Yes.

Q: Was it difficult raising your family?

CS: It was pretty hard to raise all of them.

Q: Did the Depression affect your life in any way?

CS: No.

Q: Or your husband's job?

CS: No, he always worked.

Q: And then World War II came, and you had a son that was in the war?

CS: Yes.

Q: What do you remember about law and order in early Morton Grove?

CS: Well, we lived in Evanston, too. We lived in Evanston for quite a while when my husband was on the milk wagon then. And then from there we moved to Morton Grove.

Q: You moved back to Morton Grove from Evanston?

CS: Yes.

CS: Then he worked for Brooks in the greenhouse. And from there, he went to work for Lochner's and that's when he passed away when he had the accident.

Q: Are there any physical features about Morton Grove that you remember? Different buildings or the way the town was set up?

CS: Oh, this was farmland when we moved here. Had weeds growing that high.
(gestured) There was no houses here at all. Huscher's was the only house. Yes, that one here. That was the only one that was standing here when ours was built.

Q: That must have been incredible to have done all those things and see so much happen and change within your lifetime.

CS: Oh, yes.

Q: Are there any stores you remember?

CS: Well, there was Frank's store and then there was Loutsch's. Well, that isn't there any more. They had a little meat store, and it was just a little town. There was nothing built up or anything. This was all farmland. Then after a while, The Dells came, and then Lincoln Tavern. After a while there was houses that were build on Dempster Street. There was never not much there. See, Huscher's lived on the other corner there. Of course, that house is gone now. That's where Murphy's . . .

Q: Steak House?

CS: Yes, had their Steak House. That was Huscher's property then. And then their house was moved. This is their old house from there. That brick house what is standing there, that was moved from over there over here.

Q: Oh, I see.

CS: It was a frame house, but then they brick veneered it. So that's their old homestead.

Q: You said last time I was here that you converted when you married your husband to be a Catholic. What do you remember about that?

CS: Oh, it was nothing. My dad didn't like it, but then what could he do about it.
(laughs)

Q: Well, you've had a really interesting life anyway. Did you ever work? Did you ever have any job once you got married?

CS: I worked in Evanston with a family for, well, two years before I was married.

Q: What did you do?

CS: Housework.

Q: I see. Where did you live in Evanston?

CS: We lived on Ridge Avenue and right near Miller Street. That's where my children went to school. And then we lived on Ridge Avenue, and then from Ridge Avenue we moved here to Morton Grove.

Q: You came back again then. Did most of your family live in Morton Grove?

CS: They all went away different places. The only one that lived here in Morton Grove was Clarence, the oldest one that was killed in the Second World War.

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

CS: I was only sixteen years at that time, I carried my mother all over where she wanted to go. If she wanted to go to church, we'd put her in the buggy and horse. They'd hitch the horse up for me, and then I'd put her in the buggy and I'd drive her to church, and I would drive her home again. I'd take her off of the buggy, out of the buggy, and carry her in the house, and get her prepared. Then I'd have to make dinner and . . .

Q: Was she a weak woman?

CS: No, but she had some kind of a sickness in her leg that she couldn't move. She got that when my last brother was born.

Q: When you married your husband, where were you married?

CS: We were married in St. Nicholas Church in Evanston.

Q: Did you go on a honeymoon?

CS: No. (laughs) We didn't know what honeymoon was. (laughs) No, they didn't do that.

Q: So where did you live when you moved back to Morton Grove here after you were married in Evanston? Where was your home?

CS: When we moved here, we lived in Gross Point -- we lived in Skokie when he was working for John Sile at that time. One of his girls is married to the undertaker, Haben. She was a Sile girl. She used to come to my place. She was only a little girl then when we lived in Skokie. And her two girls they were at my place more than what they were home when we lived in Skokie.

Q: What did your husband do for him?

CS: He delivered groceries. You know, bakery goods -- bread and cakes and pies. He had a wagon with two horses.

Q: How long did he do that?

CS: Oh, at least five or six years. Then he worked on a golf course for a while, and from there he got into the greenhouse business with Brooks. Then from Brooks he went to Lochner's. My husband never had a job that paid wages like they do now. When we lived in Skokie, he'd come home with fourteen dollars a week. And I had to make ends meet with that.

Q: Had you bought a home at the time?

CS: No.

Q: Were you renting?

CS: We were renting. But then we only paid maybe fifteen dollars a month rent. One time we only paid twelve dollars a month. When we moved from Evanston over here, this is the first house that we bought. This was before . . . (pauses) . . . let's see, sixty-five years.

Q: So when you moved from Evanston to Skokie, Skokie, to Morton Grove, this was the home right here.

CS: Yes. Sixty-five years we lived here in this house.

Q: Oh. That's incredible.

CS: (laughs) We didn't have what the kids have nowadays. They're never satisfied. I often say that with my grandchildren. We made our own cheese, and my mother would go to work and get kimmel (?) (cumin (?)), that little seed, from the store. And then I'd have to go to work and take the cream off; we'd make butter from the cream. And then that milk would get hard and from there we would make cheese out of it.

Q: Did you sell that or was that just for your own use?

CS: No, that we used for ourself. And we would make it in little balls and then my mother would lay it on the board. Then it would dry, and we would cut it in little slices, and we'd use it on our bread.

Q: What did you do for an icebox?

CS: We didn't have any.

Q: How did you keep things cool?

CS: In the basement, in the cellar. We never could keep anything any length of time. You know, in the wintertime, like potatoes and white turnips and our carrots, that would all be in the basement, and then from there we would have to live all winter. Sometimes the potatoes would go off. We had to go downstairs and pick the things off so they wouldn't wither. Then we'd have to go to work and put them in another bin, and, oh, we always had something to do.

Q: What did you do for water? Did you have a well?

CS: We had a pump. You'd have to go out and pump water in the wintertime. Then we had a rain cistern for our water that we used for washing.

Q: Didn't get to take a bath every day, did you?

CS: Oh, no. (laughs) We were glad to take a bath once a week. In the wintertime, we didn't take any bath -- just wash ourself.

Q: Did your family speak German when you were at home?

CS: Yes, they all did.

Q: All the children did?

CS: No, we did talk when we were little, but after a while we got away from it. I don't think that I could talk a German word. It's just like years ago you didn't know what English was. In school you learned German.

Q: Who were your neighbors over there on the farm where you were born off of Harms and Dempster?

CS: Oh, Carson's was on my side, and Martha Ross was opposite us. And Lumpp's were on the other corner and Milly Brey (?). They lived on the other corner. And Heppner's lived further down and Theobald's. They're still there in that old house.

Q: Is that the original house the Theobald's live in?

CS: That's the original house. Heppner's is, I don't know if theirs is still standing there or not.

Q: No, they have the new homes built up there. But when you say they were on the corner, it sounds like these types of corners, but they weren't.

CS: No, see when we came form Harms Road, then there was a field first, and then came our house. Martha Ross and them, they were living in a peak. This was their house going to Skokie, and then on the other side of there where their barn and that was standing that was Theobald Road. Then, going the other way, were Carson's and they lived on, see that was part of Heppner's field. That was a triangle.

Q: Was anyone in your family or your husband involved in politics?

CS: No.

Q: Where did you do most of your shopping when you bought things?

CS: Well, we always went to Niles Center. There was Klehm's and Meyer's. Let me see, who else had a store there?

Q: What did Meyer's carry? The bakery?

CS: No, they had a grocery store. Right on the other side of Klehm's Park, where they had their park where they had their dancing and the . . .

Q: I see. What other type of businesses were there?

CS: We didn't have no banks or nothing like that.

Q: Everybody kept their money in their home?

CS: Everybody kept their money home. We never had no robbing or anything like that.
We didn't know what that was. Never.

Q: Where did the men buy their liquor?

CS: They had saloons. They bought it there.

Q: Did the saloon owners or keepers make their own beer or did they buy it?

CS: No, they always bought their beer, but they made their own wine and stuff.

Q: Where were the saloons in town?

CS: The saloons? They were all in that where the bank is there now. On that street.

Q: In Niles Center there?

CS: Yes, in Niles Center on that road.

Q: So the men would have to go into Niles Center? How about Dilg's down here?

CS: Well, they always had theirs, too.

Q: Do you remember The Bridge Inn down on Dempster where Parfait's is?

CS: No.

Q: That was in later years. Did any of the men fish in the area?

CS: Oh, sure.

Q: Out of the river here? Was that a favorite sport?

CS: That's where the boys, well, we pert near lived on in the wintertime is fish.

Q: Really?

CS: Yes, they would go out and catch it through the ice. And rabbits. They would shoot rabbits, and then they'd bring them home. They would skin them. We'd make hasenpfeffer. And we killed our own pigs. We had all our own sausage. We always made all our own sausage.

Q: What kind of fish were caught in the river over there?

CS: Well, they had bullheads, and then they had these carp. But we never used them. We didn't like them, so we would take them to Evanston. We'd sell them to the niggers. The niggers liked them. Then after a while, when they found out that we had them, then they would come out and get them. We didn't have to go no more and take them over there.

Q: Sounds like your family had a lot of connections with Evanston. Did you have relatives there?

CS: Well, we had my uncle and they all lived there.

Q: So you went there quite a bit?

CS: Oh, sure. They all lived there. My Grandpa William lived there after a while on Greenwood Street.

Q: Well, your grandpa settled in this area to begin with, didn't he?

CS: He lived near Harms Road on that little street what comes on that side of Harms Road. They always call it the dinky, where the little dinky car line used to run. Well, we would go to work and walk over there and we'd take the little dinky car line to go to Evanston. That would take you to Glenview Golf Course. And then there was a little store there, and on the other corner was the dance floor. That's where we'd sneak away on my dad and we'd . . .(laughs) . . . go there to the dance floor. Then he would find out, and the next morning we'd get it. (laughs)

Q: Who owned that where the dance floor was?

CS: I don't know who owned it at that time.

Q: Was that Harms Woods over there?

CS: That was Harms Woods, yes.

Q: How long has it been since your husband passed away?

CS: Twenty years. I've been alone. It'll be twenty-one this October. I'll be 84 years old.

Q: How long did he work at Lochner's?

CS: Oh, about four years. Four or five years.

Q: What was his job?

CS: He delivered flowers and worked in the greenhouse. Helped plant flowers and . . .

Q: That was nice.

CS: No, I had a hard life. I really did. When I was a girl, I worked all the time even if I had little ones, I took in washing and ironing.

Q: You're a survivor!

CS: That time when we lived in Evanston, I had 35 student washings from the university. And my husband would go and take the wagon and I had to know which was which and not get them mixed up. So I had to mark every one. When he would bring them home, I had to mark and put tags on every one. But I was always correct.

Q: How old is your oldest?

CS: Clarence would have been . . .(pauses) . . . well, we would have been married 50 years three years after my husband passed away. He was figuring on that so bad, he was.

Q: Do you have girls?

CS: Two girls, Margaret and Marian.

Q: They all have families now?

CS: Oh, yes, they all got families and . . . (laughs) . . . their children and then them children got children.

Q: So are you a great-grandmother?

CS: Great-grandma. Let me see. Margaret has got two and (pauses) Martha's got two, three. Mary's got three. And Dick's Barbara has got two. And there's some more.

Q: I imagine it's a house full.

CS: I have about eleven great-grandchildren.

Q: When they all get together, boy! (laughs)

CS: Well, they used to always, but they don't know more.

Q: Do they all live around here?

CS: They always came here. It was always at Christmas time up and down stairs. Yes. Good thing I had the big basement. Now things are all so different. You know, years ago we would get together, aunts and uncles and all of us, we used to get together. But now they don't do that no more. But now last year, the Sesterhenn family, there was two boys. And my grandson is working with one of the boys. He is in that factory where Rogie is working. Well, when he interviewed Rogie for to come to work for him, then he says, "Well, what's your name?" And he says, "Roger Sesterhenn." "Roger Sesterhenn?" He says, "Yeah." He says, "From what family are you?" He says, "I'm from Nick Sesterhenn. I'm his grandson." And then he says, "Oh," he says, "but you never came to our family reunion yet." So then last year we went to the family reunion. They had it at . . . (pauses) . . . up there on Harms Road in Harms Woods. You know where the Bit and Bridle, the riding stables are. Well, it's right opposite that. Yes, it's got a big grove where they always have picnics. I don't know what they call it. Well, anyways, they have had that picnic grove every year -- the Sesterhenn's -- but we never knew they had it there.

Q: Oh, so you were left out?

CS: Well, there was different ones from different families. They were never asked to go. They never knew that we belonged to them. Last year, Rogie says, "Oh, yes," he says, "my dad has brothers and they have children but they never were to the

picnic reunion.” So then we all went to that picnic and reunion. They made him come to their house and make out a list and name them all, and then they sent them all invitations. They made it on a Sunday, so we all went over there. We took our lunch, and you should see the Sesterhenns! We never seen so many Sesterhenns!

Q: (laughs) They just keep growing and growing.

CS: Yes, each one has so many children and then those have children again. And, oh!

Q: Was Michael the one now that was involved with St. Martha’s? Helping Father Schmidt organize St. Martha’s?

CS: That was my husband.

Q: Oh, it was Nick?

CS: Yes.

Q: Oh, I wasn’t sure. I thought it was Michael. Isn’t there a Michael?

CS: Mike Sesterhenn was the one where Father Schmidt stayed by.

Q: Oh, in Glenview.

CS: In Glenview. See, he stayed with him.

Q: Did you ever travel anywhere in your life?

CS: Well, I and my husband made a lot of tripe after the children got bigger.

Q: But when you were younger?

CS: No.

Q: When you were first married?

CS: Then we didn't know nothing like that. We had enough to do to keep the family going. (laughs) Buy clothes and . . .

Q: Where did your children go to school?

CS: They went to Morton Grove here.

Q: Grove School?

CS: Yes. Here.

Q: Why didn't you go to Grove School?

CS: Because we were on the other side. See, we couldn't go there.

Q: Were you considered living in Morton Grove, though?

CS: Yes.

Q: But you were on the boundary line?

CS: We were out of the boundary line to go to school.

Q: So most of the children that you went to school with were from Skokie?

CS: And then from there when we moved to Harms Road further up, then we could go to Morton Grove School.

Q: Did you go to high school?

CS: No. (laughs)

Q: What grade did you go up to?

CS: About eighth grade. That was about all. And then we didn't have hardly any schooling during the winter months. The other time we had to work in the field. No, it's not like it was now.

Q: Who were your girlfriends when you were growing up? Martha Ross was.

CS: Martha and then there was Milly Brey -- her name was Seuer (?). After a while, she got married to Carl Seuer, but that was Milly Brey. And then there was the Carson's and the Theobald's.

Q: Did you girls ever get together and do anything?

CS: Yes, we would go out.

Q: To the dances? (laughs)

CS: They'd come over, and my mother, then she was well yet. She would make lunch and we'd have a . . . (pauses) . . . They were always nice, you know. We always had some company, and then the Ahren's -- that was my cousin -- and the Witte's. Then there was another Theobald living on Harms Road. And we all got together.

Q: Which Theobald is it living in the house right now? Is her name Helen?

CS: Helen, yes.

Q: And is she the daughter of the man that originally had that house?

CS: Yes, that was Charlie.

Q: How many children did they have?

CS: Gee, I don't know. There was three girls, I know.

Q: And she's living in that home now by herself.

CS: No, Mary is living with her. She's got one sister living home yet. And one of them died. They had an invalid brother. He passed away after the father and mother were passed away. I don't know. He got so sick, and then they couldn't do anything for him no more. Of course, he never went to school. He was always crippled.

Q: So your husband was quite active in town then, wasn't he?

CS: Oh, yes.

Q: If he could organize all those people for St. Martha's, he must have known everybody.

CS: Well, you know, at that time they made friends easier than they do now.

Q: Not as many people, and they all had the same background.

CS: You see, they would get together. We'd have summer picnics and that and then everybody would come to the picnic.

Q: And bring some food.

CS: Yes.

Q: What did you do? Just play games at the picnic?

CS: Oh, they had games and they had raffles and they had these puppets that they threw balls at. All kinds of stuff.

Q: Were you married to Nicholas when he helped Father Schmidt organize St. Martha's? 1904? 19--?

CS: Yes, then I was married already.

Q: Did you help set up the church over there?

CS: I ran the Lady's Fidelity.

Q: You were the president?

CS: Yes.

Q: What did they do? Just get the church ready?

CS: Well, we would make different things, and then we would have like a picnic -- we'd sell them.

Q: A bazaar?

CS: Have chances, you know, on so many things. We'd make a dinner. All of us ladies would get together. Each one would do some cooking, and we'd all bring something. We made homemade pies and cakes.

Q: So you organized the women and your husband organized the men? (interview ends)

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS