

Irene Stellar

Oral History Interview
August 31, 1989

Narrator: Irene Stellar
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Interviewer: Yvonne Ryden
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INTRODUCTION

Irene Stellar is a descendant of two families, both of which settled in Morton Grove in 1842. Her father was Fred Huscher, son of Frederick Huscher, the first of five generations in Morton Grove bearing that name. Her mother was Clara Haupt, youngest child of Nicholas Haupt. Irene relates the activities and celebrations of her loving family.

Irene tells about the homes that lines Dempster Street near Austin Avenue. She also reminisces about Morton Grove Public School and Niles Center High School in the mid-30s.

Irene has been an active member of the Morton Grove Historical Society serving in many capacities. She is a Past President of the Women's Auxiliary of V. F. W. Post 3854 and continues to volunteer many hours there.

IS: Irene Stellar

Q: Yvonne Ryden

TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Q: Good morning, Irene.

IS: Good morning.

Q: Are you prepared to talk to us about all the nice things you remember about growing up in Morton Grove?

IS: I can give you a background of my goings on. I was born on March 4, 1920. My mother was Clara Haupt Huscher. My father was Fred L. Huscher. At the time of my birth, there was one other girl in the family, my sister Florence who is approximately two years and nine months older than I. I was born and we were raised on the southwest corner of Dempster and Austin Avenue. At that time Austin Avenue was called Jefferson Avenue, and it was not paved. It was not dedicated until some time around 1927 when it went through from Dempster Street to Lincoln Avenue. At that time the name was changed from Jefferson Avenue to Austin Avenue.

Q: I guess that continues the name of the street up from Chicago.

IS: That's right. It's in the sixty hundred block west. My early childhood . . . I had two brothers that were born after me, Fred N. Huscher and Carl F. Huscher. At the time that we lived on Dempster Street across the street from us was the old Huscher residence. It was then The Dells Roadhouse. That was the family estate of Frederick and Marie Huscher, who were my grandparents. However, we lived across the street for many years, and in 1927, the house that we were living in, which belonged to William Huscher and Dad rented, was moved to the present location at 6013 Crain Street. It was moved by horse and pulled on wheels and when they came to a ditch they'd have to build it up. The house was

taken across the prairie, because at that time that's what it was. It had just been subdivided and there were no houses.

Q: So you're saying it was all prairie south of Dempster Street to where your home was going to be?

IS: That's right. In 1927 the house was moved, and we lived in the house as it was being moved.

Q: You did?

IS: Yes. We had a hired girl at that time by the name of Katherine, and she was from Hungary. She was a sort of a mother's helper. All of a sudden she came to my mother and she said, "Mrs. Huscher," she says, "I am so seasick, I've got to get out of the house. I can't stand it." So, she took my two brothers and herself, and they walked over to my Aunt Frieda Sonne's place, which was on School and Dempster Street. It was just a thing that we remembered from the moving.

Q: About how long would the move have taken when you say you lived in the house while they were moving it?

IS: Just one day.

Q: So you stayed in the house the one day while it was being moved.

IS: The next day it was put on the foundation.

Q: Is the house still there?

IS: Oh, sure. It's at 6013 Crain Street. And my sister still lives there when she comes in from California.

Q: Well, who lives in the house when she isn't there?

IS: She has the lower part rented out.

Q: So it's still there. It was your childhood home, and it's been converted into a two-family home. And your sister when she comes from California stays upstairs, but the bottom part is rented out.

IS: It was converted just about eight years ago. It was after my sister was married that she put a flat upstairs for herself.

Q: But there are two kitchens now and there are . . .

IS: That house had a double living room, a dining room, a den, two bedrooms and a very large kitchen on the first floor, and a bathroom. And on the second floor we had three large rooms and lots of closets. There's a bathroom upstairs. So, really, it was a big home. It was the desire of my mother and dad that each kid should have their own room, but it didn't turn out that way. The boys always stayed downstairs. My sister and I had the rooms upstairs.

Q: So you did each have your own room.

IS: Yes. In 1930, after my grandmother, Marie Huscher, died on the eighteenth of July, my Aunt Emma Huscher came to live with us. And she lived between our house and Sigel, Illinois, where Tina Bigler, Tina Huscher Bigler, lived.

Q: She split time with the two families.

IS: That's right. So, really Emma Huscher called our home her home.

Q: Let's go back and talk about the house on the north side of Dempster. I think you said the family homestead more or less was on the northwest corner? Or wouldn't it have been the corner?

IS: Northwest corner of Dempster and Austin.

Q: Now, I've seen pictures of a big, big, big house. Is that it?

IS: That was the big Dells. There was a section built on the house, but it was a huge home.

Q: Yes, now that was built by the first Frederick, first Fred Huscher?

IS: Right.

Q: And his wife.

IS: And his wife, Marie.

Q: And where had they come from? They apparently were the first Huschers to live in Morton Grove.

IS: As far as we know, Grandpa and Grandma Huscher came to Morton Grove in 1842. Now, I know that and my grandparents on the Haupt side, Nicholas and Magdelene Haupt, which were the parents of my mother, came to Morton Grove in 1842 in the fall of the year. So the Huschers came in the spring and the Haupts came in the fall. And the property of the Huschers went along on the north side of Dempster almost a little beyond School Street.

Q: There wouldn't have been the streets that are in there now, the streets have "M" names like Moody and Meade.

IS: There were no streets.

Q: Was it farmland? Did they farm?

IS: It was farm, yes. My father tells of farming there as a young boy helping his father. There also was a meteorite that fell. As my father would tell it, there was a hole, a large hole in one of the fields. It would be back near Church Street

not before the forest preserve property. There was a sort of a prairie they used, and farmland. And there was a meteorite that fell there. The crater was there but they've never found any of the cinder, but he said he remembered that as a boy, that happened.

Q: He remembers when the crater was formed.

IS: Yes. It was just a piece of conversation, you know, that was something a little interesting.

Q: So the first Huschers lived on the northwest corner and owned property that extended all the way west to about what would be School Street.

IS: Those were my grandparents on my father's side.

Q: And, of course, we've talked about other people, too. We've talked about the Haupt family, Nicholas and Magdelene, and how he settled on Lincoln Avenue. So your ties to Morton Grove go back to 1842.

IS: That's right. That's interesting.

Q: Now then, each generation has had a Fred or, well, the first Fred was Frederick.

IS: There was Frederick. My father was Frederick L. My brother was Frederick Nicholas.

Q: Oh, for the other grandfather.

IS: And he has a son, Frederick T. for Thomas, and Fred T. has a son, Fred, Frederick Michael.

Q: That's the little boy, now.

IS: Yes. So really, there's been five generations with the name Frederick.

Q: But they aren't juniors or anything like that because each middle name was changed.

IS: That's right.

Q: How interesting. All right. Now, you talked about the fact that when your grandmother died, the property became The Dells.

IS: Evidently, prior to about 1917 or 1915, the house was vacated and made into a roadhouse. And at that time my grandparents went to live in the apartment of Sophia Haupt.

Q: Oh, so they lived over there on Lincoln Avenue next to Morton Avenue.

IS: Then there was a fire in the upstairs of the house. And it was shortly after that that my father was building a house, or purchasing the house on Callie Avenue at 8643 Callie Avenue. At that time, there was a romance going on wth my mother but after the apartment had burnt, his mother wanted the house. So, he sold the house to his mother. And Grandma Huscher and Aunt Emma Huscher lived in that house until Grandma died. Emma Huscher always retained the ownership of the house and took care of my grandmother. And then after my grandmother died, she rented the house out and came to live with us on Crain Street.

Q: Do you know the wedding date for your parents?

IS: That has always been kept a secret. It's not really a secret.

Q: Did they elope or . . . ?

IS: Well, they just were married and that was it. And I think it was a . . . Dad was living downstairs and my mother was living upstairs at the Paroubek house.

And they were married and didn't say anything for a long time and finally they did.

Q: That happens, you hear about that. Sometimes it's because there's a difference of religion in the background. Was that true in this case?

IS: Yes, my father was Lutheran and my mother was Catholic.

Q: I see.

IS: And my father was very strict in seeing that we were brought up as Catholics, and he would get us up when there was church. We all went to church. He would go to his church and we would go to ours.

Q: So he still kept to the promise that the children would be raised Catholic.

IS: That's right. That's right.

Q: Now, let's talk about your mother and her childhood. I think you know some interesting stories about . . .

IS: Mother didn't talk much about her childhood other than little wisps what we'd get once in a while when we'd be with Aunt Tilly and Aunt Rosie when . . .

Q: Well, tell about her place in the family. I think that's part of the reason.

IS: Well, my mother was the youngest of eight children. She had five sisters. Eleanor, Elizabeth, Sophia, Mathilda, Rose and my mother—those were the six girls—and Peter and Leo were the two boys. And really, from what we were told, my mother was thirteen-and-a-half months when her mother died.

Q: So sad.

IS: And she was three-and-a-half years old when her father died. At that time the people wanted to put them into an orphanage. Eleanor, Elizabeth and

Sophie, the three oldest, decided they wanted to stay together in the house. And they did, and an administrator was appointed. He would sort of be an overseer of what monies came in and all that. And I know my mother always used to say the first of the month, they'd always come to inspect the house. And everyone had to do their chore to have the house spic and span, because she always said they'd come in and they'd put their fingers around to see if there was any dust and if they were clean, if everything was in order. As a child she went to Saint Peter's Catholic School in Niles Center. And at that time, in the morning on they're way down to the northwest corner of Golf and Harms Road. That's where the pasture was. And then they would walk on to Saint Peter's School.

Q: At a long distance, in Niles Center.

IS: In Niles Center. And they would have to come back at night and bring the cows back when they came from school. It wasn't all the time but it was some of the time when they couldn't ride a horse to take them or that. My mother was quite a horsewoman, and she was with her brother, Peter Haupt. Peter Haupt had the butcher shop in Morton Grove for many years. And my mother worked in the butcher shop for, oh, many, many years. But Mom used to always say they'd go out to get the horses. It was almost to Oakton Street and then they'd get on the old horses and they would ride the horses back. But they couldn't ride them all the way into the barnyard. They'd have to get off before they got there. Aunt Tilly and Mother were the two little devils of the family evidently, because they were the ones that would always try and . . .

Q: And do tricks and things, mischief.

IS: That's right. But it was a very happy family and to the dying day of the last child, they always got together on birthdays. It was always a very close family. There wouldn't be a Saturday night or a Sunday but what you'd visit one of the aunts or uncles because they always felt they had to keep close to one another. They had been raised that way.

Q: Keeping close was what had kept them as a family when they were orphaned.

IS: As a family, yes.

Q: I know your mother worked for a while for Sophie in the telephone exchange. I've heard about that from Helen Paroubek.

IS: Yes, she worked with Aunt Sophie in the telephone exchange. And, of course, my father was living downstairs, that's how the romance started, I think, more or less.

Q: That's when his parents were renting that flat downstairs.

IS: That's right. I remember my mother telling a little story that Uncle Peter Haupt always kept pigeons. He used anise oil to keep the pigeons to come home. And she remembers Aunt Tilly and her got into the anise oil and rubbed it on themselves and they smelled like a bunch of anise oil kids. And Uncle Peter was very, very upset that they used his anise oil for perfume.

Q: They must have smelled good, though. I love the smell of anise oil. So, your parents got married and then your father could not use the Callie Avenue house because his mother and Emma were living there, or his mother and father.

IS: Well, his mother, father, and Aunt Emma lived there. And then Grandpa Huscher died in 1917. So then, that's how Emma stayed with her mother always.

Q: I see. Now, tell about the house. The house that you lived in, the one before it was moved to Crain—did he have that built or do you think that house was already standing? Do you know?

IS: Well, right after Mother and Dad married, their first house, they lived across the street on Georgiana Avenue from the Catholic Church. I believe it was Karsten's house. And they lived there, well, it must have been close to 1920, just before I was born. I don't know if I was born in that house or if I was born on Dempster Street. That I don't know. And then shortly after that they rented the house from Bill Huscher. And then Bill Huscher sold a lot of his property that was on the other side of Dempster Street, on the south side and had it subdivided. So, when it was subdivided, he sold the house to my Dad and very reasonable. That's why that house was moved. And the house had the gas jets in it yet, even though there was electricity, you know. In our kitchen at home, I could show you where the gas jets were. I remember the gas jets were still there. Of course, then Mother had them all covered up and that, but . . .

Q: Now, on the rest of Dempster Street on the north side—we've talked about the fact that there was the big family house and that the land, the property extended west to about Georgiana. Somewhere in there, I know, at one point there was a gas station because it's now been converted into a hotdog stand.

IS: That was at The Dells. They used to call that The Dells Gas Station, and that belonged to my father. It was one of the first gas stations—I wouldn't say the

first but one of the first gas stations in Morton Grove. My father ran it for many years, and then he had hired different people to rent it. And then finally Joe Bauernfeind came from, I believe, Wisconsin, and he was looking for a job so Dad hired him and then later on he took over the full running of the gas station and maintained it.

Q: I don't want to put you on the spot, but if I ask you to tell me about the Huscher family starting with each generation, could you name the members of the family?

IS: The first Huschers were Frederick and Maria.

Q: Okay. And did they have brothers or sisters in this area? See, I don't mean to, but I'm putting you on the spot.

IS: There were one or two brothers or sisters of my father. My grandmother's name was Kolsch, Marie Kolsch. It's spelled with an umlaut over the "o"—K-O-L-S-C-H.

Q: You're not real sure about that. Okay, so we'll put a question mark.

IS: But it had the, the umlaut over there. And then there was, there was from Marie and Fred Huscher, there was Frieda Sonne and Christina Bigler, who lived in Sigel, Illinois.

Q: Christina?

IS: Yes. We called her Teeny.

Q: Okay. Christina, what was the last name?

IS: Bigler, B-I-G-L-E-R. And Christina was called Teeny all the time by the family.

Q: Was she teeny?

IS: No. [laughs]

Q: All right. Go on.

IS: And then there was Emma that was unmarried, and my father, Fred.

Q: So your father was the only boy in that family?

IS: Yes, he was the youngest of four children.

Q: I hear your father was a very outgoing man. On one of the recordings I've done somebody talked about the fact that he brought people home for dinner on the spur of the moment, that your father was just a jovial, good-hearted . . .

IS: My father was very charitable. And during the Depression there was many a time he would come home to my mother and say, "Clara, we have to do something for these people." And I remember my mother going down in the basement, taking a box, and she'd take beans off the shelf that she had canned and pickles off the shelf, and jams,—she was great in doing all of her own canning—and tomatoes. And she'd fix up a whole box of things and Dad would take them back to the people. We had one family that lived across the street from us. I don't want to name them, but they were very, very desperately poor. And the husband was on relief and he worked for the . . . well, at that time, if you were on relief, you had to do some jobs for the community.

Q: I forgot what it was, whether it was P.W.A or W.P.A.

IS: W.P.A., something like that. They had eight children, and my mother would trade a barrel of flour. And she would buy staples that they needed. And I know at times they'd get bags and bags of dried beans—you can eat just so

many dried beans and you can eat just so much rice and you can use so much flour, and my mother would trade back and forth, sometimes even canned goods and that.

Q: Take some of their surplus for things that . . .

IS: Right. If we had any clothing that would be too small for us, it was given to the woman, even Dad's suits—she would make them over, use the pants legs and make an outfit for her boys. If someone would call and say they were out of coal and they didn't have money to pay for it, my dad would take two or three bags of coal and take to them.

Q: Which brings me to, what was your father's business?

TAPE ONE, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE ONE, SIDE B

IS: My father was in the coal, ice and building material business. And that was located on the west side of the railroad tracks along Lincoln Avenue across the street from the Vegetable Growers.

Q: I think that area is now forest preserve. Is it? If you went along that street.

IS: On the west side is forest preserve. He was on the east side of the forest preserve just west of the track. He had a siding there, and all the coal and everything would come in on the siding. In fact, when the Village of Morton Grove was subdivided on the north side of Dempster Street, my father supplied all the building material for the streets and the sidewalks.

Q: That was subdivided before the Depression, though, right?

IS: About 1929, 1930, somewhere in there.

Q: The streets and sidewalks were put in, but no homes went in.

IS: No homes were in there, no. The first home that was put in there, I believe, was the Edward Guenther apartment building over on Marmora. It's pronounced "Ginther" but spelled like "Gunther" with an "E". We always called them "Ginther" and now they call themselves "Gunther". It's just like Huscher, it used to be "Hoosher" and then they started to pronounce it "Husher", so that's how it's pronounced now.

Q: Right. Sometimes it's whether you're pronouncing it the European way or the American, the more obvious American pronunciation.

IS: That's right.

Q: I can just picture that three flat, but I don't know exactly where I'm picturing it.

IS: It's just north of Dempster Street on Marmora.¹

Q: The building is unique. There aren't a lot of three flats around, and the Geunthers owned that land on the north side.

IS: Oh, yes. That was one of the first buildings I remember. When we lived on Dempster Street, there were several houses on Dempster Street on the east side of Austin. Going east there were two houses. They were owned by the Rabbe family. The Winklhofer family lived in the one house. It was rented to them. And then, I don't know . . .

¹ The building is at 8819 Marmora.

Q: Well, the Winklfofers lived in the first house right across Austin from you. Because I remember your telling me, you and Alice played together.

IS: We played together.

Q: And then there were other homes along there.

IS: Then there was another stucco house, and then there was a house where the Schuetz family lived. They had quite a few children, and, I think, later on that house, as I recall, it was either the Rendezvous or, no, Club Cherie, I think.

Q: Club what?

IS: It was, there was Rendezvous and Club Cherie. Now, wait. Which one burnt down? It was either the Rendezvous or Club Cherie that was also a roadhouse.

Q: I've never heard it mentioned.

IS: And all the Northwestern students came there. At the time of that fire,² we stood on our front porch and we could hear the people screaming to get out. I believe it was my father and the Morton Grove Fire Department, you know, some of the people that got there before the fire department, they made a chain and they pulled people out. And they just set them up against the trees and kept going in. I don't know how many they rescued that way. But the whole thing was, everyone went for the door, and the door opened in and it didn't open out. And they were suffocated.

Q: Now, Morton Grove had a volunteer fire department at that time, I'm sure, because all villages had something and so there must have been fire protection.

² March 24, 1935.

IS: Oh, yes, there was fire protection. We had good fire protection.

Q: Was your father involved in that at all? Was he in the volunteer fire department or don't you remember.

IS: I don't remember. I know my father was a trustee of the Village of Morton Grove for many years. A lot of little things, you know, little details and that. But he was always active whenever he was needed—he was always there.

Q: I know, there's one more thing. The northeast corner of Lincoln and Austin, when I moved to Morton Grove, had what looked like a house with a screened porch that had storm windows all the way around, and it was called Murphy's Steak House.

IS: Now, that was on Dempster Street.

Q: Yes, what did I say?

IS: Lincoln Avenue.

Q: Oh, yes, excuse me. Dempster.

IS: It was on Dempster Street. That house was on the northeast corner of Dempster Street and Austin. It was called Murphy's Steak House. And, of course, at that time I can remember the musicians would all go over there for a quick drink or a refreshment. And that house, before it was turned into a restaurant, that house was the home of Charles and Anna Miller. And I used to play with their daughter, Rosemary, and we'd play in the culvert with our dolls under Dempster Street . . . yes, under Dempster Street. And when they moved, they moved from Dempster Street to Tessville. And Charles Miller had the greenhouses, the Miller Greenhouses.

Q: Now, Tessville is what we now call Lincolnwood.

IS: That's right.

Q: He was actually a greenhouse owner or a horticulturist.

IS: Yes, he had a greenhouse . . . and later on he was on the high school board of education.

Q: I'm not familiar with the name at all.

IS: Now, with The Dells as a little girl, when Pearl Pine and Felix Rochbauer had The Dells, I remember going over there . . . we used to call her Auntie Pine—she'd come over and get me when the orchestras were practicing. And her nephew and I would dance—remember, I was only a little girl about maybe six years old. The nephew's name was Ellsworth Shierk. [laughs]

Q: Now, let's talk about your education. You, about the time you started . . . no, before they moved the house, you must have started school.

IS: I started school at the Morton Grove Public School in 1926. And at that time, there was only the four-room school. You know, each room had two grades. And then they started the expansion. We went through the high of putting the gym on, I think, in 1927 and 1928. They put on the gymnasium and they added four more rooms. And it was just, at that, when we moved there. Mr. Salzgaver was the principal when I started. And then we had Mr. Huckleberry.

Q: [laughs] Mr. who?

IS: Huckleberry. And then we had Mr. Etherton. And after that came . . .

Q: These are all principals?

IS: These were all principals that I had.

Q: But they changed every year practically.

IS: Well, we had those all the while in my eight grades.

Q: Go on.

IS: Miss Esther Fowler.

Q: Miss Esther Fowler. So, finally a woman became principal.

IS: Yes.

Q: Do you remember any of your teachers?

IS: Oh, yes. My first teacher was Miss Christofferson. And then, in the middle of the year I had, well, there was Martha Konapa. Later on, . . . I was out of school when she was married and her name was Martha Caldwell. She started her career in Morton Grove and finished it in Morton Grove. I believe she was in the school district over twenty-five years.

Q: No kidding? And nobody has ever mentioned this name. all right, go on then. Maybe I'll start hearing it.

IS: She was very influential in a lot of my schooling. First of all, I was always wanting to do something. I liked to do homework, and she taught us to weave. She was interested in what the children really were interested in. I think I had her for three grades. She went up from first grade to second grade and second grade to third.

Q: Oh, she got promoted, too.

IS: Yes. And so, I had her for many years. Then we started what they called the departmental teaching. And then, I had Miss Osborne. And then Miss Murray. And we had Althea Carlson.

Q: Now, she's one that Doree Huscher named.

IS: She was a person that I admired for one fact. At the time I thought it was terrible when I went to school and she said, "The world will destroy itself through its own intelligence in experiments." I thought that was a terrible statement for a teacher to make. And really, the older you grow, the more it's coming true.

Q: Yes. What grade would you have been in?

IS: It would have been about the sixth or seventh grade. She made the statement, I can remember, and she said, "you will not believe this but," she said, "your parents and you may not see it," she says, "but the world is apt to . . . " She was sort of a history teacher, geography teacher, social science teacher, and, of course, having departmental work you got her for more than one thing.

Q: Who did you have for eighth grade?

IS: For eighth grad we had, let's see, . . . Mr. Etherton for eighth grade.

Q: Oh, I see, the principal would have been a teacher.

IS: Yes. But now, like I said, Miss Fowler became principal after Mr. Etherton. That was after I was finished with school.

Q: Oh, so Miss Fowler was not a principal while you were in school?

IS: Well, yes and no. She was like an assistant principal.

Q: Maybe she was even a teacher that was promoted to be principal. Tell me about your high school.

IS: Well, I attended the Niles Center High School.

Q: Niles Township.

IS: No, it was not Niles Township.

Q: No? It was Niles Center High . . .?

IS: It was the Niles Center High School. Eventually it became the Niles Township High School.

Q: Now, was that the school that was in Lincoln School?

IS: That's right. I went through four years in Lincoln School. So, I started to tell you it was the Niles Center High School. Then it became the Niles Township Community High School, and eventually the Community was dropped and it was just Niles Township High School.

Q: You told me a year ago, two years ago, you knew Marjory Ronalds.

IS: Marjory Ronalds was one of the high school teachers. She taught Latin and English. And she had a sister, Lucille Ronalds Barnes.

Q: Yes, then we ought to say Marjory Ronalds became Marjory Ronalds Schwab. And Lucille became . . .

IS: Barnes. Lucille Ronalds Barnes. And we had John Benette who was a science teacher and Leon Dibblestein who was the German teacher and an English teacher. We had Harold Ohlson who was a math teacher. And we had Miss Rochenbach who was our gym teacher. And then there was, oh, there was Dean Flagg who was the assistant principal. And the principal of the school was Mr. Cotanche.

Q: So there was quite a staff. I had heard at one point that while that high school met at what is now Lincoln Junior High, there were elementary grade pupils in the same building. You didn't have the whole building?

IS: There were. We had the second floor of the building and the use of the basement. There was also a Miss Ingwersol who taught home economics more or less, you know.

Q: Interesting. So there really was quite a program.

IS: And we had Clara Klaus. She was our music teacher.

Q: You didn't feel cheated at all? You felt like you were in—how did you feel? What was your reaction?

IS: Well, my reaction, my sister was going to Maine Township High School and, of course, her tuition was being paid by the township, and when they merged into a township high school, Maine Township would no longer take us. So, my sister was going up there with a lot of the Morton Grove people. But ours were the first classes almost forced to go to Niles Center or to a private school. And I chose to go to the local high school.

Q: So, you're saying that the high school really started about the time that you started high school.

IS: Well, they had a couple of years of high school that was under Niles Center High School. And, I think there were two classes before we went. But then, they put it into a three-year high school, and then your fourth year you'd either have to go to Amundsen or Carl Schurz or Evanston. That was your choice for your fourth year. But we were the first class, and it was a four-year class, to go all four years. And then, in the meantime, they started to build the Niles East High School, which is now called Centre East. That high school was being built,

and we were the last class at Lincoln School. Because after that it was in the middle of the year, in 1939, that they started to go over to the high school.

Q: To that lovely building. So you kind of, in a way, could feel that you . . .

IS: We were cheated in some ways. But then we had a Miss [Mildred] Johnson that taught Business English and she taught typing and shorthand. I had her for several years. There was nothing wrong with the school.

Q: You had gym, so were there teams? Was there school spirit?

IS: Oh, yes, we had a football team and a basketball team, and we girls would play field hockey. The girls had field hockey and basketball teams and volleyball teams. And, at that time, they had what they called the G.A.A., the Girls Athletic Association, and we were affiliated with the State of Illinois, you know. And we got to go to what they called "Play Days" for the girls. You'd go to different schools.

Q: Can you remember how many people were in your class?

IS: I can't tell you off hand. I think there were about seventy, or something like that.

Q: And that included people that had graduated from the Morton Grove School and the Niles Center School?

IS: And some from Tessville, some of them from Niles. See, when it went into a township school, you took in the whole township. And then they bused us to the Lincoln School. It was nothing for us, we couldn't get a bus all the time to get home when we wanted to, and we'd often walk from the Lincoln to Morton Grove. That was no walk.

Q: Well, at that time, a lot of people had been walking from St. Peter's to Morton Grove and back again.

IS: Sure.

Q: So, you just did it, that's all.

IS: There was no big deal about it.

Q: Now, you say you were raised Catholic. If you didn't go to a Catholic school, where did you learn catechism?

IS: We had catechism on Saturday mornings at nine o'clock until ten-thirty. And you went every Saturday.

Q: Now, had Saint Martha's been started?

IS: Oh, yes. In fact an interesting thing about Saint Martha's, I was one of the first children that was christened—not the first—but one of the first children christened in the church. So my records are at Saint Martha's. You might say Saint Martha's became a parish in, I think, 1919, and I was born in 1920. so I believe the first one that was christened at St. Martha's was Robert Hoffman.

Q: Everyone says "Huffman", but I would call it Hoffman.

IS: Well, see, that's the German—that's just like Huscher and "Husher."

Q: Right, right, or like Carolyn "Hairer" or Harrer.

IS: That's right.

Q: Okay, now you and Barney went to school together?

IS: Barney and I went to school together at Niles Township High School, and .

Q: You said it wasn't Niles Township. You said it was . . .

IS: Well, after the second year it became Niles Township.

Q: Oh, all right.

IS: Because it became a township high school, I think our sophomore year.

Q: All right. Okay. So, did he grow up in Morton Grove?

IS: He was born and raised in Morton Grove at 8640 Georgiana Avenue.

Q: So he must have been around town all the time you were growing up.

IS: That's right. We went to school together—grammar school and everything. But it wasn't until our junior and senior year that we started to date. And he'd take me to the dances and what have you. And then, I belonged to St. Martha's baseball team, the SMYLES team, . . .

Q: Oh, yes.

IS: . . .and I was a catcher and also an outfielder. I usually would get to play. I always got to play, I should say, because I seldom sat on the bench. But, he became an assistant coach and after baseball practice, we would go over to The Chocolate Shop.

Q: Where was that?

IS: That was on Fernald Avenue.

Q: Back of Bringer Inn?

IS: Back of Bringer Inn. That was The Chocolate Shop. And Barney worked there after school. He always worked for Mrs. Phillipi.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B ENDS

TAPE TWO, SIDE A

Q: We were talking about how you and Barney started to date. You said you went to The Chocolate Shop after baseball.

IS: We'd go and have an ice cream cone, and he'd walk me back home and that was that. And then, he worked at the Baumhardt garage after he finished high school, and also worked at the . . .

Q: Now, I think the Baumhardt garage is the one that's at Lincoln where Theobald used to come in, and now it's at Lincoln and Marmora because they changed the angle of the street.

IS: He worked there for, oh, a couple of years and then—well, we'd date. It was never two people dating. We always went out in crowds. On Saturday night we usually would date with another couple. We'd go to a movie, we'd go up to Oscar's Restaurant, and we'd have a barbequed beef sandwich and come home. I mean, that was all—and if you got in after eleven o'clock, look out. That was—well, you started your date at seven o'clock and by eleven o'clock, they figured that was long enough.

Q: Anything else was mischief.

IS: That's right. Then I started to work for Brod Electric in Skokie in 1938.

Q: Now, that would have been your Aunt Magdelene's, no.

IS: No, that would have been a cousin of mine.

Q: A cousin, right.

IS: And I worked there for, well, all my life you might say. All my business life I worked there, close to eleven years—even after I was married, I continued to work there. Barney went to service in 1941. He was on the first draft out of this area. He went from here to Camp Grant and then from Camp Grant to Camp Forrest, Tennessee. And on Mother's Day the first year he was in the service, his

mother and I and his sister went down to Tullahoma, Tennessee to see him. We went on a train. It was sponsored by the *Tribune* or one of the papers, and we went down there to visit with him. And then, Pearl Harbor was December 7, and he already was in service nine months. He only had three months to go when he could come out. He would have had his year of conscription in.

Q: Right.

IS: And then, he was to come home on a furlough and instead, he didn't get home for Christmas and he didn't get home for any leave at all. He went right on from Tullahoma, Camp Forrest. They went to Pennsylvania where they were processed and up through New York and on board ship. And I think it was the seventh or seventeen of January, he was on his way to the Pacific.

Q: But you were not married at that time.

IS: No, we were not married. We both had said that if anything happened to either he or I, that if there would be war, we'd wait for each other. And that we did. We had a joint bank account.

Q: So, you really were committed to each other.

IS: Oh, yes.

Q: Did you have a ring?

IS: Yes, I had a ring. My father had had a mishap. In 1941, he had been going to Evanston to get some ice cubes in his car. And he was going down Church Street, and tight after you cross Skokie Boulevard there's a hill. And something happened when he went over the hill with the car and he rolled over. Dad was conscious in the car and he said, "Don't touch me, because I, I think I have a

broken neck." At that time, I was working at Brods, and the police department came and got me and took me to the hospital, because my dad was there. Dad must have been in the hospital three or four months. They had him packed in sand bags first, and then they put almost like an ice tong into his head to put the pressure on, to stretch him. So, really, it was, it was hard going for a while. It was in that time when Barney came home on the eleventh of November. He came home just on a short furlough. He had a four-day pass and he came home, and then he gave me a diamond ring. We went downtown to the jeweler and picked it out and then stopped at the hospital to show my dad.

Q: Which must have been comforting for your dad to know that whatever happened to him, you were going . . .

IS: Yes. So, we were, as I said, we were engaged, but that was the extent of it. . .and we had started a bank account—I'd put so much in each pay day. And then, when he'd get paid, even though he was only getting twenty-one dollars a month for his pay from Uncle Sam, he would send two dollars to me. [laughs] We had accumulated a few dollars. And when he came home then—it was in 1943 when he came home. He had been wounded in the Pacific. And then, we were married on the sixteenth of June, 1943.

Q: Now, was he still in the service?

IS: He was still in the service. I had gone to visit him at the hospital in Michigan, and then he was going to get a thirty-day furlough. So, he came home on this thirty-day furlough, and while he was home he had malaria. So he ended up going to Fort Sheridan, and then he came back again, back home after he

was up there for a few days. We decided that we were going to set a date. And he knew he was getting a sixty-day furlough after he got back to Battle Creek, Michigan, to the hospital. So we had sort of set a date, and the date didn't materialize. And then when he came home, we decided almost overnight to get married. We gave ten days notice we were going to get married. Well, Dad, of course, was great on my being the first one of the family to get married. And we were going to have a very quiet wedding, because Barney was still in a cast, in a brace from his shoulders to his waist. So, we knew that we didn't want much of a wedding, and we wanted to keep it quiet. So, my father made arrangements, and we had our wedding dinner at the Studio Restaurant, and, well, it was just the immediate family—his brothers and sisters and my brothers and sisters and their families. And then afterward, my father opened up the house. He had told everyone in Morton Grove that he would have open house. And they had barrels of beer outside. It was a beautiful June night.

Q: Good. So, where were you married, at Saint Martha's?

IS: We were married in Saint Martha's Rectory. And then, after Barney had been in the war with the Japanese so many months, guess what happened. We came back; we had the Fleishmann Suite at the Orrington Hotel. And when we walked into the suite of rooms, lo and behold, it was all in Japanese and Oriental motif. So, we stayed there overnight, and the next morning we left for southern Illinois. We spent a couple of days with my aunt and uncle down on the farm in Sigel, Illinois, near Effingham. So then, we came back home and we lived with my dad and mother. We had our bedroom upstairs, and . . .

Q: But now, is Barney still in the service?

IS: He's still in the service.

Q: Okay.

IS: And we had our bedroom upstairs. We had taken the north room, because that was the largest. And we had bought our own bedroom set and everything and furnished it like we wanted it.

Q: How nice.

IS: So, we lived with Mom and Dad until he came home from service, and we still lived with them. Our first child was born August 19, 1945.

Q: And that was a boy or a girl?

IS: It was a girl. We named her Carlynn after my brother, Carl, who was in the Pacific in the war. We lived with Dad and Mom until we were expecting a second child. And I said, "No, we can't live here any longer. We've got to get on our own." And Barney agreed. We had saved a lot of money. It was one thing, Dad and Mother were great on believing in saving your money and getting a good start. And that we did. So we bought a lot over on South Park Avenue. We bought it from Arthur Loutsch. And at that time, once we had the lot, we could go ahead with getting a G.I. loan. And we did get a four percent G. I. Loan to build our house.

Q: And that's the home you're still in.

IS: And that's the home we're still in.

Q: That's a nice house, too.

IS: And our son was born on the twenty-third of May, 1948.

Q: And his name is?

IS: Bernard Michael, Jr.

Q: You know, we kind of skipped over something that I wanted to talk about.

You mentioned that your mother was quite a horsewoman. And you told me some time ago that you were a horsewoman, too. I want to talk about that. Was that during your high school career or right after?

IS: Well, we had acquaintances by the name of Hester and they had horses. And so, in the winter we would always take a couple of their ponies, and we'd have them all during the winter months. And we got so that I did a lot of riding with their daughter, and we'd go. . .

Q: What was their daughter's name?

IS: Jeanne Lee Hester. She always went by Jeanne Lee. And I kept riding, we'd ride for the Long Meadow Hunt. We'd take horses to the hunt for people to purchase them and that. We'd follow the hunt and that, which was a good experience.

Q: You were a very good horsewoman.

IS: Well, we enjoyed the outdoors—I think that was part of our life. In fact, in the winter we'd take the ponies and we'd put a breast collar on them, and we'd have skis. And we'd just have the traces, and we'd come, well, here where the Haupt-Yehl House is, there was, you know, the forest preserve and that. We dragged, we rode through here all the way to, oh, as far as we could, you know. It was kid's play, and it was interesting. . . When I went to high school, we had what they called G.A.A. That's Girl's Athletic Association, and you could get

points for different things. We'd get badges and credits for different activities. Marjory Ronalds was one of the teachers at the high school, and we wanted to get an equestrian badge. We couldn't get anyone to go with us, and Marjory Ronalds said that if we taught her to ride, she would be our sponsor. So, I took her out, all summer I took her out, sometimes twice a week. At first, I took her out to the stable out here, and then I'd take her out on lead strap because she was afraid of the horse getting away. And then finally, she built up enough confidence, and she would go riding with us all summer and all winter, all fall, you know. So, that was the start really, I sort of feel like I started the riding program at the high school.

Q: We were talking about where the horses could be kept in Morton Grove, and you mentioned a Mrs. Haupt.

IS: Yes, Joseph Haupt.

Q: Mrs. Joe Haupt. And her name was Maria?

IS: Marie, and she had a daughter, Marie.

Q: And where did they live?

IS: Marie Haupt lived just about where the American Legion Home is now.

Q: About 6140 Dempster Street, she had a house.

IS: There was a two-story house, and behind the house was the old barn. And that barn they rented out to a stable, for a stable.

Q: The people could stable horses there.

IS: Well, you could rent horses and they would keep horses.

Q: Now, this Mrs. Haupt was Mrs. Joseph Haupt. Other people have told me when they had catering done, would she have been the one to have done it? Do you know that? Carolyn Harrer Heuel told me that a Mrs. Joe Haupt catered her wedding breakfast about 1926.

IS: That I couldn't say. But see now, her daughter Marie was a nurse that used to be at Children's Memorial Hospital. She went to work every morning at the same time. She got the bus and went to work every morning all the way down to Children's Memorial.

Q: So, now, talking about some of your cousins, Peter Haupt had how many children?

IS: Peter Haupt had four children. His wife's name was Anna Seelhammer. And they had four children—Harold, Marion, Robert and Dorothy.

Q: Okay. Some of those people still live in this area. Dorothy, I know, does.

IS: Dorothy lives here. Marion lives in Libertyville. Harold is deceased. And Robert lives in Florida.

Q: [Pause] Now that we've talked a little bit about the family, I would like to go back and talk again about Barney and the World War II.

IS: Well, as I say, Barney was wounded in Guadalcanal. He was put upon air transport and taken to the New Hebrides Islands where he was about a week and then put onto a hospital ship and taken to Auckland, New Zealand, where he recuperated in a Navy hospital. He was almost three months in the Navy hospital in Auckland, New Zealand. He was wounded on the twenty-sixth day of December 1942, I think. And we didn't hear from him from when he left New

Caledonia until—it was on Good Friday of 1943. it was in April and Good Friday that we heard, we got a letter, a card from the American Red Cross that he had been wounded and additional information would be coming through. Well, then we started to hear from him personally. Then, the next we heard he was at Letterman General Hospital in California. And then he came through Chicago on a hospital troop train, and he had this big cast on that he couldn't get his clothes on. So, one of the officers gave him his coat so he could go make a telephone call, and he called me in Skokie to let me know that he was going to Battle Creek, Michigan. And then, that's when I went up to see him. But when he was at Letterman General Hospital, the Veterans of Foreign Wars came through and wanted to know if they could do anything for him and asked him to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He knew he would have to have representation when he was discharged from the hospital. So, they offered to take over his case. He had a choice of the Red Cross or the Veterans of Foreign Wars or one other organization, and he chose, he joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars. All he had to do was pay two dollars for dues. So, when he got back home here to Morton Grove, there was a newly formed Veterans of Foreign Wars that was called Skokie Valley Post 3854 in Skokie, so he transferred his membership there. And in 1947, he was commander of the Post. He was the first World War II veteran to be the commander of the Post.

Q: So the Veterans of Foreign Wars had been formed before World War II.

IS: Oh, yes. They are the oldest military organization in existence. They go back before World War I, and in order to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign

Wars; you must have seen active service out of the country. That was one of the stipulations of membership. And then, in 1952, I was president of the Auxiliary. In fact, the Auxiliary was initiated and installed in August, 1946, and I am the only active, living charter member. And I'm still active at the V.F.W. I helped form a sewing group that sewed for Hines Hospital, and we made scuffies and lap robes and that. We have put in over twenty-five years of sewing, and we figure that we have made over fifteen thousand pairs of scuffies that have been donated to Hines.

Q: Oh, wonderful.

IS: Our group still meets September through May, sewing on the first, on the second and the fourth Mondays of the month.

Q: Do you meet at the V.F.W.?

IS: We meet at the V.F.W. That's the one in Skokie. It's 7401 Lincoln Avenue. It's at Lincoln and Jarvis Avenue.

Q: Yes, I know right where it is. Now, we've been talking about Barney's service overseas and, in fact, I taped Barney, so I do have a nice complete record of that. But let's talk about Barney's family, his childhood a little bit. He didn't do much of that on the tape.

IS: Well, Barney's mother and father. . . his mother was Anna Steller, and his father was Stanley Steller. He has two sisters and a brother, Paul Steller, Helen Steller Weinberg, and Bernice Wolfgram. And Bernice has a son by the name of Ronald. And Helen Weinberg has a daughter by the name of Lee Anne. And May and Paul, Paul Steller have no children. As to the spelling of our name, the old

Steller spelling is S-T-E-L-L-E-R. When Barney went into service, his dog tags came out with the spelling of S-T-E-L-L-A-R. And he went to the sergeant and he wanted it changed. And he said, "You're only going to be in a year. And after that it won't make any difference." He said all the payroll records had gone through as A-R, and as everything was, it would be a very difficult situation to get it straightened out. And remember, they didn't have computers in those days. It was all done manually. So, Barney went along with the idea that he became S-T-E-L-L-A-R for the year. Well, Barney was wounded in Guadalcanal, so what had happened when he came back, he wanted to go back to E-R. And the sergeant, the attorney for the armed forces informed him that his name was legally S-T-E-L-L-A-R, and that he would be known as Stellar with an A-R. So Barney is really the only Stellar with an A-R, and it was through the government that it was changed. And he has just kept that all his life, because all his legal papers that were made out in the Army and everything are made out as A-R.

Q: So, it's too much now to change it.

IS: Well, to change it, it would run into a lot of extra work and that. And he just felt that he'd just keep it A-R.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A ENDS

TAPE TWO, SIDE B

Q: I'm recalling this thing about your family and, in particular, your mother. Now, I remember that she was the baby of the orphaned family, and it wasn't until she grew up and came of age, in fact, that the estate was divided. So, we talked about that and we've talked about the fact that she worked part of the

time, lived part of the time with Sophie Paroubek and helped in the telephone exchange.

IS: Yes, and then, also, when Nora had her children, mother would go in and help. . .

Q: Into Chicago?

IS: . . . into Chicago and help with the children. And whoever was available would go in and give a hand until they'd get on their feet that they could handle things again. Mother and Dad both were very interested and liked to go to Schubert Theater in Chicago and the Chicago Theater. They would get tickets for these events and they'd go in and see all the plays and movies and what have you. And then the big event was in the spring of the year when the Dells Roadhouse would open up. . .

Q: For the season in other words.

IS: . . . for the season, for the spring season and summer season. Mom would get all dressed up; and, in particular, this one year, she had a dubonnet dress with beaded front and she wore a beautiful big hat with it. And I remember my sister, Florence, and I, we thought Mother was quite elegant with the fashion she was wearing. That was always a big event, that opening night. And Dad would go. There were always a half a dozen of the different men, usually the president, or the mayor of Morton Grove and the trustees of Morton Grove—they were sort of honorary people at the opening.

Q: I see, yes.

IS: And it was a big event. And then another time that was always a big event in our household, would be Fourth of July. My father would buy fireworks, and he would be the one to shoot all the firecrackers. They'd have pinwheels and skyrockets and—Morton Grove was a prairie, so you didn't have to worry where you were shooting fireworks. And then we'd have watermelon. Dad would always have a big iced watermelon for all the kids of the neighborhood, and, you might say, half of Morton Grove would come over because the fireworks were at Huschers. And then on summer nights when the Dells was going on, you could hear the music over at our house. They had the windows all open and that. And then Dad would go over to the Dells, and he'd always take the biggest bowl my mother had in the kitchen, and would get ice cream. And they'd be big scoops of ice cream, all the different flavors, and he'd bring them home. All they'd put is a towel over the top of it, and he'd come back with the ice cream. And, oh, that ice cream was always so much better than any other ice cream you could get. And Mother would have toppings for it and that. And all the kids, whoever was around would get ice cream. I don't think there was a Sunday that would go past that we didn't have ice cream. And in the summer my father was a referee for the skeet shooting. And so, we'd be in Kankakee sometimes and Rockford and different places. And my mother would get up at four o'clock in the morning and fry chicken, and we'd go to six-thirty or seven o'clock Mass, and we would all be ready to go. We'd all go to Mass and Dad would have the car packed by the time we got back. When we got home, all we had to do was put on our play clothes to go to the skeet shoot. And Dad had to be there, usually they'd start at eleven

o'clock in the morning. And that would give us three hours or four hours to get to our destination. And, oh, maybe three or four times a summer we'd go there.

Q: So you had a lot of interesting things to do.

IS: And then on some Sundays, when Winklhofers had the resort at Fox Lake, my family would go out on Sunday mornings. Mother would help in the kitchen and we'd help, sometimes we'd help take the dishes off the table and stuff like that. And then her mother and father had a big restaurant in Wheeling, and then they'd cook. So, I mean it was sort of a family—it was a lot of fun with them.

Q: You know, you mentioned your father had an accident, but he didn't die in that accident.

IS: No, my father didn't die of that accident. He is in medical records. He had a broken neck, and it was the first time—his doctor was Dr. John Fahey, and at that time he was a young doctor at St. Francis Hospital, an orthopedic man. He was very interested in Dad's case, and it was the first time they had used this contraption for the head where they drilled holes in the temples, and put, uit looked like an ice tong, in order to get the weights on to get the neck back in shape into position. And then it healed together. My father was in a cast for over a year.

Q: So, he didn't die from that. Did he or did your mother pass away first?

IS: My mother died on the fifteenth of August in 1961.

Q: Did she enjoy good health almost until the end?

IS: Yes, Mother was in good health. In fact, she died three weeks to the day she took sick, and she really died of a brain tumor. And it wasn't the brain tumor

itself, it was from the pressure of the brain tumor that she had a hemorrhage. So, really it was a shock to the family that she died. And then, of course, after Mother died, Dad and my sister would come over to our house and have dinner every night. And Dad was with us an awful lot. He never remarried or that. And while we were in Wisconsin over the fourth of July in 1971, it happened. The last thing my father said to me, he said, "Don't worry about anything, Irene, you need a rest." And we went up north, and he said, "Don't worry about Aunt Emma, I'll take care of her." It was really the fifth of July when he died—but he took sick on the fourth of July. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon he had chest pains. And then, Fred and Florence called the doctor and took him up to Lutheran General Hospital. Until about eleven o'clock at night, they were with him in the hospital. They came home and they were just home a short time, an hour or so, when they got called that they should return to the hospital. And when they got there, he was already dead. That would have been July fifth in '71.

Q: Your mother died in 1951, and your father died in 1971. And, so your father was widowed for twenty years.

IS: That's right. Dad was eighty-five, would have been eighty-six on the twenty-five of December. And, of course, another big affair in our family and life was the fact that my father was born on Christmas Day. And Mother always had open house for the family on Christmas Day. Anyone would come in. we'd have a big Christmas dinner; there may be twelve or fourteen of us at Christmas dinner. And then, she would have supper at night for the whole family—my father's side and whoever came, they knew that there was open house. So, sometimes we'd

have as many as fifty people for supper. And then the Lutheran Church choir would stop and sing carols and "Happy Birthday" to my dad. Of course, they got a stipend for doing it. But Christmas was always a big event in our lives.

Q: I can see why, because it was a double celebration. So your parents were married how many years roughly?

IS: Well, I think it would be seventy-five years now, but I don't know just how long they were married.

Q: The years they shared they were very happy.

IS: Oh, they had a happy life.

Q: They really had no problems. They had healthy kids.

IS: Well, Dad and Mother lost a lot of money when the bank closed during the Depression. Dad was a stockholder in the bank, and, of course, you know what the stockholders paid. And we kids had savings accounts and, of course, the savings, you know, to get as much as you could out of it, they'd put the savings accounts against what they had to pay.

Q: But generally speaking, they had a happy life.

IS: Oh, they had a happy life. We had, as a childhood; I would say that my sister and two brothers and I, we had one of the happiest family lives that you could have. In fact, my father built a ski slide next to our house. We had it for a couple of years. And it would go from Crain Street all the way to Capulina Avenue. But it was high enough that when you came down, it was fun. All the kids of the neighborhood were there.

Q: You had grandparents on your father's side, too.

IS: Well, I only really knew one of my grandparents. And that was Grandma Huscher. When she lived we always had Christmas at Grandma's house. She would have all the Sonnes, and there were seven in their family. And then the wives and their kids and everything. So, you can imagine what a Christmas would be like.

Q: Yes.

IS: But those were in the times that we didn't have the things they have now.

Q: We had a wonderful time talking. Can you think of anything else you want to say?

IS: No, nothing.

Q: All right, then, I thank you, I thank you very much on behalf of the Morton Grove Historical Society for sharing your memories with us.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B ENDS