

EVELYN WEILAND

Wayne: This is July 20th, 2023. I'm Wayne Summers, along with Judy Thelen. Today we are interviewing Evelyn Weiland.

Evelyn: You pronounced it correctly. They are tempted to pronounce it Wēiland, because it's W-e-i, but it's a German name. Give you a little lesson in phonics: If you have in German, "E" and the "I" together, the second vowel is long. So you have the name, TheĪs, the name, KleĪn. You have to sound out the second vowel. Now the name, Wēiber, is the opposite. Otherwise, you would say WeĪber, but you have to remember that's from the German language, a little lesson in phonics right now.

Wayne: How did your family get here originally?

Evelyn: Well, on my father's side, they came from what's called the Eifel, the German Rhineland. The Eifel is west of the Rhine. If you have this map of Germany in your head, you will know that's the Rhineland. Many immigrant settlers came here from the Rhineland, which is called the Eifel. I have no idea what that means, but it's not really important. My father's side, they were early. My maiden name is Freund, which is very German. The English word is "friend." On my mother's side, it was Kloeckner.

The site right here [Museum for Westphalia Historical Society]was the first commercial building in Westphalia. It was a furniture shop and it was owned by my great-grandfather Kloeckner. They called those shops, not a furniture--. They called them cabinet shops because they made all their own furniture: tables, chairs, bed frames, even coffins. The coffins were not shaped like they are now. They were pointed. I don't know if you've ever been to a place where they showed the coffin from years back, and they were made in that cabinet shop. Interesting, isn't it? They were early. My ancestors came in the 1840s, so they were early.

Wayne: What was the reason for the pointed coffin, do you know?

Evelyn: I have no idea. The building was empty for quite a while. We, as kids,--I wasn't really the culprit-- we would go inside of those coffins and put the lid on there and it had an opening. It was glass. You could see out and we got a little panic stricken. That's okay. You can put that in there if you want.

Wayne: Did you grow up on a farm then?

Evelyn: Oh, yeah, born a farmer's daughter and I married a farmer, but I was able to go to 12 years of high school. I was the first one in my family to go to college. I was the youngest one and so I went to MSU and became a teacher.

Wayne: Which schools did you go to?

Evelyn: Here at St. Mary's, the Catholic school.

Wayne: So you were close enough to go?

Evelyn: I could walk. I was one of the lucky ones. I wasn't that far away, right next to the cemetery, if you're acquainted with that beautiful house where I was born. I was fortunate to be able to have teachers for 12 years, good teachers. I was a stay-at-home mom and after I knew I wasn't going to have any more children, I went to MSU, finished up my education, became a teacher.

The Eifel people left--. Napoleon captured that part of Germany and our ancestors way back were called serfs, not slaves, but they were owned by the duke. Germany, at that time was not one united

country. It was a system of dukedoms and so when those dukes lost their property, our ancestors became free. They were able to do what they wanted to. Then they made plans to come to America because in Germany, the families were large and they were poor, and there was not enough land. So I think, mainly, it had nothing to do with religion. That came later on in the history of Germany, but that's why most of them left, because they heard about this place in America. Letters went back and forth and saying what a wonderful place this was. You could buy land for a dollar an acre. Considering what it's worth now, more than a dollar! I have no idea what it is right now per acre. I know you it's gotta be three-four thousand?

Wayne: At least. I think farmland is expensive. I think a dollar an acre back then was probably still considered a good deal.

Evelyn: Yes, this was section five. That's the land that they bought. Those founding fathers bought all of the land in that section five [of Westphalia Township], except either 60 acres or 80 acres. There were six founding fathers, five and the priest, but you see, they heard about this place, especially the letters that came from--Remember the name of Johann Fuchs, John Fox? He is considered in Germany, the first one. What title did they give him? The "King of Immigration." Most of them knew ahead of time where they were going to go. They came into Detroit and then, from having information from Detroit people, they knew where to come.

Wayne: Going back to your life on the farm, when you were young, what kind of crops or animals did you have?

Evelyn: When I was, like preschool, we still worked with a team of horses. By the time of the 30s, they did have some tractors and of course, my father had a steam engine. That was something.

Judy: Do we have a picture of that?

Evelyn: I have a picture of that at home.

Judy: I'll remember that.

Evelyn: It's a steam engine. It's now at Dearborn at Greenfield Village. It's there. That's my father's steam engine and we went to see it. The farmer's wife would get very anxious, nervous, if they could hear that whistle and they knew they had to prepare a meal. I can still remember when they would sit down at the table with at least 12 men sitting at it. They would come in. The neighbors and your own people would sit down at a meal. My mother had to serve at least 12 men for the noon meal. You should see them when they had to wash up outside. There were no bathrooms, so they had big tubs of water and by the time the last one came to wash, that water wasn't looking very good anymore.

Wayne: What was a typical meal?

Evelyn: Well, probably chicken, maybe roast beef. In my day, my mother would can beef and chicken. It could have been something like that, where they just opened up a can of beef or a can of chicken. Most of the time, I think it was chicken and potatoes and some kind of a vegetable, and certainly pie.

Wayne: So what kind of pies?

Evelyn: I would think apple and, I think, whatever they had. It all would depend on what time of the year it was. They could have had what they called way back, "pie plant," but that was rhubarb. I think

they still call it a pie plant. Otherwise, I'm not sure. Cherry pie? Sounds good. I don't think they made

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cream pies because you had to keep them cool. You had an ice box. You didn't have a refrigerator. I'm sure you've seen an ice box.

Judy: Did you keep some ice in store from winter?

Evelyn: Oh, yeah. We had storage in our house down in the basement. We would store apples. You would put them on some kind of a hanging shelf, and they were separate, and you could keep them. When you used them for a pie, they weren't quite as juicy anymore, but carrots, cabbage. They made sauerkraut. The basements were usually full of crocks that contained meat, certainly sauerkraut. I think we could store carrots someplace. I don't remember how they would do that. I think in some kind of sand, and of course, potatoes. I don't think farmers way back bought potatoes. They had their own potatoes. I remember, in our basement it was a great big bin that was full of potatoes and that was supposed to last until the new potatoes came.

Judy: They didn't always look like they were new in spring though, when they started sprouting.

Evelyn: Yes, they were pretty wrinkled.

The sauerkraut is something. I don't know if people still do that but that would last. That was a good lasting vegetable and you could do a lot with sauerkraut.

Wayne: Did you pickle any cucumbers or things like that?

Evelyn: Oh, yes. Every farmhouse had a special room in the basement just for the canning and there were many, many cans, anything that could be canned, any vegetable, peaches, especially peaches. My mother canned a lot of corn, green beans, and whatever else. Like I said, they canned meat. The meat was a big thing, to have a can of beef. I can't think of anything else right now.

Wayne: Did you have an ice house?

Evelyn: Yes, we had an ice house but some farmers made their own ice. We did and they used to pack that ice in sawdust. They would go down to Stony Creek. It all depended on where you lived. My father went to the Grand River, west of town.

Judy: Just cut ice out of the river?

Evelyn: Yes, they had special equipment to go on that ice and to cut that. There was one family called the Goodman's, lived close to the Stony Creek. That picture is in the blue book [*Of Pilgrimage, Prayer, and Promise ; The Story of St. Mary's, Westphalia; 1836-1986*] They had a special apparatus to cut that and it does say in the blue book, if you take a look, a man by the name of Pete Trierweiler had a special machinery that they could go and cut that ice, Grand River and the Stony Creek. Like I say, most farmers had their own ice but then they could go to somebody who would sell the ice. That would go in your ice box.

Wayne: Did you have a sugar bush too?

Evelyn: No, had a woods but our family never tapped the trees, but many did. They still do tap the maple trees for maple sugar.

Wayne: What were some of the chores that you had when you were growing up?

Evelyn: Well, mostly for somebody like my age, is taking care of the chickens. You had to go gather the eggs, but usually the men milked the cows, took care of the horses. We had horses, cows, sheep. My

father had a big flock of sheep and pigs. You had to have pigs. Every farmer had to do that because that was your source of meat.

Judy: Did they eat lamb? I understand some people raised sheep, but they did it for the shearing, for the wool, not for the meat.

Evelyn: I think most of them would butcher, maybe what they called the mutton, or if you had a young one, you had lamb chops. My husband used to talk about that. When they would go to somebody's house for dinner, when they had to work and the woman would serve mutton. That was not the best piece of meat.

We had sheep and pigs, of course. Then you would butcher a steer for the steak, the beef. When they butchered pigs, they would come together, different neighbors, and they would butcher as many as five or six pigs. It would take almost a week before you had everything taken care of. You had to make the sausage. You had to clean the casings. You didn't buy casings. You had them right out of the pig. I remember, in our house there was one man who that was his specialty. I would watch him, how he would clean those casings. There's another name for that, isn't there?

Wayne: They're intestines, yes. We don't like to call them that though. Did your family speak German?

Evelyn: Yes, fortunately, in our home, we learned both languages, English and German at the same time. I don't ever remember a time when I could not speak English or German both. That was true for all of us. There were eight of us. I'm the youngest one. I'm always the youngest one or I should say I'm always the last one.

Wayne: At home, was it mostly German and then when you were at school or outside of the house, mostly English?

Evelyn: At school, it was English. When I went to school, they were speaking English. There was no one in my class that did not know how to speak English. My two older brothers--the oldest one was born in 1908--he said some of the lessons were still being taught in German, but basically it was English. There may have been some in my brother's class where you could hear the accent. They were speaking with a German accent. I know my brother, Bud, who was about four and a half years older than I, he says he had one classmate who came to school, and she said in German,--well, I'll say it in English--"I don't like it here. I want to go home." See, she couldn't speak enough English.

Wayne: Did the nuns understand German?

Evelyn: Oh, yes. The first ones who came, they were here early, like 1870 something, the Sisters of Christian Charity. They left when Germany had what they call the culture war, when Bismarck was in power. They were giving the Catholics some difficulties. That's why our Sisters of Christian Charity left Germany and four of them came here. They were speaking German. Of course, everybody was speaking German. No problem.

Wayne: So they, basically, had to learn English for trade?

Evelyn: Yes. That's why some people here, you know they're German, and their name is Smith,

S-m-i-t-h. That's not German. It was S-c-h-m-i-t-t or it was S-c-h-m-i-d-t. I think they had, from what I heard a woman my age say when her grandfather went to St. Johns, to have some official business that had to be done, the officials would say, "Schmidt - Your name is Smith." See, they were embarrassed and they changed their spelling on their name. Smith, I don't know if there was any others. Well, Miller, I'm sure Miller wasn't spelled M-i-l-l-e-r. That's Mueller. Yeah. It was M-u-e.

Wayne: Did Fox [the German was Fuchs] change their spelling too?

Evelyn: Yes, they did. I don't ever remember when that change took place. By the time I got talking to people, they already had the English. The words were anglicized.

Wayne: I wonder if some of that happened around World War I.

Evelyn: WWI, I think by that time, maybe. I'm not sure.

Judy: I think the name changes, from my experience in looking at the censuses, was that the census takers were English speaking and the names got garbled sometimes. For example, My Thelen name was always "Taylor," because in German Thelen is pronounced Talen, sounds like Taylor. Between Thelen and Taylor, three censuses in a row they were Taylors because that's what they heard and that's what they understood, but we didn't change the name, but there were some cases, I think later on in World War I and during World War II, where people did decide that they would take the alternative. You'll see families that are split between one spelling and a different spelling because of that.

Evelyn: Well, you take the name Fedewa. Originally, see they were Italians. It was Vidua, V-i-d-u-a. Well, I can see the "V" in German has a little bit of an "F" sound. So when he was asked, "What's your name," he said "Vidua," and so he spelled it F-e-d-e-w-a. Then in our records here, the early ones, it's still Vidua. He left that part of Italy, Adam Vidua--he was the first immigrant Vidua--because he was looking for work and he came into the Eifel. He was a very talented stone mason so his livelihood was assured. He didn't have to leave because of being poor. He had a good occupation but they were not building castles anymore. They were not building cathedrals anymore so somebody like that did not have as much work.

My husband's ancestor--his name was Nicodemus Weiland--he was a stone cutter. He left that part of Germany and went over to the part that at that time belonged to Germany, is now Poland. So he married a girl from Poland. My husband's great grandmother was Polish, Damsky, and related to the Feneis/Fineis's. She was Francesca Damsky. I don't know if you've come across that in your ancestry. The two women, but they left. The Damskys lived here in Westphalia, but eventually they went to Grand Rapids because there were more Polish people in Grand Rapids. They lived over on Wright Road, the Damskys.

Wayne: How about holidays? How did your family celebrate Christmas, for example?

Evelyn: Oh, wonderfully! I never saw the Christmas tree until Christmas Day or Christmas Eve. See, that tree was separated, secretly. The doors were closed, but wonderful food. The gifts were not wrapped. They were under the tree. If you got a doll, that wasn't wrapped. Who had the money to go buy wrapping paper or who had the time?

Wayne: Were they labeled though or did you just have to figure out which one is yours?

Evelyn: I don't remember.

Judy: Or just claim whichever you wanted.

Evelyn: Maybe they were handed to you. Like my brother, he probably had something that was more boyish, for a boy. We celebrated St. Nicholas, which comes the first part of December, and I don't know if they still do that.

Wayne: A lot still do.

Evelyn: Yeah, St. Nicholas.

Wayne: Usually, they had something small.

Evelyn: We never saw who brought the presents. We never saw that. Suddenly the door was open and there were all those gifts under the tree.

Wayne: Were you told it was Santa Claus?

Evelyn: Not really, no. Well, I think in a way, but we didn't say Santa Claus. I think, Christ Child, "Das Christkind," 'cause this community was very Catholic. Of course, I don't need to tell you that. I think in German, we would say Christkind. "Kind" is a child.

I took a couple of years of German at MSU. I could never read German. I could always understand it and I learned how to read it. Fantastic! Difficult grammar in German. If you wanna learn that, you better know your grammar in English.

Judy: Exactly.

Evelyn: Your maiden name is Bauer?

Judy: No, my maiden name is Thelen. I didn't change my name when I married.

Evelyn: See, a bauer is a farmer. You probably knew that. Most of these names, like Miller is somebody who grinds something, a miller. Somebody whose name is Snyder, that's a tailor. Now, a Kloeckner, I'm not sure what that means. Kloeckner, but that name is still in Germany. So is Thelen. He authored a book. See, I still have connections with the people in Germany and write letters back and forth. Of course, now it's email.

Wayne: Gets there a lot faster.

Evelyn: I think, like in the Eifel, even in World War II or certainly in World War I, those people living in that kind of a remote area, I don't think they really knew what was going on in that part of Germany. Same way as War II, where my mother's relatives--. I don't think they knew what was going on in the part of Germany, especially Eastern Germany, where some of the concentration camps--[were]. I don't think they were aware of that because they didn't have the communications. Like my friend, Marie Bengel, who's a German war bride, she lived close to the Polish border. She says, "We never were told. We always were told we were winning the war. We were told we were winning." So again, sometimes you have to be careful. Who gets the blame? Isn't that true? Who gets the blame?

Wayne: How did you celebrate the 4th of July when you were younger? Is it a lot different from today?

Evelyn: Well, I don't think we did that too much as a family celebration. We celebrated as a community here, big celebration.

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Wayne: It's not just recent then?

Evelyn: No, the 4th of July with the big meals, that goes back to here when my mother--she would work. It was in the 1920s, maybe even earlier, they were having, already, the big dinners.

Judy: The 4th of July picnic when I was growing up.

Wayne: Was it like a potluck or everyone brought their own food?

Evelyn: Every farmer had to bring either chicken, a vegetable. You had to donate that.

Judy: Oh, okay. So you didn't bring ready-made food? It was made for you with contributions from the community.

Evelyn: With a big committee of women who did the cooking. Can you imagine how hot that must be when you fry that chicken with no air conditioning?

Wayne: Are there any other special occasions that your family celebrated, maybe Easter?

Evelyn: Oh, yes, Easter. My mother would use-- see, you didn't go to the store to buy the coloring, the dyes. She would use beet juice, coffee. Beet juice was a good color, almost red, and coffee. I don't know what she did with the coffee. That turned the egg kind of brownish. Eggs, Easter eggs.

Wayne: Were they hard boiled then?

Evelyn: Oh, yeah.

Wayne: Was there an Easter bunny back then?

Evelyn: Not that I can remember.

Wayne: I'm not sure when that showed up.

I know you've done a number of things in the community. The blue book, I know you edited that. There's a lot of information on family histories in there. How did you manage to gather all of this?

Evelyn: Oh, it took almost two years.

Judy: That was my question.

Evelyn: That book came out in 1986, the first sales. First, we started with 3 X 5 cards. I imagine you've seen them.

Judy: I've seen the box.

Evelyn: At least I realized I needed to go back one more generation. I didn't have the first generation. So

sometimes on those 3 X 5 cards, I will have the second generation that were born here. Yes, it took us almost two years, but our records here at St. Mary's are a treasure. You wouldn't believe those priests. They would write where they came from in Germany. They wrote the name of the town.

Wayne: Written in Latin or German?

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Evelyn: It was written in German and it was written in the old German script, which I cannot read but fortunately, we had a German war bride here who could read that. So she would help me. Her name was Marie Bengel and she is the one I told you about. She lived pretty close to the Polish border. Fortunately, she could read that.

I remember going to the different families. We had so many families by the name of Smith. I remember going to ----, but she was very hard of hearing. My sister-in-law went with me, and we asked her questions. Finally I said, "Tell her who was the first Smith in her family." "Acht," she said in German. I gotta say it in German first. That was John Smith from Acht. I didn't realize when she said "Acht," because that word, in German, means eight and I said, "Why is she saying that?" See, I couldn't make myself heard because she was so hard of hearing, didn't have hearing aids, but when we got to the church records, there it was: Johann Schmidt from Acht, he was. That's how they identified themselves because there were so many people with the same name. So he was the John Smith from [the village of] Acht and there were other Smiths. They also had a name attached to single them out. Well, they had first names like John or Joseph or maybe Peter. "Well, which one are you talking about," they would say and then they would say.

Judy: Mary and Ann and Elizabeth.

Wayne: There's still some of that today. Which, by the same name, are you talking about?

Evelyn: It took a lot, and census records. I have a copy of the 1860 census. You probably have seen that. Census records and when the people heard that we were putting a book together, then many families gave us their information. They would come and tell, especially Wirth. That name is spelled W-i-r-t-h. That isn't the way it was spelled originally, either. It's W-i-r-t, Virt. The "W" sounds like a "V" in German. A virt is an innkeeper. How do you like that? Virt, but they came from the Eifel.

They came from another part called Hessen. The Germans that helped the English in the Revolutionary War were Hessians. We have people here, especially Feldpausch, Huhn, Goerge, Wieber, Cook/Koch. They came from the state of Hessen. Some say Hesse/Hessa, but officially it's Hessen. I've seen it both ways. Of course, some [came] from what would be called Bavaria. Some, like Koenigsknecht, they came from Hungary and some from Czechoslovakia, Jegla, Czechs.

Then we had a few that came from the part that's now France. A Schneider family came from what they call Alsace, which now belongs to France, but at the time when they immigrated, it belonged to Germany. They fought over that land for how many centuries? I always say that that soil has to be soaked in blood. But see, then some of them, the Schneiders especially, the older people could speak French. They spoke French, those are the Schneiders. I don't know if you've come across any of them.

Judy: I did some work for Pat Schneider, who married one of my cousins on the Bauer side and did a whole bunch of his. I've been trying to research into Alsace for him. I've gotten a certain far distance and then there's a connection that's kind of missing. So I'm still trying to confirm that side of the family.

Evelyn: This woman's maiden name, it was Heinz, like the ketchup. Heinz, but they would say Heinza in

German,

Judy: and that's why there are at least ten different spellings that we've run across so far between first French and German records, Hansi, Hensi, just all sorts of spellings, and they really murdered her father's name, Dionysius, tons of different ways to spell that too.

Evelyn: Dionysius, actually, it sounds Latin, Dionysius. Morris/Maurice Snyder, and that's the Snyder homestead west of town. That's where Schneiders settled. It's in the second mile, big farmhouse, big

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dairy farmer. That's the homestead, Schneider. That's fantastic that some of these people still have that same land, like the Hanses. It's going on 200 years.

Judy: Still in the family.

Evelyn: Yes, still in the family. Arens is the same way. Lots of people left because they didn't wanna be farmers, so they left Westphalia. Leo [Pohl] just had a call from a woman from Detroit, and I never heard---. Well, the way Leo pronounced it, I didn't recognize it but they were here. It's T-h-e-i-d. That would be pronounced "TheĪd." Never heard that name, have you?

Judy: I've seen that name, but I don't know if it's a connection to here or not.

Evelyn: Why they left, I have no idea. Many of them went to a place called Wyandotte, where they were building ships. I don't know if they built something else in Wyandotte. I've tried to get a book of the city, the history of Wyandotte.

Wayne: Right on the Detroit River.

Evelyn: They call that "downriver."

Wayne: What kind of businesses do you remember being in Westphalia? What was the downtown like when you were young?

Evelyn: Everything. They didn't have to leave Westphalia. It was self-sufficient. We had a doctor early; we had a drug store; had two general stores. They sold everything from groceries to wallpaper, yard goods, anything that the housewife wanted to buy. Certainly, we had what they call saloons, beer gardens. I think they even had their own power plant, where they generated their own power. It was a building that's gone now. It was not alternating. It was not AC-DC. It was whatever else that is.

Wayne: It's either alternating current or direct current so it might have been direct current.

Evelyn: I bet. If you lived in the village, then you could get that power but if you lived in the country, you still had to depend on some other kind of fuel. Housewives used to say you couldn't plug in your toaster or your iron at the same time.

Judy: You weren't using sad irons, huh?

Evelyn: 'Cause I think in those days, they didn't have that many appliances that were powered by electricity.

Wayne: When did electricity come to Westphalia?

Evelyn: Where I lived, to the west, it came earlier than in the other directions because it came from the Grand River. There's still a big power plant on the Grand River. I think Consumers [Energy] probably

owns that. I remember getting electricity in our house. I was still in preschool because I watched the man, how he was pulling those wires through under the floorboards. So I think we got electricity, like 1930. The other directions, I'm not sure.

Wayne: And in town?

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Evelyn: In town, it was earlier. I think Leo might have some information about that, Leo Pohl. They even had a man--and I think that's written down--who took charge. He had to watch those turbines. I don't know what they called them, the generators.

Evelyn: We had a firehouse. It's in the brown book [*Westphalia Area History 1836-1976, 140 Years of Progress*], shows a picture of the firemen. They wore uniforms and had regular meetings. I think they had everything here so that you didn't have to leave town.

Wayne: When did telephones come in?

Evelyn: Early. I think you probably have to look in either the brown book-- They had two lines. Originally, they had two lines, their own system strung up. A stranger came into town--that story's in the blue book. A stranger came into town and says, "How come you have two lines?" And the farmer says, "One is for English and the other is for German." Germans have a strange sense of humor. When we put out that blue book, we had a lot of help from the Clinton County Historical Society. They told us different things. "You should become a tax-free business."

Wayne: A non-profit.

Evelyn: A nonprofit. "Ask the people to give you their stories and have a part in your book where you have these stories like that about the telephone lines. Don't change their writing even if they make spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Just leave it." Her name was Geneva Wiskemann. Out of St. John's--what was her name? Ovid-Elsie, we had a woman from Ovid, but they gave us a lot of good information and our book won an award. It was judged by the Michigan Historical Society as one of the best books of the year, but it took a long time to put that together.

Judy: You got a lot of help from the community then. People started bringing you things as they realized what you were looking for.

Evelyn: There's one section where it's just stories. People brought their stories even about the telephone when everybody could listen in. You heard the neighbor's ring, you could go and listen in.

Judy: I understand that didn't change until about 1980. Is that right?

Evelyn: I wonder, I don't know when they changed that.

Judy: I thought Leo said that.

Wayne: think the 80s. It was still there when I started teaching at P-W [Pewamo-Westphalia]. It would buzz, telling you that your time was almost up and then it cut you off.

Evelyn: Yeah, I'm sure the telephone company has their own history.

Wayne: Because Westphalia was fairly self-sufficient, did it do better during the Great Depression than

maybe other areas?

Evelyn: Yes, I believe they did because I don't ever remember anyone saying they were ever hungry or that they were cold. Everyone seemed to have enough to eat. Well, I doubt that. With your clothes, if you outgrew them, you gave them to somebody else. I know, being the youngest one, when my coat, when I couldn't wear that anymore, we gave it to either a relative or a neighbor.

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That's another thing. They had a seamstress here and they had a hat shop, and right across here was ladies' ready- to- wear. I think, when they left Westphalia, they went to Portland, the Schueller's. That was ladies ready-to-wear. They had what's called a workers' union where, if you got into trouble--It's like, if you got sick and couldn't go to work, you could draw money from that society. Is the UAW like that? That was that little building right across here. It's a bar now. That was where the Worker's Society had their--. They called it the "Arbeiter. The arbeiter is a worker, Arbeiter Society. That's how they helped each other out. So I don't think that it was that severe. You didn't have men that worked in a factory in those days. I never heard of that.

Judy: I got the impression in some cases that people didn't go hungry, but ask them what they ate. "ate lard sandwiches."

Evelyn: You had your own milk. You had your own eggs. Then the people in the village. Well, I think in those days, some of those people had their own chickens. I don't know about cows. Cows, most likely. Yeah. They even had a candy shop where they made their own candy and sell candy. Fantastic! I imagine the villages like Fowler or St. Johns, wouldn't the situation have been the same, that they were self-sufficient?

Wayne: I'm not sure. I always got the impression that Westphalia was a little bit different because they were a little closer to each other. They saw themselves as more as one big family instead of a bunch of families that happened to live in the same area.

Evelyn: Oh, yeah. You knew when somebody was in trouble.

Wayne: And they're still that way. If there's a death, people start handing out hundred dollar bills to them, still today.

Judy: My aunt told me that they never felt poor, but she says, " But now I know that we were poor." You didn't feel it because so many people were experiencing the same thing.

Evelyn: We were all in the same boat. Even the nuns in school, they would watch. I don't think there was ever a child that didn't have food in their dinner bucket. That's what we had to carry, was a dinner bucket.

I was able to walk to school. I never got into those cars where they packed how many kids in one car before school buses. There weren't any seat belts. Who had seat belts in cars? I remember one of my friends said, "I was on the third layer." So they had them packed in the back seat.

Wayne: The biggest person on the bottom, and you're just kinda--

Judy: But they didn't have to walk to school when it was freezing cold in the winter then.

Evelyn: No, they didn't.

Wayne: When did the boarding houses close?

Evelyn: When the automobiles were more prevalent, then I think they were able to get the children to school. If you lived too far away, maybe three to five miles, you could stay in the boarding house. There's another good story. You gotta look in the blue book. A woman, we're going to present her in our cemetery walk. She talks about how she stayed in the boarding house. During the winter months, there were as many as 70 children in that boarding house and the nuns took care of those.

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Wayne: So they fed them?

Evelyn: The boarding house, it was a separate building. That's another thing. Do we have a separate picture of that boarding house?

Judy: I found two. You sent me one in the bag yesterday and I found another one that was a postcard that showed it next to the school. The boarding house was more prominent and I sent that to Glen and Deb last night.

Evelyn: See, it's where the funeral chapel is right now and it was a big two-story type building, wood. I can remember, when we used to have little festivals, we would have to come to the boarding house. That was torn down in 1935 to get ready for the big centennial, 1936, when they celebrated a hundred years. So the priest that was here had built a new building, the one that's there right now. That boarding house, can you imagine the nuns? They had to go to the convent to eat their meals, three meals a day for 70 kids.

Judy: Did I hear they said \$2.50 a week was the charge?

Evelyn: I said that. I have to double check that. That's only 50¢, isn't it, if they stayed five days?

Wayne: 50¢ a day.

Judy: For three meals.

Evelyn: For three meals and a bed.

Wayne: Were they usually about nine or ten before they went to the boarding school? I'm assuming you're not gonna send a five or six year old away from home.

Evelyn: I don't know but some of those early six-year-olds went to the country school. If they lived too far away, usually first or second grade. Even some of my classmates, they went to the country school for the first couple of years and then came to the Catholic school.

Wayne: I can understand not wanting to have your little kids away from you.

Evelyn: That's what somebody said. "Hey, that was a pretty good deal. You could send your kids away for five days a week."

Judy: But some of 'em didn't want the kids walking in freezing weather.

Wayne: They didn't want that either.

Judy: One of my aunt's complaints was that, no matter how cold it was, they had to walk to school. They would occasionally get a ride.

Evelyn: Once in a while I would get a ride but I usually walked and that's up the cemetery hill. I had a pair of roller skates and the sidewalk went all the way up to the cemetery gates. That's no longer.

Wayne: Was that a wooden sidewalk or cement?

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Evelyn: Cement. There was a pedestrian type bridge over the little creek, and boy, going down that hill with those roller skates!

Wayne: Pick up some speed!

Evelyn: There was a board missing in the wooden bridge so you had to know when you had to jump to get over. I don't know why they took that sidewalk away. That was neat. Why did they ever do that? You go to the city of DeWitt. You wanna see sidewalks, they've got sidewalks for miles.

Wayne: Nice wide ones. I think I read that they had a brickyard here that some of the bricks came from.

Evelyn: This building over here, this big brick building, the pizza place [Platte's Pizzeria], that was built with the bricks that were salvaged.

Wayne: Were they salvaged or did they make them?

Evelyn: They had the clay. They had the right kind of soil and they made the bricks. That building, Snitgen's store on the corner, the church that burned, several houses, the big one---it's Hengesbach's now. We've got that in the Blue book. Those, that were built with those bricks, and it was right here, this first block and it will tell you--I gave that piece of literature to Leo. It tells that the brick yard was southeast of Dr. Cook's residence. I don't know who lives in that house now. Klein it was.

Then it says, and this is something I never knew. Then after they were finished making the bricks, some Arens had a fish pond. Did they sell fish? Did he raise fish? I never heard that. That's that deep depression here when you go west.

Wayne: So it was filled in at one point with water?

Evelyn: I wonder. I don't know that. See, there's some things I don't know. Like I say, they really knew how to take care of themselves. Fortunately, when the immigrants came, there were many people who had various kinds of crafts: somebody who could make barrels; who could make crocks, a wagon; to make buggies. Westphalia Electric was one place where they built the buggies. The people who owned that, their name was Thome, T-h-o-m-e. In Fowler, they pronounce it "Thoma." and here they said "Thomē."

Wayne: And they spell it different.

Evelyn: "A" versus "E." I don't know how the Fowler people spell that.

Wayne: With an "A."

Evelyn: There's also a [Thome] family that came from that area called Alsace.

Wayne: When did indoor plumbing come to you?

Evelyn: The people in the village here, like the big house, the brick house, Snitgen, they had a flush toilet. Belens/Behlens had a flush toilet. We got ours maybe 1930, when you had electricity. Always had a well, but it was wind power. So I would say early 40s, late 30s.

Wayne: Did you get a bathtub about the same time?

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Evelyn: Oh yeah. I wonder how did my [mother] — She had four boys first. How did they take a bath? Did she have a warm good fire in the wood stove and open up the oven door and then have a tub or something in front of that stove so they wouldn't get too cold when they took a bath? I don't remember that.

Judy: My relatives, 'cause when I asked them that, some of them said they never took a bath. You "washed up, you washed down." Yeah, sponge bath.

Wayne: The smell in some of these schools must have been interesting, all these kids who hadn't had a bath in months.

Judy: I thought maybe they used laundry tubs 'cause laundry tubs were big.

Wayne: My mother did and she said there was one in, like the kitchen, and you would warm up water and if you were the last of the 10 kids, that you got kind of dirty water by the time you--

Evelyn: That's what I said about the threshers. When the last guy--and I wonder what the towels looked like. You could go to the mill. If you bought something in a cloth bag, you could make towels out of that, wiping towels. I don't know about bath towels. Feed sacks, they called them. They would make towels out of that. Like I tell you, they were very self-sufficient.

Judy: Some people made clothes out of them.

Evelyn: Yes.

Wayne: Now, the museum [Westphalia Historical Society Building and Museum] that we're in right now, I think you had something to do with starting the society and moving here. Could you tell that story?

Evelyn: I think that was one of the greatest things. There were a group of us. We got together. One of the greatest ideas is that we went ahead with that because it's a place where you can store all your memories, all your information about what we've been talking about, even artifacts, the things that people used to use. Now you're talking about doing farming. We have a display. I think we had so much interest. People were so excited. That's why we succeeded in keeping this. We started that in 1986 when we--

Judy: Before the book or after the book?

Evelyn: At the same time.

Wayne: Didn't have enough going on at that time, obviously.

Evelyn: That's when Geneva Wiskemann, who lives in Watertown [Twp.]--I wonder if she's still alive--she was so helpful. "This is what you have to do. You should do this. You do that"--with Clinton County Historical Society, very helpful. Is this who you work with?

Wayne: Yes, I'm the board secretary.

Evelyn: You are. See, all those books you see up there? [Family histories, local info] That got started when we got this place together.

Wayne: How did you get this building?

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Evelyn: Laurie, next door, the flower business, she owned this building. She wanted a bigger place, so she sold it to us, good deal. Laurie Pung, isn't it?

Judy: Yeah, she's a Pung now.

Evelyn: The original building was a big wood frame building. That was the furniture store or the cabinet shop owned by Kloeckner and then Wieber. They wanted to turn it into a post office when Bob Trierweiler came home from the service. It would've cost too much money to restore it, to remodel, so he bought another building, one over on the other end of town, and after that it became a gas station. Do you remember it being a gas station? That's why this wall--. This looks like a chimney, but I don't think it's a chimney.

Wayne: Or part of it when it was a gas station.

Evelyn: It was a gas station and then Laurie bought it and had a flower shop and a bakery. Then she wanted a bigger place and sold it to us. We had a fundraiser and we got the money to buy the building and Dan Arens put that up. You could see how much money you had.

Wayne: A chart?

So we had that out here. That was exciting, see when it hit the top.

He's a wonderful artist, Dan Arens. I think he put the mural that's in Fowler. He did that one, the one in Pewamo, and I think the last one he did was in Ionia. He should do one here. I have ideas. They should close that, take those windows out of that wall [of the Museum]. Those windows really don't serve any purpose and then Dan Arens could paint a mural on that wall.

Wayne: You could have an old Westphalia scene of some sort on there.

Evelyn: Some kind, even from the days when they were building their log houses there and the animals that were here. Apparently, from what we've heard with the stories, they did have bear. Bear would come in and steal some of their livestock. I'm 97 years old. I bet you knew that.

Wayne: Yes, I'm always amazed when I talk to some people, and some of them are older than you, where they're still so bright. They're so with it. I'm going, "Wow!"

Evelyn: I'm grateful for that. If you got a good set of genes and have a pretty good upbringing, they say, "nature and nurture." I bet you've heard that at P-W.

Wayne: Do you have anything that you need to ask that we haven't covered?

Judy: I think she's covered a lot of it about how the things came together, how she did the book.

Evelyn: Can you imagine what that was like in those first days when those men--They left their women in Detroit, those founding fathers. Platte was married; Salter was married, had children; Tillmann wasn't married; neither was Hanses. The women stayed in Detroit that first-- Well, they came in November. It was tough, I bet.

Wayne: Probably being there's better out here in the winter for that first winter where there's nothing.

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Evelyn: They had a lot of help from the people in Lyons. See, Lyons is older than we are, and so is DeWitt, not much, but they're older, and of course Ionia. They had some tough days. Where did they sleep? Maybe they went to Lyons.

Walnuts, they had walnut trees. The forests were so dense. This is what Hanses has in his books up there. If you wanted to see the sky, if you wanted to see the clouds or the sun, you had to cut down some trees.

Wayne: I keep thinking if you're farmers, you're coming here, you have 600 acres or so, and it's all trees, and you just have an ax and maybe a saw. It's gotta be a little disheartening to think about all the work you're gonna have to put in before you can start to grow any crops.

Judy: It's interesting to pay attention to the agricultural schedules that were done from 1850 through 1880 with the census. It was sort of an adjunct and it shows how much land they actually had, first of all; how much of it was cleared; how much was still forest; how of it much was something else. The interesting part was, the English-speaking people had horses, but none of the Germans in 1850 had horses. They had oxen.

Evelyn: One farmer had a pair of oxen. It'll tell you in the brown book which family had a pair of oxen and they were put to good use.

Wayne: Everyone got to kind of use it?

Evelyn: Had to go to that farmer and borrow, say, "Can I have your pair of oxen for the day, do some work?"

The church, the black walnut--. I have quite a standing of trees woods, and very seldom will get a black walnut that's good timber, but originally that's what they had here was the black walnut. That's why the speculators, who were looking for good land, they didn't wanna stay here. They said it was too swampy. It was swampy here, even right in the downtown. That's why they settled out in that direction and that direction because it was--What do the Germans say, "sumpfig," "swampy," and so the speculators said, "We don't want this land. It's not worth anything." But the Germans said, "If this land can support that hardwood, walnut, oak, maple, it's gotta be good land," and they were right.

Judy: There's a book called, *The Trail of the Black Walnut*, which had something to do with Canadians and where they were choosing, and they followed the black walnuts.

Evelyn: Now I have one tree in my yard, a black walnut, which is a nuisance.

Wayne: Most people don't grow them unless they're already there.

Evelyn: It is loaded this year. It's in clusters you're gonna be walking under it. So I have a special little apparatus that you roll this across the ground, and I have somebody--I can't do that anymore--take those walnuts out to the woods. You should see all the walnut trees I have growing in the woods.

Wayne: Lots of volunteers out there.

Evelyn: Well, I also have what they call an English walnut. It's a good crop this year. A couple years it froze in the spring and then they didn't mature into walnuts.

Wayne: I noticed the hickory trees seemed to be doing well this year too.

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Evelyn: Did I tell you anything that was worthwhile?

Wayne: Oh, absolutely. Thank you very much.

Judy: I learned a lot. There was one question that I didn't get asked. Just out of curiosity, did you have enough apples when you were growing up to make cider and did you have hard cider?

Evelyn: Everybody had an orchard. You had apple trees and you had plums. I can't remember any other fruit. Plums, we had plum trees, and of course grapes. You had to have grapes. That's what our garden was at home. You had big, long rows of potatoes and of course grapes.

Judy: Did you make your own cider?

Evelyn: We didn't. Well, they had a cider press, different people. That Pohl over there to the south, he had a cider press and then there was one over in Ionia County, Klein, who had a cider press.

Wayne: Were there any brewers in town who made beer?

Evelyn: Well, they did their own, nothing commercial. I don't remember anybody making--Yeah, my brothers did. They made beer during the prohibition and lots of families made their own root beer. Root beer was easy to do.

Judy: I mean, hard cider's easy to do too. You just put cider in a keg and let it sit.

Evelyn: Yeah. You didn't cork it. It would work and then there was a certain time when you had to put that plug in there and the spigot to draw that cider. I think everyone had some kind of a ramp in their basement to put their cider barrels. My back door is a big back door and I think that was made big just for cider barrels to get down to the basement.

Evelyn: There's a family out here, Goodman--it's not Goodman anymore--where they had, how many boys in that family? They had the record number of cider barrels in their basement. Nobody had as many barrels of cider in their basement as the Goodman brothers. Mrs. Goodman had a spinning wheel.

They would make their own clothes, spin their own yarn. There was a knack to that. You had to know what you were doing and even made their own soap. Hey, we've been here an hour and 24 minutes.

Wayne: It's been a good conversation.

Judy: It's been delightful.

Evelyn: I like it. Our claim to fame: We are the first permanent German Catholic settlement in central Michigan. We've got this plaque from the state. It should be here. I brought it here. It's a big piece of paper signed by the governor. I think the reason was, like I said before, because we had so many craftspeople; we had teachers; we had musicians. What made it successful, some people came because we had a priest and we had a school. We had a priest, always had the priest.

Clinton County Historical Society