THIS is Larry Sprunk and the following is an interview that I had with Ada Engen of rural Northwood, North Dakota. The interview was held in Ada's rural Northwood home Thursday, April 8, 1976, and it began at approximately 7:30 in the evening. The interview with Ada is complete on sides one and two of this cassette.

LARRY: Can you tell me Ada the background.... We can look at the pictures after awhile. I was wondering first if you could just tell me about your family, when they came to North Dakota, why they came, how they got started? That sort o' thing.

ADA: I'll tell you about the hardships.

LARRY: Do that.

ADA: Is that what you want me t' start on?

LARRY: Ya. How they got here.

ENGER: And tell him they came here without a penny in their pocket, and they plowed and took the sod and made a sod house right out here.

ADA: I was born in a little sod house right out here.

LARRY: Oh?

ENGER: Ya. [redacted] Made out o' sod.

ADA: He wasn't.

LARRY: He's a young sprout, huh?

ADA: Y-yes. Real young.

ENGER: I was at one time.

LARRY: Well, what brought your family to North Dakota?

ADA: What brought all these Norwegians from Norway on these [redacted] bare prairies where there wasn't a tree, there was no water, there was no wood? [redacted] And they survived and made it! It was because the families were large in Norway and there wasn't room for them. Mama said, "There was no room for me in Norway." She and her husband stayed [redacted] three years with his parents and used a room in their house and worked there. That wasn't any fun.

LARRY: No.

ADA: And.... You're not taking this down yet, I hope.

LARRY: Yes, I've got the recorder on. Oh, that's alright, Ada. Don't worry. That's what I came for.

ADA: I've o' said it differently.

LARRY: That's what I came for.

ENGER: Well, did you plug it? You have to plug it.

LARRY: No. This has got a battery in it too.

ENGER: Oh.

LARRY: I can't let it run on the battery too long, but it'll last for awhile. No, that's alright.

ADA: I'd of said it different. The reason for them coming was there wasn't any room for them in Norway. They couldn't make a living in Norway and there were brothers and sisters in that big family who had come here earlier. Those who came here of the ones that I know couldn't even make enough money to get here although the fare would be about $40, and they couldn't make that much money in Norway to get here. This was a Norwegian settlement solid. So those who had gotten here ahead of them sent them tickets to come. Papa's sister and her husband, who lived here, sent my dad and mother their ticket. They came over on an immigrant ship, which was very wretched. They had two children. One was two and one half and one was eight months. A boy and a girl. They came to Philadelphia and then they were shipped across the country by railroad to Northwood. Mama said, "The trip on the ship was hard, but it was not much better to be shipped over the country like cattle." But they got there and they were alive. Then.... We'll call him our uncle. He met them in Northwood with a team of oxen and a lumber wagon and he had his daughter, who was grown-up along. So mama talked with her on the way up from Northwood. It was 12 miles. And after awhile the young girl said, "We haven't got a very good house yet. We live in a sod house." Mother said, "I didn't have the slightest idea what a sod house was, but I didn't say anything." And when they got there our aunt received them very warmly and she said, "I will fix some water for you so you can wash up. The children and yourselves. But I'll have to boil it first because the water is so hard and it gets better if I boil it." Mama said she never in her life had imagined why water was hard. All water

water in Norway was soft. So they got washed up and they were fed and they made beds for them in that one-room sod house. This was in May in the spring. They stayed there all summer. And the question was that the man worked off that $40 that he had already gotten. It was customary and that was a good thing because they in that manner became Americanized and they could help themselves. They did not learn the language. It wasn't necessary because all the Norwegians talked only Norwegian. But they learned the customs of the land and they learned how to live here. Then in the winter, dad went to Brainard and worked in the woods to make some money. And that was a hard life, dirty life. Sanitation was bad and they got lousy. When they come back, they had to boil their clothes and get the lice killed. It wasn't easy.

LARRY: What year was this Ada?

ADA: They came in May, 1889.

ENGER: That was quite a bit later than when the first settlers came here.

ADA: Uncle and auntie had come in '83.

LARRY: Oh, I see.

ADA: And several others had. Several who even were related. And when the newcomers came they were accepted and welcomed and treated very nicely, but the conditions were hard.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: Then he worked for uncle in the summer and then late in the fall they moved to a shack to live alone, which was good. And mama said the old stove that they brought for her to cook in was abominable, but it worked. This was in 1890. And at Christmastime mama had another baby. A little girl was born then. And that day dad had taken a team of oxen and a sleigh and driven to the Sheyenne River, which is far from there. It's west. To cut wood. There was nothing here! There was neither wood nor nothing else. I often asked her why on earth he didn't do it in the summertime? And she said, "It would be much harder to go there with a wagon. It was much easier with a sleigh."

That's why they went in the wintertime. And while he was gone a neighbor woman thought of mama over there all alone about one and one half miles away, and she walked over there t' see if she was alright because it was time for her to have her baby. And the lady stayed there with her for about a half of a day. They were very helpful to each other. And she walked back home again and she told her husband to hitch the horses up and go and get the lady who served as a midwife. It seemed that each community had some superior woman that came to the rescue and they knew who she was. She never complained. She was the most cheerful woman and she delivered, must I say, hundreds of babies. So this neighbor went and got the midwife and everything went smoothly; though I stayed there with mama, but dad got home before the baby was born. The midwife was just finishing up her work and another neighbor came. He said, "She's got to come with me right away! My wife needs her." So she finished up her work at mama's and she went with this neighbor to take care of this woman and they lived and the little babies lived too.

LARRY: What was the midwife's name?

ADA: Merit Idom. One could never say enough for her for the things she did. One time several years later when mama had the Typhoid Fever, she left her household and came and stayed with her and took care of mama. And she never complained and she never got money for her work. She did it. It had to be done. Alright. Then the doctor came to see mama and then he--I'll just tell you this. Then he left a bottle o' brandy. Then he said to her, "You give her two tablespoons every so often and I'll be back tommorrow." Typhoid Fever was serious. Doctor came back the next day and he looked at Mrs. Idom and he said, "But it's gotten so far down the bottle. You must o' given her more than I said." And she said, "Well, you might know I had t' have a little for myself so I wouldn't get the Typhoid Fever." Mrs. Idom smoked a pipe all the time.

LARRY: Is that right?

ENGER: The next year about they moved here.

ADA: Ya. She smoked a pipe all the time; but, I don't think, she ever bought any Bull Durham for herself because the men would buy tobacco for her. She was always cheerful. She was remarkable.

LARRY: Now, when did your family move to this--this is your dad's homestead here?

ADA: Right.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: They moved here in May that year 1900. No, 1890. Excuse me. 1890. In May. Mama said, "They had $.25." That was all the money they had, but they got along. They brought with them a few chickens. Not many. They brought with them some cows and the pioneers depended on their cows for that which was important. They had to have milk for their children and they had a lot of them. The women usually milked the cows and, I think, it was a comfort to them. I think, that helped them from getting too lonesome. They liked their cattle; they were like pets. Then they came here in 1890. All the land in Loretta Township was taken when he came and he had a little difficulty in finding land in the township, but there always was those who had filed on land and left it and this was one of the quarters and he got it. Then they built a little shack, a wooden shack, to use through the summer because he would have to go out and work to make some money 2nd he wasn't going to stop then and break the sod and take the sod and sod up the house until the fall when the work had been done. Then he would have time to do that. So she lived with her three little children in that one-walled shack all summer and her biggest fear was storms, Thunder storms. She was afraid of them because when the rain struck that one-walled shack, it made a noise and she was fearful. He walked over to John Runnings, which was about two miles, and worked there in the summer through haying. Haying was the big season because they had to have hay for the cattle and the horses. Those that had horses. There weren't many horses at

that time. Later years, it was equal important to get the hay. But they had their milk, few eggs, and they bought their flour usually once a year. They had to be sure there was something to eat. There was once that he bought his flour when he came here that one time, otherwise, they always bought their flour in the fall. If the families were medium sized, they'd buy 10 100 pound sacks and store them, but where the family was large I know they bought 20 100 pound sacks at a time. They bought it in the bulk and then they didn't have to worry that they'd starve. I don't know where they got their butchering the first fall, but they always butchered in the fall and they salted some of the pork and they froze some of the meat that they could use in the winter.

ADA: Do you want to know more?

ENGER: Is that the kind of information you want?

LARRY: Yes. Exactly. You're doing wonderfully. Now, when was the sod house built then? When your dad came home in the fall?

ADA: Alright. Then in the fall.... Oh, yes. In the spring, he had two young oxen that he had to train to pull the walking plow and they walked behind the plow, you see, and he could not get those two young oxen to pull together. It was just about impossible! So he went to some other people that he knew and he told them that was just impossible. He couldn't break them young oxen. So there was a man that had a old ox that was very well trained and he let him buy it. He came home with the old oxen and hitched it to one of the young ones and it worked. They'd pull a plow. Those things were difficult. So he broke some right away in the spring and they planted pototoes. Those people had to look out so they wouldn't starve! There was no relief and there were no homesteads. You help yourself or perish! And they did help themselves. So he broke enough to plant pototoes. And I do not know the story of how he got his hogs, but they had to have some hogs because everybody butchered pigs. And they were very particular about taking good care of 'em and they raised their own pigs. Particular, too, about seeing to that the little ones didn't get killed. That was a big problem they had and they did pretty

well in it. That was the first summer and he worked for John Running and then in the fall he broke [redacted] the sod and sodded up the house and made it warm. It had some small windows up on the wall way in on the inside of the sodettes [redacted], you see. Mama said after she got her sod house ready and she put some white curtains for those windows [redacted], she said she had never been so happy in her life as she was. This was her home.

LARRY: Is that right?

ADA: They had a large immigration chest. They made those out o' lumber reinforced with iron bars so they were very strong and when they came over, o' course, all the belongings that they had was [redacted] in that big box. And also [redacted] inside o' that big box was a smaller chest and that is a chest we still have. They were beautifully painted. Papa's name is on the side of it and the date on it and inside of the chest were [redacted] two small compartments. The top one you opened the cover and then you could pull up the side of it, like that, and there'd be a shelf underneath there and that was to put valuables in. Maybe your money or maybe your [redacted] citizenship paper or maybe something else important. It was a chest in there for [redacted] safeys keeping and then they had clothing or whatever it was. Mama brought some pretty dishes and things that she didn't preserve. I wish she had but she didn't. Times were hard. They used what they had.

LARRY: Ada, you know, a couple months ago--maybe more than that--I was talking to a old fellow and he told me about his mother being very lonesome because most of the homesteads around his mother's homestead or his folk's homestead were taken up by bachlors. [redacted] I'll use his words. He said, "North Dakota pioneer country was wonderful country for horses and cattle [redacted] and men, but it was hell on women." Would you say that's true?

ADA: Yes, I would say, that is true. Just imagine, all these young women, young girls, married and raising these big families up to 11 children, 10 children, 14 children [redacted] and it wasn't easy for the women and they were lonesome. The men they would go to town. They would see

other men. The women were home with the children. It was lonesome. But they had a spirit that was wonderful. Did you want t' know anything more about my family?

LARRY: Yes, please. You're doing wonderfully.

ADA: Alright. Each year got a little better. Mama was a good sewer. Most of them would have one sheep or two and I saw mama shear the sheep. I saw her wash the wool. I saw her card the wool and I saw her spin the yarn, and I saw her make stockings and mittens for all of us for years. And she also would use that wool for filling for quilts. I declare, "They'd have frozen to death if they hadn't o' done it."

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: And things got a little better each year and they were strong and they were young. Mama helped lot of the young women that came from Norway, who were married around here. She told about one woman that didn't know what to do when her baby came and they just helped each other. They got along and children lived. Then papa had this part of this house built out of lumber and they got out of the sod house.

LARRY: When would that have been? That was after you were born? Right?

ADA: Yes, after I was born but let's see--1, 2, 3, 4. I'm the fifth child. 1, 2, 3, 4. Yes, I'm the fifth child so there were just two of the children that were born in this sod house. That would be about four years and then papa built this house and they got out of the sod house. and that was quite a thing. It lifted you up and brought you up out of the dirt and that pleased them. Things got a little better each year. They had more cattle by and by and more milk. Mama was a good butter maker and she sold a lot o' butter until she was much older. It was an income and with the money from the butter they would buy calico and a few little utensils maybe they wanted and some food. Then they raised chickens and the flock of chickens grew and they would sell eggs and that was a little income but not very much because they didn't pay much for butter and eggs.

LARRY: Ada, did your dad have good water on this place?

ADA: That's a very important question. No. They dug a well, of course, right away. The water was hard and it was not the best drinking water either, but they got along and sometimes they would--there were so many sloughs on this land. They've all been drained now. But, you know, they liked to have the sloughs for hay for their stock and they looked at that with a keen eye. Right east of the house was a great big slough. Even I can remember when the water was five feet deep in it. So one time they dug a well about six feet deep and let the water seep into it and that was good drinking water. We drank that for a couple o' summers.

LARRY: Is that how your mother got Typhus do you think? From that water?

ADA: No. No, no. It was in the country. It was very contagious. Very contagious. Common. But she survived. And then the two younger boys were born in this house. After one of the boys was born two years later, that would be 1898, papa got sick and he was not feeling well all winter. And in the spring, a couple of the men came and helped her and they took him to Grand Forks to a doctor. He said, "There's nothing to do." They should take him home and let him rest. And he lived two weeks after that and he died.

LARRY: Is that right?

ADA: And mama had the next boy after he died. So there she was a widow with seven little children. The oldest boy was 12, I think.

ENGER: Ten.

ADA: The boy was 10 and the girl was 12 and all the rest of us were little kids, but she made it. And she had a hired man for a couple of years and one neighbor rented this quarter for one year and by that time, the boys were big and she made it all alone from then on with the boys. She was a strong woman and she was determined to take care of her family There was no assistance. There was no help. But she had two very good neighbors. One on that side and one on that side who gave her advice as far as some business things were concerned and many things. I can remember one time when there was a terrific blizzard on Thanksgiving day and

the roads were impossible. The man that lived on this side walked over here and asked her if she had bought her flour for winter yet. And she said, "No." And he said, "You send the boys over. I've gotten mine and I'll lend you a sack until the roads get good and you get yours. Then you can repay it." You didn't give it. It was repaid. And they were good to her and they gave her other advice when she needed it.

LARRY: I should ask you some questions now, Ada, before I forget. What was your dad's name?

ADA: Iner Engen.

LARRY: And your mother's maiden name was?

ADA: Kirsti Mosslet. (sp)

LARRY: And the neighbor over here that came with the flour.... The names of the two neighbors?

ADA: That was Joan Haroldson and this was Andrew Wahl. He was a Swede and this one was a Norwegian. But they gave her advice when advice was needed. They were wonderful men and that fall before the baby was born, after papa died. Andrew Wahl came over here. His wife knew when it was time for it. And he came over here and he said to her, "Do you dare stay alone another week?" And she said, "Yes, I do." And he said, "Alright then. Then I'll go and hire a hired man for you to finish up the work." The night when he was born the same midwife was here and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wahl came over here and sat here all night for moral support.

LARRY: Ada, when were you born, if you don't mind me asking?

ADA: 1894.

LARRY: So you were old enough then to remember your dad dieing?

ADA: Just a few things vaguely. I was very small. Mother used to tell it.

LARRY: One fellow over by Carrington also told me that it was very hard for women because the homestead shacks or shanties or cabins were so small that once in awhile a lady would get cabin fever. She just couldn't stand being closed in like that with....

ADA: I've read of that, too, but mother never complained about that.

LARRY: Oh?

ADA: I think, she was so relieved and so happy to be in her home because it could not have been easy to stay in anyone else's home no matter how kind they were to you, and eat their food, and sleep in their house. That couldn't have been easy. But mother worked at auntie's place and they were very friendly all their life. It was always fun to have her come. I can remember all the time when I was young, mother would take us along and go over there to visit once a summer and she'd fix nice lunch for us.

LARRY: Now, this was the aunt over here? Right?

ADA: M-m-m. Papa's sister.

LARRY: And another thing I wanted to ask you. Did your mother or your brother or older sisters tell you whether or not that sod shanty had any problem with bugs or--what do they call 'em--prairie ticks or lice? Because I talked with people that said that that was one of the problems with a sod house.

ADA: You see, they didn't live there very long. Some people lived there much longer. There was one family out here that lived in one 'til the children were all grown-up. And mice were perhaps a hard thing. Lice was a problem in the country at that time. I don't know why but it was. The flies were terrible and the bedbugs were worse even in the lumber houses. And I don't know why; but they've all disappeared and there's been none since, but they were a terrific pest and they fought flies all summer long.

LARRY: Where was the nearest store for your folks?

ADA: In the beginning it was Northwood. That's 14 miles. They had t' haul their grain there and they had to get their supplies there. In 1896, the railroad came to Aneta and that became our town and still is although we do our banking in Northwood.

LARRY: How far is Aneta from here?

ADA: Ten miles.

LARRY: Ada, do you know if there were any inland post offices or country stores that have disappeared since then?

ADA: Yes, yes, yes.

ENGER: Oh, the Cable store out here three, four miles.

ADA: Four miles east on the Hart farm.

ENGER: You came by there when you came up.

LARRY: Oh, yes.

ADA: On the Hart farm. There was a man whose name was Cable and he had a store there and Cable was our post office for a long, long time. The mail was hauled from Northwood to Cable Post Office and that became quite a center. People would go there and get emergency supplies although they did take most of their things from town. He had quite a trade because they could walk over there or they could send a kid over there to get something. I remember one girl told me there her father put her on a horse when she was quite small and he said, "Now, you just ride over to Cables and get a chimney for the lantern and get some tobacco." And she tells me and she laughs about it. She was just so little. She tells me now, "I did it and I brought back the chimney for the lantern and I brought back the tobacco." He had a good trade.

LARRY: Was that their post office too?

ADA: Yes. They didn't have as much mail then as we do now, you know? We didn't have a daily paper until we were big, but they did have a paper. They had a weekly Scandinavian paper and they were so anxious to get that because once in awhile they would see a letter or something from Norway that just tickled them. I think, they read every word that was printed in that Norwegian newspaper.

LARRY: And up until your dad died did he haul his firewood from the Sheyenne then?

ADA: Firewood was quite a problem. Yes, he did. They went down to Sheyenne to get it, but before he died they could get cordwood in town. To save money they didn't buy anymore than they had to. They lived in one room upstairs and they didn't use a heating stove. They used a cookstove.

And in the northwestern part of North Dakota I've heard that they used buffalo chips for fuel and here the people used cow chips for fuel in the summertime.

ENGER: Not entirely. They used some of it.

ADA: Ya, they used some of it. They'd pick it and, you know, dry it, and use some of it.

LARRY: Did your mother ever remarry Ada?

ADA: No, she didn't. She just kept agoing.

LARRY: Did your mother economize? Would you have a big garden? How would she.... You mentioned how she would make socks and mittens and so forth.

ADA: Yes. And after she had several cows mother was a good cheese maker.

LARRY: Oh, is that right?

ADA: She made excellent cheese. And even some of the neighbors can remember and they tell me how good that cheese was. She'd cure it awhile and they'd slice it and eat it. She even made so many some summers that she sold 'em in the store, but she told me she got only $.25 for a cheese. Food wasn't worth much then. But a $.25, I think, then was worth much more to them than a $5 bill is to us now.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: She economized. And a little later when she had more cattle, one whole summer she made butter. Excellent butter maker. She made butter and furnished the Commercial Hotel in Aneta and each time she took the butter into the hotel she had a little can with a cover on it and she filled that with buttermilk. That buttermilk was excellent for baking and cooking and she got $.25 for the buttermilk and she thought that was pretty good. So it goes.

LARRY: Was she a gardener, too, or was it the kids' job?

ADA: O-oh, no. She worked hard. She would see to.... To plant pototoes was most important. She would see to it that she had enough pototoes. She always told the boys that they would have to plant twice as much as they needed to be sure if it should be a dry year. She had to look out for

herself. And sometimes the boys complained because they'd have to take out so many in the spring that weren't used, but she always had enough.

LARRY: Was that a root cellar that she would keep them in or did she keep them in the basement here?

ADA: It was a dirt cellar under the house. It wasn't fixed any other way and that's what all the cellars were in those days. Pototoes kept very well. Yes, she always had a garden and it seemed to grow so well in those days. The ground was good and.... I remember one time Mrs. Wahl had told her that a relative of hers in east Grand Forks was growing beans and they ripened so mama planted beans. She had a lot of 'em. They got ripe. They were the Northern beans. They were good. She picked the beans in the fall and she put them in the wagonbox and she had her [redacted] Two little boys tramp them out. And then she took out the hulls and then she took the beans and ran them in the wind, fanned them in the wind. She had a big sack of very good beans. They looked out for themselves. You couldn't let anybody starve and we didn't. We always had plenty o' food. We were well taken care of. We had a good home.

LARRY: What was the average sized farm, Ada, say, when you were growing up in 1905, '10?

ADA: [redacted] Two quarters. Some had [redacted] three quarters and I know [redacted] one who [redacted] had [redacted] four of 'em. [redacted] Am I right?

ENGER: Some had [redacted] one.

ADA: Lots of 'em had [redacted] one.

LARRY: Ya.

ENGER: But [redacted] four would be about the biggest up around 1910 like you were saying.

ADA: Yes. You see, as things went on, they started to breed horses and they would raise colts and they'd get more and more horses and they could put in more and more land.

LARRY: Oh. One of the things [redacted] I wonder about and ask people about is when all of these people left? Because North Dakota had to have been very populated with farmers during this period that we're talking [redacted] about 1910,

'15. Did they leave gradually or were there periods when a lot of them would leave?

ADA: There were several who stayed here awhile and left. That's true. Down here we had solid Norwegians in the township, Solid Norwegians.

ENGER: I think, what he means is the big families. Why they....

ADA: Ya, we'll get it. We'll get it. All Norwegians excepting the Prepps and the Muchlers and the Harps. They became permanent and there are some of 'em still here, most of 'em dead, but there was a Palmer and there were two Vereguss that were not Norwegians. They left very early. So early that I can scarcely.... Maybe in the early 1900's. They never came back, but these other three were there all the time. Ethnic groups, of course, are selfish. I don't care whether they were Poles or Germans or Norwegians they liked each other and they stayed together.

ENGER: All these pioneers stayed there 'til they died.

ADA: They stayed there 'til they died. They're all buried up here on the....

ENGER: And when their kids left, nobody to take care of the place then it stands empty like this big one you see over here.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: Yes.

ENGER: That's what happened.

ADA: Yes.

LARRY: Ada, you can look back to much different days than we are experiencing today. And another one of the things that I ask people about is how do you feel about this tendancy in North Dakota toward bigger and bigger farms where one farmer is farming eight sections or 10 sections or 12 sections?

ADA: I think, it's too bad. Farming was a way of life in our day and now it seems that as soon as boy or girl is through high school.... Because they all go through high school now. I did but I was the only one. We never see them again. They go. They go to the cities. They've got to get to the cities. It was a good life to live on the farms and bring up

the family there and they turned out--not only Loretta [redacted] Township but all over--some very fine men and some very strong people with principles. And I don't know if it's the same anymore.

LARRY: Does it bother you, too, to drive around North Dakota and see these empty houses?

ADA: Yes, especially around here. It hurts. Because I can remember all that was done on that Muchler farm that you said you saw the windows broken out now and it's pitiful.

ENGER: There are a few farms that kept agoing here yet, but it isn't enough.

ADA: There are many good farms here yet.

ENGER: All the schools closed up.

ADA: I could take you to several farms right out here two, three, four [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] miles where their houses are just beautiful, all carpeted, every convenience you could name in them. Dishwashers and automatic washing machines and everything you could name in there. There are many good places here yet, but there aren't any people to do the work.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: There are too many places where there are only two [redacted] people like this. Maybe a man and a woman and they're turning old and they have it rented out and that's the way it goes. It was a good way of life.

LARRY: Now, tell me, Ada, about your schooling and what country school life was like.

ADA: Yes, I can tell you that. Every child went to school. They all learned to read and write and spell and count maybe better than some of our grade children today. But we had four [redacted] schools in our township, one [redacted] in each corner, for a long time and there would be four [redacted] strange girls that would be hired to come in and teach because none of the pioneer girls had had that much school or even the eighth [redacted] grade even. I can remember we had a teacher who had finished the eighth [redacted] grade and she got a certificate and taught after awhile; but at first, they all came in here. And they came usually from

Grand Forks or from some other city or some other place. They were strangers. They came in and lived with some family. Mama had the teacher for years and she boarded here, roomed here, and taught school. And everybody went to school. The schoolhouse was cold and the stoves were terribly poor make to start with. At first there was a stove that was fed by wood, but that didn't last long. They had these great big round stoves that they put hard coal in. Some of these young girls who came to teach didn't know how to make the fire and we were pretty cold but it went. Children weren't dressed then the way they are now. We had woolen stockings on and good underwear and more clothes than that on. We were not naked like they are today so we didn't suffer much. But there we were. All grades. One teacher. The first day I went to school I had to sit with my brother, which was a shame because the girls sat on one side and the boys on the other, but the teacher said I should sit with my brother. And he put the chart up there and on the first page there was a picture of a man and then it said, "A man and an and a." And I was supposed to learn it. How could I learn it when there was no one to tell me. He [redacted] didn't have time and I sat there. Then he told me to learn a poem. It went like this. 7 times 1 is 7. 7 times 1 7 times over and over. 7 times 1 is 7. And I didn't learn it in school because I couldn't read. That was my first day. I guess, my brother knew it already and I learnt it here and I haven't forgotten it. There were 41 pupils in this one-room school in our corner one winter. Couple of newcomers and all the rest of the children. There were children in these houses! Lots of them but we got along good in school in one way. And women weren't so conscious of their diet as they are today. Today the child must be fed warm food in school. He couldn't stand it if he didn't get it. We stood it. We would take an empty tin syrup pail, half gallon, and mama would put bread and butter and lots o' time--maybe not always but most of the time--an apple. I can remember. Then we'd put our lunch basket down by the door and we'd sit down in our seats. And I can remember that a slice o' bread was frozen stiff when noon came, but we didn't get sick. We didn't die either. I had nothing to drink in school. Never.

Excepting in the spring. When it got warm, there was a water pail with a dipper in it that the boys took and ran over t' the neighbors and got water around noon and we'd all drink out o' the same pail. We didn't get sick either. And so it went year after year and it got better, A little bit better. Maybe the lunches got a little more varied, but that's what it was.

LARRY: I've got two things I want to ask you about. Do you remember any of the home remedies that your mother might have used for kids when they had a chest cold or a sore throat.

ADA: ~~I don't want t' talk about it~~. I Can't.

LARRY: O.K.

ADA: Then in the winter when the big snowstorms came, the outdoor toilets filled up with snow, plum full, and today I can't imagine why one of the men didn't take a shovel along up there and shovel them out, but they didn't. They stayed that way until spring came and the snow melted. It was never mentioned. You don't talk about those things. We would sing and....

LARRY: Well, at the risk of being improper what would you do if you had to go to the bathroom?

ADA: I can't remember that it ever happened. We never had a drink after we left home and we didn't eat very much and I can't remember that anyone ever had to do it, but I certainly can see what would happen. You could easily leave the room and run out behind a snowdrift. I don't know if that ever happened but it could happen.

LARRY: And another thing. Did they have a horse barn there or did all of the kids walk or were they brought?

ADA: After several years they did have a horse barn and then, of course, the boys would always play in the barn. The girls played inside. There was no such thing as grades. You finished one reading book and you'd be in second grade, finished another reading book and you'd be in another grade, but the larger the children were they could read and work arithmetic. I remember a lot of stress was paid on arithmetic on spelling and they learned a lot of things. I can remember the stress on geography after we were bigger. Things they proved.

ENGER: Well, way back there was none that finished the [redacted] eighth grade.

ADA: No. The first [redacted] two that finished the [redacted] eighth grade in Laurada Township was myself and Rose Mutchler. That year we got a teacher who saw the need of getting the [redacted] eighth grade taught completely so that we could pass the county examination and the [redacted] two of us did. And I don't know if there were any that passed it the next year, but that's what happened.

LARRY: [redacted] Would there be any kids, any boys, that would have to quit school early and go home or stay home and help their parents that would stay in that grade again next year or how would that work?

ADA: Well, it was pitiful what happened to the boys. You see, their dad would need 'em to do the work and, I suppose, my oldest brother didn't go to school more than a few weeks, if you added them all up, because he had to work. And my oldest sister talked so much of that [redacted] one winter. They had a extra good teacher when she [redacted] was.... Bik. And he'd put on programs and just imagine what a treat that was. She had a picture of herself and Mary Wahl and some of the boys. They were big and they had been in a program, but they had very, very little school. And yet, both of them [redacted] could work arithmetic and both of them could read well. Both of them could write.

LARRY: Was it important, Ada, for children to learn English and become Americanized?

ADA: Yes. Children learn fast. My mother lived to be 101 years old and she never spoke English?

LARRY: Is that right?

ADA: She never felt the need of it because her friends and the ones she knew all her life talked Norwegian. That was too bad but that was it. But the children weren't. As soon as the oldest child had been in school, he learned English. All of the rest of the children would learn from him and they'd learn rapidly and they talked English.

LARRY: Tell me a little about the social life? What would people do in this area?

ADA: May I divide that up in [redacted] two?

LARRY: Sure, however you....

ADA: There was a lot of social life in this respect. They all took pride in inviting somebody over to dinner and that would take maybe all Sunday afternoon and that was fun both for the children and for the older people. There was a great deal of that and as the years went on, there were a lot of surprise parties and talk about "life" in those. Some of the young men would start a surprise party for Mr. and Mrs. So and So and they would take up a collection and they would usually buy a piece of furniture and then they would all go over there that night and surprise them and they had a lot of fun, I guess. Some of the times they would dance all night and some of the times they didn't. This is in the real early days. I can remember in our family there were three surprise parties. One while dad lived and they bought him a piece of furniture and then there were two later on. There were a lot of those things. Then.... You see, there were no automobiles. It was difficult to get any place and there were not many driving horses in those days. Later on, there were driving horses and buggies. There was no other place to go. And the ethnic groups stuck together. There was a great deal of it through the church. Our church was started.... A travelling minister came through and gathered the Norwegians. He came back and preached a few times and the next year he came back and preached eight times. That was in 1883 that he started. Even before my people came here. And from then on there were religious services. There was a church that was being formed, but I read the source books and he said that there was no record of charter members to start with. He was just interested in getting all of the Norwegians to have church and having all their babies baptized. That was the big thing. Then when the children grew and the church got larger, the custom was they should all be confirmed. They should be instructed first and then they should be confirmed and that became a big problem. And from then there were religious services and the ones who wanted to get married were married when they wanted and the babies were baptized when they came around and so on. And then we had a minister from Northwood started to come out and then they were closer knit. They met in the homes and in schoolhouses. One whole winter they met in one man's basement, cellar,

He whitewashed the cellar, cleaned it up, and put benches in there. And the record shows that each family should pay him $1 for the privilege of meeting there. I also saw in the township secretary books that there were town meetings also in that place. Then after that they met in the schoolhouses and church wasn't so often. And the first minister who came here was Reverend Shay and he was a wonderful organizer so he organized the Ladies Aid at my uncle's place. Auntie had only two children. They were grown-up and that house wasn't full o' babies so it was easier to meet there. They organized the Ladies Aid and they started to work to raise money to build a church. And then in a year or two--there were a lot o' young people now growing up--he organized all the young people into a Young People's Society and that existed and was very active all my life until quite recently when there aren't any children. And in 1896, the church was built. Would you like to know how much it cost and so on?

LARRY: Yes, I would.

ADA: May I stop a minute?

LARRY: Sure, sure.

ADA: He had his first sermon in 1891 and he became our permanent minister and his salary was $150 a year. The Ladies Aid was organized at in 1893 and,as I just got through saying, the women worked to build a church. And by the time the church was built in 1896 the women had $599 to contribute towards the building of it. Severd Solberg was a local man. He built the church and it stands there just as straight and nice today as the day he built it with the help of the local men.

SIDE II

ADA: Clara Sclerdahl was our first organist. The first organ was purchased in 1904. The seats in that church were homemade. They were benches without any backs, but they served the purpose. The people gathered there and they are still gathering there. It's been used continuously and the church has been a steady influence in this Norwegian territory. Now then, you might ask what about the three families that were not Norwegian?

They did not come to our church. They mixed in the township but the church was seperate. That was a Norwegian church. They preached Norwegian there until in the 30's. By that time all the pioneers were buried on our church yard up there.

LARRY: What was the name of your church?

ADA: West Union. West Union.

LARRY: And help me locate that Ada. Where is [redacted] that from the nearest town would be the best way to do it?

ADA: It is 12 miles west of Northwood.

LARRY: O.k.

ADA: Reverend Shay stayed here until 1909. Then we had a new minister and there was a parish formed [redacted] at that time, Beaver Creek [redacted] and Bethany, and West Union and they bought a parsonage in Northwood [redacted] and from then on the minister has used that parsonage and our minister lives there today. Reverend Shay lived on a farm. He had one [redacted] quarter of land and he lived there for awhile, but then he moved to Northwood. My brother bought that farm. Since then we have had several other ministers, but we have never been without one. And now, I want to say something about the social life. You asked about that sometime ago. Now, this Young Peoples Society. You have no idea of how active it was and how big it was because there were from Seven [redacted] to ten [redacted] children on each place [redacted] and they were growing up and they were here in this territory. They were here a long time. They were here until they got married and a lot of those people are living on those farms today [redacted] and a lot of them are dead and their children are living here today. It became customary to have one [redacted] party in the spring and one [redacted] party in the fall for the Young Peoples Society under the auspices of the church, of course, but they were free. They were an organization by themselves, but dancing wasn't permitted and a party if it were on Saturday the minister told the man of the place, "See to it they get home by 12." Maybe we didn't always but that's what he said. One time they had accummulated a $1,000 that was used for things for the church. So you see, there were many things that were needed and it has always been improved. Right now, we have a carpeted church [redacted] and comfortable

pews and good heating system and the people built a basement under it for an Assembly Room and we have a complete kitchen. Nice place. And the graveyard is acrossed the road. One man gave the graveyard to the church. That piece of land out of that quarter.

LARRY: Yes.

ADA: And one man gave a deed to the church, which is across the road. That was on another quarter, but it has that property. It's been an an active church. Last fall we had a sale on the Ladies Aid. We had it in the basement. Our pastor was there and we had a good auctioneer and we cleared about $1,000, which was used for charitable purposes and for things that we give to.

Start

LARRY: Ada, ~~I wanted to ask you. Was there any.... You were talking about nationality cohesiveness.~~ Was there any pressure in those days to marry within a nationality? I mean....

ADA: Oh, yes. There was nothing openly said, but mothers couldn't think of anything but their daughters marrying a Norwegian. That was deep set and they did marry Norwegians, ~~practically~~. Most of them.

LARRY: How long did that take before this nationality unity began to break down and everyone became kind of Americanized and it didn't make any difference whether or not....

ADA: It came so gradual. You see, all the young people ~~talked Norwegian~~. Now ~~excuse me, they~~ talked English very early. As children we talked English and we moved freely with these people who were not Norwegian. And mother lived the longest. She was the last one of the pioneers to go. She died in '65. 12 years this fall. She was 101. But she understood English. I think, I talked more English than I did Norwegian to her. It didn't make any difference. She understood it. She got along very nicely with her grandchildren. They all liked her and she understood them when they talked.

LARRY: But it took awhile before a Norwegian would marry a German or a Ukranian or Irish or Scotch or whatever?

ADA: Yes, it did. It took a long time. And the sons and daughters, who

have lived here who were pioneers as children, they married Norwegians. A lot of them have gone already.

LARRY: How long did it take for religious tolerance to become a part of the community? ~~Because even when I was growing up in the 40's, there was a real skepticism, I guess, about Roman Catholics among Protestants.~~

ADA: That has gradually softened and right now, I think, they cooperate very beautifully and we don't hear those harsh things that we heard earlier. I don't know why.

LARRY: Are you glad to see that tolerance and compatibility?

ADA: There's no reason why omit it shouldn't be. Yes, there's no reason why there shouldn't be. That's a Christian church. Ours is a Christian church.

LARRY: ~~Do you think that the early--now this is Norwegian Lutheran.~~ Do you think that the early pioneers, your parents and the neighbors that you knew, were more fundamentally religious than the Christian religion is today? I mean, in terms of making religion a way of life rather than a Sunday morning....

ADA: They were. Definately. Definately.

LARRY: Let me tell you something else that a fella told me Ada. He said that in the early days ~~in the 1880's and 1890's~~ people used to help each other not because they expected to be paid but because it was the thing to do and that they didn't keep track of favours. The neighbors would help one family out repeatedly if that family needed help and that they did good for the sake of doing good rather than for being rewarded. They didn't expect to be rewarded.

ADA: And that is really true and I don't see how they all could have lived had it been otherwise.

~~LARRY: M m m.~~

~~ADA: As I said, those two families did a lot for mama. It was moral support and~~ Mama did a lot for a lot o' families in this community. When it came to bad roads and the doctor couldn't get there, they'd come and get mama to help them. She never thought of pay. And she never made common about it.

She never talked about it. She'd put her clean apron on and go because it had to be done. And that was the spirit at that time.

LARRY: One of the reasons I started this project was because I was intrigued by older folks always referring to that period of time when there weren't the luxuries that we consider necessities today and things were hard. Why they consider those "the good old days"? Was it because people were more neighborly, friendly, sociable, because they pulled together and helped each other? Do you think that might be one of the reasons why they call them "the good old days"?

ADA: I think it is. They lived through the same suffering; they lived through the same privation. They understood each other. They didn't talk about. They'd just look at each other. They knew it. They'd feel it! And that was good. I don't see how they could have lived it if it hadn't been that way. I can remember papa's brother's wife used to come here and mama and she would sit and talk, but they wouldn't.... I think, they enjoyed being together because of what they felt more than what they said.

LARRY: Do you think, Ada, that people were happier and more content with what they had then than they are today?

ADA: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed.

LARRY: Why do you suppose that is? Or is that just the inclination that older people have to remember their youth as being better than what it is today?

ADA: I don't think, if they were here now and we could talk to them, I don't think they would say it was better than it was tough, it was hard and, I think, that common struggle they lived through brought them close together. They didn't need to talk much about it. They'd just look at each other and feel it.

LARRY: Do you think that prosperity is a double edged sword? That we've lost a lot of that because of our technology and our....

ADA: Oh, no. I don't think that I would like to give up any of the technology or any of our science that they know now. It's good to have a doctor

that you can go to and that you can trust and that knows what he is doing. Oh, no, I wouldn't want to give up any of that.

LARRY: Oh, no, I didn't mean that. I don't mean that we should give up what we have, but have we lost qualities that we used to have that were valuable then and that are humanitarian; such as, concern for each other and compassion?

ADA: Yes, we have. Yes, indeed, we have. Because I can't imagine.... Now we have so many friends that we've known all our lives. I can't imagine that any one of 'em would come over here and ask me if they should help me if something happened because that isn't where we'd turn now. We would turn to the hospital or to the doctor or to someplace.

LARRY: Social Services?

ADA: Yes. We're not dependent on our neighbors although we like our neighbors and it's fun to be together.

LARRY: It's not the same as it was?

ADA: It's not the same for us as it was for them.

LARRY: Yes. Let's move forward now Ada. After you went to grade school did you board in Northwood while you went to high school?

ADA: I went to high school in Aneta.

~~LARRY: In Aneta I mean?~~

~~ADA~~: There were eight girls in my class. We were not local girls in Aneta and we all worked for our board. Our parents didn't send us to school. If we wanted to go beyond the local school, it was up to us and it was customary for a girl in the country, who wanted to go to town to go to school, to find a place to stay and work for her board. That was not difficult. I think, they were glad to have us. We were used to working. We didn't complain if we had to scrub a floor or do something like that. We did it. And the school was not the same as it is now. I had English, Ancient History, Algebra, and Latin. ~~English~~. And I went to those classes in school.

~~LARRY: You said English twice Ada.~~

~~ADA: Did I??~~

LARRY: English, Ancient History, Algebra....

ADA: English, Ancient History, Algebra, and Latin.

LARRY: Oh, Latin. O.k.

ADA: Latin. And we went to high school. We went to those classes from 9:00 until 4. We went home. There was an hour at noon. We went home. I can remember most of the time, many o' time, I'd wash the.... The lady had the lunch ready and her husband would come home and we had lunch, and I can remember many o' times, most of the time, I'd wash the dishes before I went back at 1:00. Didn't think a thing about it. The rest of the girls did something too. We all did it. And we never had a session after school. We never had a session in the evening after school in the schoolhouse. There were no athletics. There was nothing. And the next year we had some music, one year we had a one half year of art and that was fun, but that was class.

LARRY: Yes, right.

ADA: That's all there was to it?

LARRY: Was education important to you Ada? Did you want badly to get an education?

ADA: Yes.

LARRY: And then you went four years to Aneta?

ADA: I went three years to Aneta because that's all they had then.

LARRY: Oh, I see.

ADA: Then I taught a year. The professor showed us how to teach reading. He knew we were going to teach and he showed us how to teach reading. Then I went to summer school. Then I taught again. Then I went t' summer school and I taught again four years. By that time at $50 a month I had saved enough so I could go one more year to school. My school grew like "Topsy" did.

LARRY: Did you go to Grand Forks then?

ADA: No, I went to Concordia College one year and the President asked me if I wasn't comin' back next year and I said, "No." And he says, "Financial reasons? I'll give you some work to do in the academy. You can teach." And I wasn't smart enough to say yes. I said, "No." So I went out and

taught some more a couple o' years. Then I went to Valley City and graduated from the--I got a professional certificate. I graduated from the Standard Course down there at Valley City.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: [redacted] That was a good school. Then I could teach in town. I didn't have to make anymore fires, carry four ton o' hard coal over a snowdrift. It was easier.

LARRY: Where did you teach in the country schools? Around this area?

ADA: I taught home two years. I taught on the west side of Aneta, Lee Township, one year and I taught in Northwood Township down by Northwood one year out in the country. And then I taught in the grades in towns, but I wasn't still satisfied so I quit teaching. Then I had saved enough money so I could go. I quit teaching and I went to St. Ola for two years and got my degree and then I taught in high school.

LARRY: What towns have you taught in?

ADA: Buxton, ~~Mandeville~~ Manville, Churchs Ferry, Perth, Coltan.

LARRY: Could you tell me a little bit, Ada, about how towns varied in social terms of social life or standards that they expected from their teacher? How would town communities vary?

ADA: As far as what they expected of us, I think, it was pretty much the same. They treated us with respect and it was nice to live [redacted] with those people, but it was pretty much the same. We paid for our board and room, of course, and the teacher in those days in the smaller town, for instance, Churchs Ferry we put on a beautiful pagent in the spring, and I was just looking at some old pictures where I had made all the costumes for must o' been eight or ten [redacted] girls out of tissue paper. They were flowers. They were pretty. And we never thought about it. Boy, we worked hard. It was fun.

LARRY: But it was voluntary? You weren't required to do it.

ADA: No. We wanted to put the pagent on. We agreed to do it and then each of us did certain things.

LARRY: Can we back up [redacted] now Ada? You mentioned a little while ago that you would tell me about home rememdies your mother had? Can you tell me about

that now?

ADA: You were supposed to take a teaspoon of kerosene if your throat was too sore.

LARRY: Was that hard to get down?

ADA: And sometimes you could cook a syrup from onions, vinegar and a little syrup, and some sugar. Take a tablespoon of that if your throat was sore. I don't know what else she had. We always had a carbolic salve to put on cuts and, I presumed, that was very important because we'd run around barefoot and we'd maybe step on a nail or something, but there was always a box of carbolic salve in the house and there was always a bottle of liniment. That's good stuff and she'd mix it with hot water and sugar. You'd drink it and grin.

LARRY: Was that like the Wards or Watkins Liniment? That kind o' rose colored liniment?

ADA: That's what it was and they always had a bottle of that.

ENGER: Watkins man used to come twice a year. Do you remember?

ADA: Watkins man came twice a year. We knew when he was coming. A very nice man, a business man, dressed up.

LARRY: Ya. How about other salesmen? Would you get button salesmen or trinket salesmen?

ADA: There were so many peddlers in early days there was no name for it. and Mama was deathly scared of these peddlers who used to come around and carry their bags and want to stay all night. but She often kept them, but she was scared of 'em. And mama had a dreadful fear of tramps. There were so many tramps. There were so many people who just walked through the country. They lived on the country. They'd come and get something to eat, of course, and she never said, "No." But she was fearfully afraid of 'em. There were many beggars, who would come with their hand in a sling. Whether that was real or artifical I don't know, but they'd say they'd been hurt in the mine or something and they were collecting money. That happened often. She had a fear of those people, but we had some peddlers who became almost a part of the family. There was one whose name was Gessler and

he'd come through here with a big load. He had a horse. We liked him very much and he'd sell fleece lined underwear, big piles of it, and sometimes he'd have little suits for the boys, and always toweling. And he talked a few words of Norwegian. He'd come in and he'd say to mama, "Do you want t' trade today?" And then he'd ask her if she'd want some toweling because she usually bought some toweling from him. We liked him. The last time he came through here--I don't remember the year [redacted] but my niece was to be married here at that time and mama and the girl's mother and I were working at this table. We were making the wedding cake. It was a fruit cake. And he came in and he said, "I hear you're going to have a big wedding here. I'm not going to bother you today." And He stood there very kindly and looked at us for awhile and he got a handful of raisins. Then I got up and I went in the pantry, and I found an orange, and I put it in his pocket, and he went. That's the last time I saw him.

~~LARRY: Is that right~~?

~~ADA:~~ They became a part of the community some of them, but the strangers that came mama was afraid of.

~~LARRY: Were there gypsies, too, in those days or not in this part of North Dakota?~~

~~ADA: Not much but later~~ There have been gypsies that have gone through here, but not in the early days. I don't think they ever saw them or heard of them. There was a big band that camped over between here and Northwood. I can remember one time. It was much later and one of the ladies needed a doctor. She was goin' t' have a baby in that camp and the doctor wouldn't go alone. I think, the policeman went with him; but, I guess, he went. Stop

LARRY: Oh? Ada, why don't you look over what you have here and you can kind of direct it now with the notes that you have written down. I'll stop for awhile.

ADA: There's one thing. It says, "The Contribution of the Blacksmith. At Cables they had a smithy there and his name was Hereford and they lived there. He had his wife there, too, and they lived there. There's where the men took there plow lays to be sharpened and there were perhaps other things.

Maybe axes of knives, too, but he had work to do there for the community. That was in this community. For a long time he was there. Oh, yes. You asked why they left here? Well, in the depression there were people, who made big loans and they couldn't pay them back, and there was just a lot of change of people. There were a lot o' people who rented farms here at that time. There were people who came in and stayed a little while. We remember their names. There was a lot of shifting around and, I suppose, that was because of the depression. There would be reason for leaving and going and renting out the land. Oh, the bank closings. That affected us. I was teaching in Iowa. I had taught two months and put my money in the bank and one day that big bank closed.

LARRY: Where was this in Iowa?

ADA: Fair City.

LARRY: Oh?

ADA: And the family had money in different banks, for instance, in Grand Forks or in Aneta. They closed. I got back 19 percent and they got back just a little bit.

LARRY: Did your mother lose quite a bit?

ADA: No. I don't remember just how much it was, but she lost some. I think, everybody lost some.

LARRY: Did people understand why the banks were closing, Ada, or did they kind o' hold it against the bank?

ENGER: After they loaned the money out and couldn't collect it in the 30's, you know.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: And they knew that.

ENGER: In '33, all the banks went here.

ADA: It came so suddenly that I don't think they analyzed why it came. It just came.

ENGER: You see, when the bank examiner came around and their books weren't up where they should be, why, they closed them right there.

ADA: And then, you asked for the effects of the depression on social life.

People wore old clothes and they were not peppy. They looked as if they were pressed down. I don't know if it would be right to say, they were almost musty looking. Not exactly that and perhaps not the right word but they were just down.

LARRY: The depression was a mental thing as well as an economic thing?

ADA: It was and it showed. You could feel it. And it seemed like they didn't care as much about how they looked or how nice things should be. I can remember that.

LARRY: Were you teaching in North Dakota during the depression?

ADA: Yes. Yes. My salary was cut ~~the~~ to beat sixty one year and it stayed that way for many years too.

LARRY: Would you say the depression reflected in the way children were dressing or the things they had in their lunchboxes?

ADA: Oh, yes. You could tell it very, very distinctly. There was none of the people that seemed to be so fastidious about their dress as they had been before and as they are afterwards. It showed. #1 Importance of the Family in Early Life in North Dakota. #2 Well of course, that was the four social life. The family got together. Mrs. Muchler would have a big group of families every Thanksgiving. She was an American born girl, you see, and the Norwegians didn't wake up to what Thanksgiving was until much later. ~~The~~ A fter awhile we always had turkey and cranberries and everything like the Americans did. They became Americanized very readily. But I can remember when we didn't do anything for Thanksgiving. That was when I was little little, and Then they took pride in having ~~and it was fun to have~~ two three families over and having a big spread ~~and~~ with white tableclothes, and napkins, and everything you could think of. They'd Make it pretty. That is what they worked for and the mother didn't have to do all the work. By the time the girl was 16 or 17 she was very anxious to have it pretty at home and that made quite a progress. Another thing that was a progress: a ll these Ladies Aids met in the homes. And you should have seen what they'd do before they had them! They'd perhaps ~~paint~~ calcimine or do something to fix it up, curtains had to be cleaned, the barn had to be cleaned ~~even~~ because they came with their horses and put them in the barn, and the whole

thing was all stirred up, and that's one of the things that, I think, was the best thing that ever happened to the people. And they took pride in having everything nice looking. They had to have a new apron for the aide. They maybe had to have a pitcher for the cream. Everybody had cream for their coffee in those days. And it was fun and there was none that was overworked in those days because there were so many young girls in the homes. Those were big days. And you asked about baseball teams and public team sports. Yes, it was common in the small towns to have a baseball team. It was common out in the country, for instance, even when these great big groups came to a farm home for Lutheran League or for Young Peoples Society, they'd have a program and then a group of boys would go out in the pasture and play ball. Good for them. "The Importance of Dancing in a Community Society"? In the early days, I suppose, when they had those surprise parties, they would take out part of the furniture and they would dance, but it died out and the church was against dancing and that prevailed and there was no dancing in the homes. There were young people who danced and they'd go to public dances, but not in the homes here. I can remember in 1911 and '12 and in through there Aneta hired an outside baseball team and those men came and stayed there. I was in school and everybody would go to the baseball games. They played between other towns so there was a progress made there in that respect. Those boys were good. They were trained.

LARRY: Sure.

ADA: I talked about the basket socials. There wasn't a road in the township when my dad came. And one very interesting thing. I saw this spring in the township secretary's book, a very original one, that this township was organized March 6, 1888, and I saw that at one of the first meetings they had they voted to buy a road scraper. So from the very beginning they were goin' to make roads and the story of building roads is terrific. They'd have scrapers and shovels. And then there are many coulees in this township and then they'd build little bridges with planks so you could get over. Course, gradually those had to be replaced and there are good ones now. Big good culverts where they are and all that and that cost money and it

took a long time to get the good ones, but they had to help themselves so they could get through. There was a road boss in each township and they used scrapers and horses and shovels and men. Then progress was such that they bought a large scraper where they hooked.... How many horses Iner? Iner, how many horses did they hook to the big scraper?

INER: Oh, about four, I 'spose.

ADA: No. The big one?

INER: Oh, that was a grader.

ADA: A grader. Yes, it was a grader.

INER: 16 horses on that.

ADA: 16 horses on that.

LARRY: Is that right?

ADA: And they used that for several years and they made good grades; but they were narrow and they weren't smooth like the roads are now, but there was progress. Progress was made. They had this big slough right here where there was water in. I can remember. That was in '06 and '07. I can remember the depth of it. And the country was full of tree peddlers and they would have a fast team that they got at the livery barn. They'd drive fast and they'd come right through mama's yard and go lickety split right through the field and, of course, that was terrible. Then finally, they decided there had to be a grade. There had to be made a road in through this big water slough. And one day the County Commissioner Board came out here in a surrey. That was a very elegant thing to ride in and there was one Norwegian and the others weren't Norwegian. And Peter Kirsman? was a Norwegian and he got out of the rig and came in and talked to mama. It was 11:00 and he said he wondered if she'd cook dinner for them because they were surveying this place to put a road through it and she did. She cooked dinner and had it ready when the five men came in for dinner. People valued the land in those days. They couldn't get back to Northwood to get dinner and then they paid her $.25 a piece. I remember it well to this day. I was a little girl. Then this road was fixed by contract. They got a man, contracted with him to build this road out here and he had a lot of--it

was in 1906. He had to use a lot of horses and scrapers. It was done by men and horses. So he asked mama if he could board the men, but what could he do with the horses? So he said, "I'll put a lean-to to your barn to keep the horses in." With the understanding she was going to buy it when he was through and she did. And then they stayed here for two weeks and built this road late in the fall. It was a nice dry fall and it worked fine. The road has been there ever since, but it has been gravelled many times. Good road. Start You'd like to know something about the effect of the agricultural station. I could never say enough for that. That is one of the biggest things we've had in North Dakota and I wonder if we would have had any wheat to seed today if it hadn't been for what they have done for us. There was Doctor Ladd down there and several others and the experiments were marvelous. T They had given out an enormous amount of help to every farmer and not only outdoors but to the farmer's wife's kitchen. I remember in 1917. ~~That I would still give credit to the experiment station.~~ We had a very capable, outstanding County Superintendent and her name was Beatrice Johnston. She was so well known in the state that they used to say, "If you write to her, you can just write Beatrice Johnston, North Dakota and she'll get it." Everybody knew her. She sent out notices to this community that all the girls, grown-up girls, should meet at Scerdahl's ~~(Weid) in the~~ kitchen on an evening. S She sent out her deputy to show us how to can tomatoes. She brought the tomatoes and she canned two quarts of tomatoes. ~~and all the girls.... And~~ There were a lot o' grown-up girls here. Now, she didn't ask the mothers. ~~and that~~ which was a very progressive and a very smart thing to do because we knew that the girls could grasp it quicker. Some of the mothers couldn't understand English.

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~ADA: And~~ We girls sat on all the chairs, ~~Mrs. Scerdahl ahead,~~ and ~~then we sat~~ on the floor. There was so many of us and this Miss Burr canned two quarts of tomatoes. and S she showed us what sterilization was. Oh, I remember it so well how it had to be sealed and sterilized. ~~And since then....~~ During World War I there were hundreds of tomatoes canned in this

community by the young girls and a enormous amount of garden stuff. Now I will give credit to the experiment station for the whole thing and there was no time that we couldn't write down to the experiment station—we girls were more progressive than the mothers, I guess—for something that we were stuck on or something we wanted to know. We could write down there and ask how to do it or what about it, and we'd always get an answer and get information. We had the Dakota Farmer, I can remember, since I was 13 years old. and After I got old I thought it was so pitiful that mama couldn't have read the women's department in Dakota Farmer because it covered everything that you needed to know. It was progressive and I also will give credit to the experiment station for that. As soon as the Dakota Farmer comes, I read every word of it and to me it's just as interesting as it was then. Just as good too. The experiment station was one of the best things in North Dakota. Ftt Living Conditions Before the Electricity." ? Do you want to know what? Every time you had company something would happen to the Aladdin lamp. It would either go out or the chimney would crack. When you were here alone, it went pretty good. When the men went to the barn, they took lanterns along to do the chores. Pitch dark. Dark in every corner in the barn. Dark in the house. Dark down the cellar. Dark all over. I read many books to a light with a narrow wick in it and a small chimney on it. We had good eyes in those days. Stop

LARRY: Ada, do you remember a different feeling being outside in North Dakota at night when there weren't all these carbon lights and yard lights. You know, now you can't see darkness in North Dakota because anywhere you go there are lights all over the country. Did North Dakota have a different feeling at night in those days?

ADA: Course, they did. They kept out of the dark if they could; but, you know, I can remember the biggest thrill in the world was to have a ride in the Ford car after it was pitch dark.

LARRY: With those carbide lights, I 'spose?

ADA: M-m-m. And with those tall lights along the road. After the spraying Come.... there aren't any of those tall weeds. Start Yes, there was a lot of

work before we got electricity. We got our electricity in '48 and it made all the difference in the world. I don't have to smell the smell of kerosene anymore and I don't have to wash any chimneys. They were always sooty. A lot of work but we did it and we didn't have detergents. If you put soap in hard water and tried to wash a chimney, it got all sticky.

~~LARRY: Ya.~~

~~ADA:~~ Detergents made housework entirely different. Yes. Recollections of the formation of the Telephone!? Yes, the telephone cooperative was done in 1906 here and Earnest Kruese was a German man, who lived on that quarter east of our place, and he went around and got stockholders. If you paid $50, the interest on that would pay for half of your telephone. If you paid $100, it would pay for all of it. My mama put in $50 and I don't remember when it ended, but it did ~~and paid for half the telephone.~~ ~~And~~ We got the telephone in that way. There were 23 on our line and I knew every ring. I guess everybody else did. I remember a lot of them now and we weren't supposed to rubberneck, but we did and I to this day think that was a good thing. I remember staying here one time when mother wasn't here and I was alone. I was a grown-up woman, too, and the two men went to town with the car and a terrific blizzard came up. I couldn't see any of the out buildings. There was a blizzard. So before it got dark I went out and got two buckets o' coal and I thought if they aren't here by 4:00, I'll go in the barn and look around. I never worked in the barn, but I could look and see if things looked all right. I didn't dare do anything. I didn't know. And I rubbered all day. I knew where every neighbor was. Our boys and one other person wasn't home yet. Finally ours came. They came here. They had driven all the way with the door open so they could see the edge of the road and ~~rode that way and~~ they got home. It was good to rubber; it was good to know. I'm one that doesn't think it was wrong to rubberneck. Course, we knew there were rubbernecks and we were very cautious of what we said. And yet, I remember the fall when the flu was so bad that Doctor Pederson started out from Northwood with horse and buggy and the roads were terrific and he called at almost every place from

Northwood this way. ~~And~~ We knew he was coming. He was coming here. Somebody had the flu and He stopped over at Orlands and we rubbered. We heard he was there and my sister and I got a big meal ready, a warm meal, and Doctor Pederson he knew us. He came in and he said, "You know," he said, "I was wondering if you could fix something for us to eat, for me and my driver. The stove looked so cold over there. I didn't want to say anything." Well, they were sick, The woman was [redacted] sick) and he knew we were here so we had a big meal ready when they got here, but It was late in the evening but we fed them. He tended to the sick and went again. I don't know why it was wrong to rubber. I thought, [redacted] it was a good thing.

~~LARRY: Well, you've given me examples of why.~~

~~ADA:~~ We had the meal ready. We knew they'd have to eat. Because we weren't sick. "Importance of Magazines Prior to Introduction of Radio"? Well, I think, we had just as many if not more than we have now. I beleive so. But there were always printed materials here. Mother subscribed for a Norwegian children's magazine that we read. They were anxious that we learned to read [redacted] Norwegian so we could understand the church. Religion and Norwegian were synonymous. And mother always had that weekly Norwegian paper. We quite early got a daily and we always had the farm papers. There were things to read here. Stop. I don't think we need to go back to how the church was financed. We progressed gradually.

LARRY: No.

ADA: And the growth of farmers' cooperatives. Yes, we had a cooperative elevator in Aneta and the men bought shares in it and it paid well. Everything has gone fine. And we had a cooperative telephone and the electricity was cooperative also. We got it in '48. And this Farmer's Holiday Association you spoke of. Yes, it was active here.

LARRY: It was?

ADA: There was an organization here. There was a local man that met in the Central Schoolhouse and they discussed it and it was active. You wanted to know something about the shipping and the railroad here. Yes, there were men who brought the cattle and shipped them on the railroad.

Our men went with the cattle in the cattle car and shipped cattle to St. Paul and I miss the old Goose yet. I am very sorry that we don't have our local train that I go to Fargo whenever I want to on.

LARRY: One thing I wanted to ask you about Ada. I think, we're just about out of tape. In later years when you were outside of North Dakota, if somebody asked you where you were from did you ever feel apologetic when you told 'em you were from North Dakota?

ADA: Never! This is a good state and I was proud of it.

LARRY: How would you explain North Dakota to somebody from Kansas or Iowa or Nebraska?

ADA: Well, I was in Norway last year. That's far away.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: And they'd heard so much about North Dakota that they weren't very curious, I guess.

INER: Oh, I can remember when the people down here in Minnesota thought there was old Indians out here. Indians and coyotes.

LARRY: Ya.

ADA: That's right. We've had to take a lot of that and that things were so wild out here. It hasn't been wild. These people put their shoulder under the difficulties and they just shouldered it and did it. And they didn't have any federal help and they didn't have any food stamps either, but we had plenty to eat.

LARRY: One of the things I was going to ask you about. Now, it seems as though one of the big issues that North Dakota is facing in the immediate future is full scale coal development and the people in the western part of the state where the coal companies are coming in and the coal gasification plants will be built are concerned. Do you think that their concern is justified or do you think that they're overreacting?

ADA: It might be a little bit of both. That would depend on the people, but they've been mining coal out there so long. I taught in Zap one year and there was a great big strip mine there. We had two buses that brought the children from the strip mine. The workers lived in shanties out

there. I went through an underground mine there one time.

INGER: Well, isn't the biggest argument in strip mining the ruining of the land so it can't produce?

LARRY: M-m-m.

ADA: Yes. You know, it looked almost mountainous around that strip mine. They had just pushed the dirt out and left it there and there was green grass growing on top of it. I remember the man who took me to see all this one Sunday afternoon. He said, "The Lord created the Earth and He said it was very good." But he said, "This doesn't look very good to me. All those bumps."

LARRY: What year was that approximately?

ADA: '38. But there was a lot o' mining done down there. There was some underground mines and a big strip mine.

LARRY: Do you remember, Ada, when Women's Suffrage was going on?

ADA: Yes.

LARRY: How did you feel about that?

ADA: There wasn't much stir here about it and there wasn't much said here about it, but I remember it well.

LARRY: Most people naturally assume [redacted] that women should vote. Or not?

ADA: I don't beleive locally there was any thought or argument about it. I think, the women were more satisfied then than they are now. Much more satisfied. They were satisfied to be a man's wife and to bring up the family and to work with that man and that's how you get good families. I don't think they'd visualize that it should ever be any different; but it has happened, but [redacted] I don't think [redacted] they ever thought that it should happen. Their daughter should get married and have families. There was no talk about divorce even in the early days. There perhaps were divorces but it wasn't a big issue. The women were satisfied.

LARRY: Do you think that women as homemakers and as mothers and as partners working outside with their man milking the cows and hauling bundles or shocking if they had to [redacted] have overlooked, in a sense, ~~have been overlooked~~ by history books about North Dakota and the role that they ~~played of~~ provided in being a

mother and....

ADA: I've never read a word about it. I don't think there's anything printed about it.

LARRY: That's what I mean. Do you think there has been a little case of neglect there in....

ADA: Emphasizing it?

LARRY: Yes. Giving credit?

ADA: Yes, I think so. I've never read a word about it. The sacrifice that the pioneer woman made and she was happy. She stayed with her husband and worked with him and they brought up the children together. It was a good life.

LARRY: M-m-m.

ADA: And they didn't stay put down. There was progress. It was a little better each year and that's what they wanted. And they built big beautiful houses out here. Some of them are just gorgous and they took pride in that. Of course, maybe that's what helped build the country. "I put more lumber into my barn than Mr. Jones put into his and Mr. Jones has a very big barn over there, but I'm going to build my different. I'm going to build a great big round one that will take more lumber than his barn did." And that was progress and that helped build it.

LARRY: Do you think that we're getting a distorted picture of what prairie life was like from the TV shows that we see like "Little House on the Prairie"? Because there aren't any sod houses. You don't see the privation in "Little House on the Prairie" that I hear from the old folks that I talked to.

ADA: No, it wasn't like that. That's not so very primitive.

LARRY: N-no. No. (Laughs)

ADA: No, it wasn't like that. Today a child can't walk to school two blocks. His dad has to take him. We walked to this little school over here. The Platt boys came right across the quarters and just a little bit farther and they never stayed home either. They just walked. One time in the early days before I started school there was a terrific blizzard and I

can remember mama said to me--I wanted something to est. I could wait 'til supper. "Just think of the others in the schoolhouse. They won't get anything to eat tonight because they can't get through this storm," she said. Mr. Pratt and Mr. Wahl got together. Those farms aren't very far apart. They hitched up a team and a sleigh and a wagonbox 2nd they drove and they got to the schoolhouse 2nd they took all the children all over. And they said mama would have to keep all these children over night because they couldn't get them home, but they said they had to go home and they tried. They started out and they came back again. The horses got lost. Now, that seldom happens but the horses got lost and they went in a circle. They brought back their team and we kept their team all night and those two men walked home. They said they had to go home 2nd they walked 2nd they found their home too.

LARRY: Is that right?

ADA: And mama made supper for the children. She put all the boys upstairs and all the girls downstairs and they got along. They met what every emergency came along.

LARRY: Ya, that must of been a storm because I've had people tell me that if you couldn't get home, just let the horses go and they would find their way home.

ADA: But there wasn't any road. It was a bad storm. The two men walked home.

Start

LARRY: Was threshing time an exciting time of the year?

ADA: Y-yes, it was fun for everybody. I never heard of a girl or a mother or a woman say, "They hated to have the threshers". It was fun! Mother stretched this table out from this end clear over there and put white oilcloth on it all the way and we had 23 men to cook for. We made pies and cakes and everything. It was fun. We brought forenoon lunch out and we brought afternoon lunch out. You should have seen all the good sandwiches we made, cookies and cakes, and we thought that was fun.

LARRY: How early would the day start?

ADA: Mama got up at 3:30. Stop.

LARRY: Ya.

THE END