

Serina Bale Oral Interview
May 12, 1975

Section 1 of 4 [00:00:00 - 00:26:04]

- Lori Bakwin: This is the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center and I'm [Lori Bakwin 00:00:08], I'm interviewing [Serena Bali 00:00:11] at 1402 Fourth Street, South Morehead. Today's date is May 12th, 1975.
- Like land-
- Serena Bali: Yes.
- Lori Bakwin: ... a part of it too?
- Serena Bali: We [inaudible 00:00:28] some land, yes. You want near the place, do you want the place, near Hatton, North Dakota. It was really before Hatton became a town.
- Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Serena Bali: But in that area Goose River area.
- Lori Bakwin: Okay. Did he farm?
- Serena Bali: Yes. He farmed at one time, but he also taught school in that time. A time they taught in the homes and he was probably one of the first teachers in that area.
- Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Serena Bali: And he had school in the different homes, but then too he tried to farm besides that.
- Lori Bakwin: How did he and your mother meet?
- Serena Bali: Well, I think he needed a maid and she came and worked for him for a while, but they weren't married that year. She didn't feel she wanted to marry that young. So, she left and went and he had his mother help him with housework too, but somehow they decided later to get married.
- You don't want the-
- Lori Bakwin: Yeah, do you know the date?
- Serena Bali: Well, I'd have to look that up.
- Lori Bakwin: But the year, do you know the year?
- Serena Bali: Yes. What it 1890?

Speaker 1: When they were married?

Serena Bali: Yes.

Speaker 1: They were married in 1895.

Serena Bali: Yes. 1895.

Speaker 1: [inaudible 00:02:05].

Lori Bakwin: Okay.

Serena Bali: Are you recording this now?

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Were you born in North Dakota then?

Serena Bali: Yes I was, I was. North of Hatton, we had a different farm then, he then sold the other place and he moved 12 miles north of Hatton and there is where I was born.

Lori Bakwin: Are you the oldest child?

Serena Bali: I'm the second child.

Lori Bakwin: And?

Serena Bali: My sister Marie is the oldest and I have a younger brother.

Lori Bakwin: Who his name is?

Serena Bali: John.

Lori Bakwin: Okay. Were you raised there in Hatton, or on the farm?

Serena Bali: On that farm. And we lived there until I was teaching my third year, then we moved to Hatton and lived in town.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: And I continued teaching.

Lori Bakwin: What kind of schooling did you have?

Serena Bali: When I started teaching? I had only six weeks of college at the time. I started in a rural school out in Grant County, North Dakota, and in the year, 1925. And then I taught [inaudible 00:03:15] '26 every year until the year '55 when my mother had

passed away, that year she passed away and it went from '54 and that year I moved down here because I wanted to continue my education. And then I didn't get my degree before I had attended some evening classes and some summer school, I started teaching here in '55 kept on until 1970.

But I didn't tell you about all my teaching in North Dakota, I taught there for 30 years.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: And I got my two years of college. They called it the Standard at that time in 1931. But they didn't require degrees in those schools where I taught, I was principal at Pekin, North Dakota for three years.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: And in rural schools, I taught in the rural prior to that for 16 years and then I became principal. And after three years I moved to Portland, North Dakota and taught there two years in the third and fourth grade. Then I taught in Hatton in my hometown for nine years in the third grade. That was prior to 1955 and that's when my mother passed away, then I moved down here. And I lived in an apartment for five years, bought my home here in 1960 and I have been here since.

I retired in 1970, I think as I mentioned.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Could you tell me what school was like in the early?

Serena Bali: At that time?

Lori Bakwin: Uh-huh (affirmative)

Serena Bali: Yes, it was rather difficult when I think back how I could do it, I'm rather amazed. I had to walk about a mile and a half and build my own fires in a little stove. We had to bank the fire [inaudible 00:05:33] in the winter time at the school. I worried about whether or not that my school would still be there the next morning. I wasn't very good on how to bank fires you know, I just had to learn that the hard way. And I had about 18 pupils I think the first year, all grades except in eighth, I think it was. Taught there about seven months that first year, they had just a seven month school. We had to complete the year in seven months.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: It was hard conditions because so little material to work with. We had few books and the children were rather behind in reading. They couldn't seem to read up to their own grade level. They had been promoted on and on and they weren't able to comprehend the printed page. I had to practice it like in history class. They would read the story with me or they'd try to read it themselves and I'd have to tell it to them. The next day I would ask the questions and required that they would tell me

because it was the best I could do, they were behind in their grades.

I didn't have any eighth graders at that time, it was fortunate for me so I didn't have... That first year was quite difficult and most of them being foreign, they had German Russians, and they seemed to stress their own language the most. I wasn't able to talk to some of them mothers because they were well unable to speak or understand too much of the English language, but I learned to talk a little bit German, the place where I stayed they talk German by themselves. And I heard them say [foreign language 00:07:37] and the [foreign language 00:07:39] that was the teacher and the school, I figured they're talking about me now. So, I better start learning how to understand some of these. And after I'd been there quite a while, I didn't care quite so much about the [inaudible 00:07:50].

- Lori Bakwin: Yeah. Is there anything else, like do you remember the aversion towards left-handedness?
- Serena Bali: Among the children?
- Lori Bakwin: Yeah. I mean, what was the reason behind having them write with their right hand?
- Serena Bali: Oh, we had learned that we were not supposed to force to the right hand. At that time they taught this, that if a child is inclined to use the left hand, he must be given that chance or he would stutter, become a stutterer because they claimed there was some connection in the brain back then and they explained to us, that it had to do with their Morton muscular coordination. So, I just let them be left-handed.
- Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Serena Bali: But we didn't go into that too much the first year but as on I went to summer school. I think I had some class [inaudible 00:08:56], I can't remember the first year, if I had any left-handed ones or not. I know I had a girl that walked on crutches. She was crippled, I didn't know if she'd had paralysis or something, fourth grader.
- Lori Bakwin: In the school did you notice any discrimination against kids that spoke with like German or-
- Serena Bali: They were all German, so.
- Lori Bakwin: Oh, I see.
- Serena Bali: Yeah, yes they were.
- Lori Bakwin: Were you ever in a situation where it was like mostly English speaking and a few Norwegian or Germans?
- Serena Bali: Oh let me see. It seemed to me later on, as I moved through the different schools, it seemed to me that most of them spoke English. And I don't think there was any

discrimination, but there used to be when I went to school myself in a rural school out there on the farm. They'd get angry at us in school and they'd say, "Oh, you're all Norwegians." Of course, we had Germans and Irish and all kinds of pupils in the school there. They would sometimes getting into a little fighting about that.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: There was discrimination, "You're all Norwegians."

Lori Bakwin: Yeah. Okay. Were you affiliated with any church during your childhood?

Serena Bali: Yes, I was confirmed in a Lutheran church and that was Norwegian-

Lori Bakwin: They spoke-

Serena Bali: ... we studied Norwegian, spoke Norwegian and I was confirmed in Norwegian.

Lori Bakwin: Do you remember what time it changed in your church?

Serena Bali: It had started changing then. So, there were a few who were taking English and I can't remember if there were more Norwegians than English but it was beginning to change, I think it had started about a year or two before that, where some work we're chasing English.

See, it was a Norwegian community [inaudible 00:11:05]. It was really called the Norwegian Lutheran Church at that time.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) The services were in Norwegian?

Serena Bali: Most of them were.

Lori Bakwin: Uh-huh (affirmative)

Serena Bali: Yes.

Lori Bakwin: And do you remember, like around what year they started having the services in english?

Serena Bali: [inaudible 00:11:27] Probably about the year, around 1926 or 1927 [inaudible 00:11:34]?

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: I don't know if that's quite correct. It wouldn't be probably for all communities.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Can you remember the attitude of most of the people like in North Dakota about the U.S. intervention in World War I?

Serena Bali: Yes. I was a child then. Nobody seemed to resent the fact that we ended the World War I, which was in 1917, 1918 I think. And they seemed to have the idea that we were being attacked on the ocean and there was an interference with our trade, I understand. And I think they were sinking our ships and we didn't seem to resent the fact that war... We thought war was inevitable at that time. It had started in 1914 in Europe of course and we heard about it. But it didn't really become serious before that time and I didn't have any brothers or even close relatives that had to go. So, I didn't bother me so much.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: And then World War II, if I remember right, it wasn't too much resentment against that either. At that time I was teaching, I was principal at this place and we heard that on a Sunday that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. I just took it for granted that it was necessary that we entered a war. I hadn't read the article, the truth about Pearl Harbor. We hadn't read that at that time. So, we didn't know some of the events that occurred prior to that attack. Had we known that, I suppose the feeling would have been different in our country, but we really felt that it had to be done I guess. And I can remember we made a scrapbook, it was entitled Victory America and the other teachers in the lower grades and I had to compile that scrapbook.

The children had original poems in it and there were pictures and they were all about the war and how we should try to win the war and so and so. And I can recall some of the original poems if you want them too, but later I was going to say that scrapbook was chosen to be represented in our county. And then it went to Bismarck to the state and from there, it was picked out as one of the scrapbooks of the nation and it was sent to Washington, DC.

And as I look back upon it now, it was almost a shame to influence the children so that they would talk about enemies and things like that. You know, one child wrote, "The Japs are tough, the Germans are rough, they're both our foes that everyone knows." They would write you know. It doesn't seem quite right, but yet this was encouraged at that time. And then they'd drool in original cartoons. They had car rationing, I mean, there's gasoline rationing, you know?

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: And one child drew a rationing board of people sitting, some woman was sitting at the table with a ribbon in her hair, stuff like that.

And some farmer came in to get rationing stamps and he said, "Isn't there enough red tape anywhere without wearing it in your hair." He wrote, you know, and another one wrote too about rationing, "Can't I get gas?" And the other one said, "No, well, if you have stamps or something." The other one said, "No, I don't have that." "Well, you better start walking." So they were quite clever some of those children, they thought it was fun doing it you know, but as I look back upon it now, I don't show it so very much because somehow I just have a feeling that, that war business shouldn't enter into schools, the children being instilled in that attitude. I

don't know how you feel about that, different history.

Lori Bakwin: Okay. Were you involved or what did you think of the women's movement in the early 1900s?

Serena Bali: Women's rights to vote?

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: I felt okay about that. I thought they should have a right to vote.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: Same as the [inaudible 00:16:39]. I felt women should have a right to vote.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Did you participate in any, like sign your name on a petition, or?

Serena Bali: About that particular arrangement?

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: No, I don't think so.

Lori Bakwin: What was-

Serena Bali: Can't remember the year when that came in, can you?

Lori Bakwin: 1919 I think, or was it 1920.

Serena Bali: '20, let me see. I wonder if I wasn't that young, I would have been too young, I think at that time.

Yes. I didn't start high school before '22 and I made that in three years and then I started teaching at '25. So, I don't think I was involved in pretty much in that, but as a child, I seem to think when they talked about it, that it was perfectly all right that women-

Lori Bakwin: Most people thought so around here?

Serena Bali: I think they did.

Yes. They seemed to be in favor. I didn't hear the resentment that we hear now.

Lori Bakwin: Okay. Give me some of your impressions on the depression, you must've been?

Serena Bali: I taught right through the depression.

Lori Bakwin: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Serena Bali: I started teaching prior to that and I thought my salary was reasonable, I was doing \$85 a month. But then the lowest salary I had, it was in the forties sometime there, I taught for as low as \$50 a month. And some teachers had to go below that, \$45 was the limit. But I had a school the way through, I didn't let go of my vacancy because I was afraid I wouldn't get another school. I thought I just had to hang on regardless, and you didn't ask for a raise you were glad to have your job [inaudible 00:18:45].

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: I had had \$90 straight for three years and then my school closed because they were [inaudible 00:18:52] was too small. So, I had to go down to \$70 to take another school down west of Grand Forks [inaudible 00:18:59] and I was there. That was a tough one I thought but I later had to go lower than that because then as the depression became worse and many teachers didn't have schools. They were just either let go and went into college and then tried to get a job. You couldn't even [inaudible 00:19:22], it was so hard to get to work. So my idea of the depression was just [inaudible 00:19:30]. If that had continued, I'm afraid I would probably have become discouraged to go on and get my degree because it just wouldn't have been feasible. There wasn't any sound schedule or anything like that. They started improving that later, so.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Do you remember like listening to Roosevelt and his fireside chats? And did you agree with his new deal policies?

Serena Bali: Well, yes [inaudible 00:20:10]. Yes, I think I did. I recall his inaugural speech and I remember I was teaching then, he hadn't been in office very long before he [inaudible 00:20:26] the bank holidays and I was affected by that. I had a little of money in the bank and he closed everything. So then when I went to a teacher's meeting, I even had to borrow money to go. He froze everything same time, froze up our bank accounts. But that was a good thing because that strengthened the banks and prior to that banks had been closing and people have lost money in them. So I thought that was one good thing Roosevelt did, among other deals that he carried through and he helped the farmers in many ways. But later on, as I read more about the news, I found that there were somethings that he did that, I [inaudible 00:21:09], and as I got older and read more into things.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: But I was perfectly [inaudible 00:21:15] with him, the time he took office.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Did you know anybody that lost their farm from a foreclosure?

Serena Bali: Yeah, we did. We lost our farm.

Lori Bakwin: Oh did you?

Serena Bali: Yes, we did.

Lori Bakwin: Can you tell me like the process.

Serena Bali: The process of foreclosure?

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) or how it affected you.

Serena Bali: It didn't affect me, but it affected me later in that I started to think about my brother who was the one who would have probably taken over the farm, but he was too young you see at the time and [inaudible 00:21:53] started farming and we'd had a chance or if the moratorium would have been declared then, so we had gotten a little extra time. He might've had a chance to buy back the place, but there wasn't money, you couldn't borrow. And I couldn't have borrowed or anything even on my contract.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: We bought a house in Hatton then I paid out the last [inaudible 00:22:17]. I didn't have more than a hundred dollars in the bank and I paid out and my brother and I, and my mother had a little bit and we bought a house and we paid exactly a thousand dollars cash. It had to be cash, or we wouldn't have gotten that house. And that was a nice home so, it didn't hurt me too much at the time that we lost the farm because I wasn't interested in farming myself, but it affected my brother, it was harder for him. It was too bad because if it had gone on a little longer, I'm sure that we could have gotten it back. I would have talked... I just I believe that farm went in that same year that I went out teaching my first year. I was unable to help [inaudible 00:23:06], it was really unfortunate.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Okay. Maybe you can give me some impressions. How about unlike in the fifties, the communist scare or the Red Scare? Do you remember anything about that?

Serena Bali: That they were afraid to come to here [inaudible 00:23:34]. Yes, I think it was said that the communist would probably become dangerous but I heard more about the communist infiltration within our own country and I feared that more myself. I never, as matter of fact, I don't even now I think that they ever come with guns and drive us out, but probably they'll do it, take us over without firing a gun, because of apathy of the people, I think. I never feared that they would actually come and defeat us in any way.

Lori Bakwin: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Okay. How about the Vietnam issue, were you for our intervention in Vietnam?

Serena Bali: In Vietnam? No, I didn't feel that we should have intervened there. I felt that it

should have been more opposition to it in this country, in the early times, well I'm inclined to talk too much.

We had the first rhythm band in Grand Forks County, that's in North Dakota. And we worked [inaudible 00:25:14], I gave them a little instruments and I was interested in, not that I'm so very musical, but just because we had it in our programs and our county superintendent came out one time and asked us if we would be interested in broadcasting because that in Grand Forks, KMGH, I can't remember the station's name nowadays were going to broadcast and they were going to have a convention of some kind of interests, I guess it was and so we were asked to come in and demonstrate our rhythm band for them. Then in the afternoon we were on the air and we had to go against that. And I remember we also had to broadcast for that, I mean we had to demonstrate with our teachers-

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Serena Bali:

We had to demonstrate for teacher's convention that we had in the fall, because there wasn't any other rural land going at that time. That may be interesting enough to talk about, it was quite an experience for the children to come into grand court, and so we made a broadcast after that too I think. I know it ran twice on the air, and the second time they walked in like they were professional musicians. The first time they were just petrified, and we went on with rhythm band each year, took part in the music festivals. Of course, we weren't only a rhythm band, we had solos, two part, even three part music, that we'd sing and then different choruses. So it was quite exciting when we got some happy superiors, and then as I went on and taught in town, my last year in Hatton we had a flutophone band, and they played even three part music with that, and we played at the college, Maryland State Teacher's College.

We got hired at superior in that music festival they have. When I came down here, I didn't do a great deal because we had this special music, and I didn't have my music major so I didn't want to go into it much. We played a little bit, just enough to get my pupils interested and we played a little through the fall, and then we also had other percussion instruments and tuned bells. I had used tuned bells in the other bands too, up in North Dakota. I found that it helped so much in discipline. The children were more cooperative in every way. I never had any trouble that way.

They just loved the bands that we played music in. Well, it was a special interest, and another thing was industrial arts. They did sewing and painting, they saw the use of a wood saw and a carving saw to make all kinds of toys, and they'd paint during the noon hour. Then we'd sometimes put on a carnival or something to sell those things. So I found that that helped to keep up the interest in the different years that I taught alone, where I was my own boss, but of course we couldn't be doing that all the time.

I might also mention about the Young Citizens League. That's something that seems to be rather new here in Minnesota. They had the Young Citizens League from the

years about the 1940s through the fifties. There were fewer and fewer rural schools, and from then on, I don't know what they've done with the Young Citizens League, but that was quite a thing. We were having a county convention in Grand Forks county, and the pupils would be sent as delegates, like two from each of a rural school. We had two delegates at that county convention in Grand Forks, and it happened one year that one of my pupils was drawn as a delegate to go to Bismarck, and so that meant a trip to the state convention.

They would then sit in the seats of the house of representatives Senate chamber during the state convention, just like they were really senators. It was quite interesting for us, and then we had a number from our county. One played guitar and they were singing. So they're sang, we're delegates from Grand Forks county, and so on, or songs we made up from school creative work, and then the next year it happened the same way. One of my pupils happened to be drawn. So that was quite rare because there were so many rural schools in Grand Forks county at that time. We got that chance again.

Lori Bakwin: What was the objective of the Young Citizens League?

Serena Bali: It was like having a learning club in your own room, and we elected president, secretary, and vice president. They had little duties, and the object of it was to obey rules of the school, and try to be good Americans. We put on little programs about it. We had little rules that we tried to abide by, like we cooperate with our teacher. We work with her, we don't work against her, and so on, I could just go on and on and tell you some of the things that we stood for, and of course this was affiliated with the county, and we got material from the county and also from the state. It'd be just like any other organization, only the children were organized. Then they had of course, senior president, to sit by them and advise them.

None of mine were other officers then a county secretary, one of them got to be secretary. Well, of course, all he would do then is sit by the senior teacher secretary, that would show him how to take down notes. I didn't have anybody that was president, but I thought it was a very fine thing, and I was wishing they had continued them. They should really have it in the city schools, I would think. Maybe we wouldn't have so much vandalism. It really taught cooperation. The children learned what it was all about to have a government job of some kind. I don't know why it was discontinued. When I came down here to teach, I talked about it. Nobody's interested in it.

Lori Bakwin: What type of discipline other than corporal, or cooperative, was used on students?

Serena Bali: Well, the one I found the most effective was something we figured out. I had a little plank at work, with a little pulley, I put a little nail or pin or something here, and then a cord here, and then a flag, and I could pull it up or down. We celebrate when the flag reaches the top, and we try to keep that flag up to the top. If anything happened when I was had a class and I was getting angry and I didn't want to start laying into them, then I'd go and pull that flag down, and then they would just straighten out, because they felt so bad. Maybe it meant that we couldn't have

our industrial arts, or there was something that we couldn't do then, because the flag didn't reach the top, or wasn't at the top that day. It just meant that the cooperation was lacking and the teacher was disappointed, and so that way I didn't have to be scolding them all the time.

Sorry. May I just go back to tell you the contrast of before I had gotten onto these different ideas and figured them out, the children would throw spit balls. That was a common thing at that time too, and then before I came, I would see spit balls had been thrown up to the ceiling. Well, I didn't just have the methods at first, so of course I probably got angry. Maybe didn't deal with it like I should have. I know that it would have gone better if I had done these things, but this is what we learn as we go on teaching year to year, you figure out how we can deal with this and that. Many times when children do things in school, they do it more to get the attention of the teacher.

If they find that she doesn't fly off the handle and get angry, maybe they'll straighten up. Just an example here in Moorhead with one of my pupils who was a problem child. You'll never know, he would put his head down on the floor and almost stand on his head right in the middle of school, when I found out that was his actions in ways, it wasn't that he was insane or anything. He was just that type of a problem child. So I was working with a group one day, everything was quiet. All the children were reading, studying. He wasn't doing anything.

So I just got up from where I was sitting with that little group, and then they started looking to see who had done something wrong, because he saw that flag. He couldn't see anybody doing anything. Well, it wasn't any fun anymore, because I didn't give him any attention. Straightened right up, never had any more trouble with him that way. I told his mother too, at the conference about that. So the parents liked the idea of it. The children seemed to cooperate more. They wouldn't have that much to come home and talk about. They saw that they just weren't so important.

Lori Bakwin: Did you know of any teachers disciplinary actions? How did they differ from yours?

Serena Bali: Some other teachers?

Lori Bakwin: Yeah.

Serena Bali: Some I thought talk too loud in the classroom, or maybe didn't show enough attention to many of those who were unable to sit and study on their own, and maybe the teachers, some of them, hadn't had as much experience, and maybe they didn't understand their behavior. So of course they probably shake them up or something. I never liked that idea myself.

Lori Bakwin: Do you feel it accomplished anything?

Serena Bali: No, it didn't. It rather made the child worse, because some didn't get much attention at home. I think we just assumed they needed to be shook up by the

teachers, and that's the way it worked out. It was hard for me to tell, because up in a rural school, I never had a chance to see much how others talk either. In Moorhead, I can't complain that anybody did. It seemed that some teachers sent children to the office more, and had the principal talk to them, but I resented that idea because I always liked to handle my own problems. Sometimes the principal wouldn't even know what side to take.

He'd probably get the idea that I wasn't strong enough to handle my own problems, and in that way I had to accept it. I know I prayed a lot about it and I really feel that I should give the Lord credit for giving me guidance in how to handle children, and I found the children would react the same way, regardless of whether they were here, or in the country, or town, or Minnesota, North Dakota. I think with the same treatment, children would react about the same. Children are no different now than they were a hundred years ago. [inaudible 00:38:48] Are you asking how I feel about it?

Lori Bakwin: And the general attitude of it?

Serena Bali: The general attitude is the same as mine. That it shouldn't be. It works out better if they were married in their own church, because of the children. So many times with children, it becomes a divided home, and the children will usually go to the side of the mother, I suppose. It all depends upon whether the mother or the father is a stronger personality. Of course, we were Lutheran, so naturally we'd see our side of it, and we would feel that Lutherans should marry. In fact, we had something about in the Bible camp, that we were advised not to marry Catholics or any other denomination than our own, because it worked out for the home.

Lori Bakwin: Was this the same attitude of the general public you would think in Fargo-Moorhead?

Serena Bali: I wouldn't know, because we didn't talk so much about it when we got down here. I don't know what the attitude is.

Lori Bakwin: Well, how about in North Dakota?

Serena Bali: Yes, it was the attitude for a long time. However, there are many that I know. She should understand... They have that there too in North Dakota, quite a few now that are marrying other denominations, but it still hasn't changed my opinion of it. I don't think it should be. Some people are doing it, because I don't think that they are too serious about church in the first place. I suppose the children would naturally be the same. They just go and fall in love with somebody, get married, get married, and that's it, but there are quite a few acquaintances of mine, they're about my age, that feel bad about it. Their children did not marry someone of their own denomination, but there's nothing they could do about it.

Lori Bakwin: What would be the feeling then of a girl marrying a one of a different race?

Serena Bali: That would be not accepted. I'm absolutely sure of that. I haven't experienced that

in any of my relatives or friends, but I would be against it myself.

Lori Bakwin: Do you think the attitude in North Dakota or Minnesota would be the same?

Serena Bali: I think so. In general.

Lori Bakwin: Did you come into contact with any other racial groups during your early childhood and teaching experiences?

Serena Bali: The only classmate I've had is at the University of Minnesota in a music course. There was a Negro there, but he was a very fine student. I can't recall if there was anything racial, no. Nationality or mixed. You could talk about Mexican too. I had a Mexican girl in my school over here in the Morehead. One three month period, during the time when their parents were working in the sugar beet fields, I had her. They had to move then, of course, in the fall, but I found that it was a little bit hard to work with her, because she was so behind. They had moved from one school to another, she seemed to do well in reading, math she couldn't get at all, but that wasn't because of any inferior intelligence. Simply because she just hadn't had the opportunity. She seemed to be a very bright girl, got along nicely, and no discipline problem from her at all. I can't recall much more about nationality.

Lori Bakwin: How about Indians?

Serena Bali: No, there might've been some that had the Indian blood in them a little bit probably, but I don't think I actually had any Indian children in my school. That's strange too, 45 years of straight teaching.

Lori Bakwin: What's your feeling towards the Indians, and the Indian movement?

Serena Bali: About this in South Dakota? I'm afraid there's too much government interference there. They should leave the Indians alone. I think now they have been given their place to live, and I don't think they should be controlling someone. Well, if they had good control, but I rather disagree with the way that some of them are representing those who are to be helping those Indians. I'm afraid they're posing as helpers, but they really aren't. I'm sorry, I haven't read up enough to really be qualified to speak to too much about it. I've always felt sorry for the Indians.

When I taught third grade, and had been for nine years, we always had a unit on Indians, and my pupils looked forward to coming into that room so they could be Indians, and we put on programs, we'd study the whole year and then we'd dress up and have the children wear braids. We made braids out of black stockings, with little caps they made, and they looked like Indians, and we took pictures or even had a movie on it. We put on an Indian play, it was called Little Indian Weaver. You probably read that book. I read the book to them, and we made a play out of it.

Those children couldn't seem to forget that, and they had a feeling of love to the Indians, and it's the way the course was taught, and the kind of work books we used and all. There was never any resentment. So I resent the fact that they are

looking down upon any racial group for that part, because they have a soul. They're people we are, and they should be treated as such.

Lori Bakwin: Okay.

Serena Bali: I got into a very embarrassing situation the first year I taught. It was out in Grand county, where I was talked to by one of the school board members. In fact, he came very angry to me and he said, I understand Ms. Valerie, that you are teaching the children to pray to the flag. I had them flag salute, and those Germans up there didn't seem to understand what that was all about, and I had to explain to him, I said, we are not, and I told him what the flag salute meant. I had to explain it to him. He didn't listen. He said, I want you to stop it, because there's nothing to obey.

And I thought that was very unfair because we were supposed to have the flag salute, and yet I think when I mentioned to the county superintendent, she didn't go very far into it, I suppose, on account of votes. She didn't want to say anything. She simply overlooked the situation, and considered the source. If I remember right, I don't think we had the flag salute any more that year. So I thought it had offended him. [inaudible 00:47:52] He said that there's only one we're supposed to pray to, and I said to him, we weren't praying to the flag, and I went through the flag salute, told him what it meant.

To him that was idolatry, or whatever you would call it. I thought it might be all right to mention it, because ignorance can cause a great deal of trouble. It could have caused my dismissal from that place, if I hadn't talked in a very tactical way to that man, because he was angry. I could've lost my job the first year, and probably gotten so discouraged. I never would be back. So it's strange how such misunderstandings can come about. He became very friendly to me after that. I never had any trouble with him.

Lori Bakwin: What college did you say that you went to?

Serena Bali: My first two years was at Mayville Teachers' College in North Dakota, and then I attended University of Minnesota for some summer schoolwork. I attended also a workshop there for language arts. So I was down there three summers. Then when I came down here, I took evening classes and Moorhead State College evening classes, and some summer schoolwork and got my degree in 1959. That's all the colleges I attended, but I had taken some business college, business correspondence work from [inaudible 00:49:36] in Indiana. So I had bookkeeping and salesmanship, business, English, commercial law, further study, and then after my graduation from Moorhead State College, I took a course. I took courses for special education so that I could do tutoring, my field was then with a slower child. I did a lot of teaching here in Moorhead with the slow readers.

Lori Bakwin: Serena Bali tape. Tape two. May 19, 1975.

Serena Bali: My father's name was Liam Bali. He was born in Dane county, Wisconsin, and

moved to Columbia county when he was only a year old. In 1872, he migrated by covered wagon to Northwest Iowa, and there he lived for six years. He attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. He came to North Dakota in 1878 to his cousin, Nelson Polly. From there, he found his way to the spot now known as the John Holden farm. That's near North Dakota. He was the first to settle out from the river, Goose River that is, in this area. Here he took his tree claim and homestead. He farmed, and during the winter he served as the first proverbial school teacher. About 10 years later, he entered the hardware business, and was engaged in that for six years. He built the store, which Willow and Tire later purchased. He also owned another building near it and the hotel, which was called the Half in House. This was later sold and remodeled into a residence. He also owned the store on the site of the present center.

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Serena Bali: He also owned a store on the site of the present Seneca Implement Company. This was destroyed by fire in 1915. He discontinued the hardware business in 1894 and moved to Northwood where he married [Louis Burgee 00:52:19]. They soon returned to Hatten and continued to live in this community for many years.

Speaker 2: Okay. How about your mother?

Serena Bali: Going back-

Speaker 2: And grandmother?

Serena Bali: ... my mother's ancestors.

Speaker 2: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: This would be my grandfather. [Gens 00:52:41] Bergee was born August 22nd, 1838 in Norway, and came to Minnesota. He married [Sinima 00:52:51] or [Susan Thompson 00:52:51] in 1867. Sinima was born May 5th, 1844 in Trolla, Norway. She sailed for America with her family when she was nine years old, her father and her sister died on board ship, and her mother and two sisters went to Wisconsin to live with relatives. The mother soon married Mr. Thompson in Minnesota. Sinima married Gens Bergee and they made their home near Rochester, Minnesota. In 1881 the families of [Tobias Johnson 00:53:34], [Nels 00:53:34] Johnson, and Gens Bergee with the two daughters migrated to Dakota in covered wagons. One of the Bergee girls was my mother [Louisa 00:53:45] who was then 15 years old who had to drive the cattle.

I might now stop there and say they made this journey in a covered wagon. And they came to Blanchard, North Dakota, where there was a railroad at that time. I don't think the railroad went any farther than that, the railroad. And then the rest of the family, were to come by train to Blanchard. Upon this wagon train came to [Casil 00:54:25], Minnesota, the people were celebrating their certain [inaudible 00:54:29] or 17th of May festival. And I believe here is where we would maybe stop

a little bit and talk about that they had a dog with them, from home. That dog followed them about a hundred miles or more.

One morning, as they awoke they found that the dog was gone. And my grandfather didn't exactly know if he should wait a little while and look around for the dog, but finally gave up because he couldn't find him anywhere. When they came to near Blanchard there, my grandfather got a mail. I don't know just how the mail had been delivered, but when he came up along in that community, somehow or other he got this letter from my grandmother down by Rochester that she didn't know what to do. She said the dog came home. "What shall I do because when I take the children on the train, I can't take the dog along." Grandpa wrote back and said, "You'll have to kill the dog."

The Bergee family came to Beaver Creek Township in June, 1881 and settled on the Southwest one quarter of section 14. They had nine children, Louisa [Bolly, 00:56:02] my mother, was the oldest. And there was [Gina Betsy 00:56:12], [Annie 00:56:12], all deceased, and [Hannah 00:56:12] who is also now deceased. Then there was [Serena 00:56:16] and [Tina 00:56:17]. Tina [inaudible 00:56:18] passed away in Canada. Gens Burgee, my grandfather, died February 3rd, 1919, and my grandmother died April, 1923.

Speaker 2: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: Just [inaudible 00:56:40] I want to... I'll tell you a little bit more about my grandparent's later home. They moved from Beaver Creek Township in the year 1900. And then my grandfather settled on a farm about a mile and half near what is now Fillmore, North Dakota. And there he lived until his death. Maybe restart.

My father lived near... In fact it was after then he married my mother, that they moved to Northwood, and lived in a house which he built himself and for a while. And then he went into business he went back to Hatten and lived there until he took a farm about 12 miles north of Hatten where he settled for his last home. And there they lived for over 30 years, we were all born there. My oldest sister passed away at the age of about seven weeks. Her name was [Annie Serena 00:58:03]. The second child was [Marie 00:58:05]. I was the third one and my brother [John 00:58:10] is the youngest. We were all born on that farm, 12 miles straight north of Hatten. And we lived there until the year 1927 when my father are located in Hatten, we bought our home there and then we lived there until 1955. When I moved down here.

My dad passed away January 21st, 1937. And my mother died in 1954, on December 16. And after that year that I discontinued my teaching in Hatten and moved to Morehead, where I began with teaching, in the town of [inaudible 00:59:11] continued until my retirement in 1970. I have practiced.

My father, as I had said before, I was born in Wisconsin and he lived there for some time. At that time, they had oxen for their transportation and it took a long time for them to make a trip to town. And my father had to really be the main one to help

because his mother needed him, and his father didn't feel so well. When he passed away my father had to take care of his mother and then she came up here with him too, to the Hatten community and lived with him for a while there after his marriage, she before she passed away shortly after he was married. And my dad told several stories about Wisconsin. Oh one thing he was telling one time about how the rattlesnakes would make such noises that the boys would run around barefoot in general in big, high, tall grass. And he got so used to it he didn't pay too much attention but he could hear when those rattlesnakes came along.

And then of course they'd have to be cautious because they were so numerous, and then they were warned that they mustn't play too close to the places where they were expecting to find those rattlesnakes. And my father told about times when he would be playing, picking nuts in trees nearby there, they had to have all kinds of nuts. They would pick in great big bags and then he would save them until Christmas time. They didn't have so much candy in those days, so during Christmas they would have enjoy eating the nuts that they had picked.

I was amazed when I examined some of the books that my dad used when he went to school, it seemed to me that the sixth reader was about the same as a high school book now. And I can't understand how they could comprehend some of that material, but they really must've had wonderful reading ability or reading methods, I don't know what it was. They had readers that seemed so hard to me at that time, and was when I was a child, about in a year 1918 or that I was amazed because the readers we were having at that time had so many pictures and they were interesting. And of course comparing them to the readers now mine would seem much more difficult. But they had a great deal of Christianity in them, stories that were from the Bible really, and I think that is one big difference between those books and now that they don't have very much along that line that seem to have more religion in the schools at that time.

And my dad was capable of competing material that I was really amazed at when he was younger, and the work that he had at Luther college must have very comprehensive. And he was given a wonderful education because I could ask him the meaning of almost any word and he wouldn't run to the dictionary. He would say, "This is what it means." Just like a walking dictionary. From the college that he had had, and he did not attend long enough to graduate, to help his mother when dad passed away he had to take care of his mother. And so as I say they left Iowa back then that discontinued his college education. He had at one time thought he was going to study to be a minister, but he gave that when he got interested in hardware business and later in farming, he didn't do so much of it but I always thought that my dad was cut out to be a teacher. He seemed to have the qualities of one who was interested in that type of thing. He was very interested in getting our us to learn.

And I know one way that he seemed to get me interested in the Bible, he had a German testament, and he sometimes in the evening, he would ask me to read it in German, as he would read it in Norwegian and translate it. And I think that was his way of trying to get me interested in reading the Bible, I really think that was

probably very apt to want to read that at that age. But he taught us everything at home. And when we got ready for confirmation instruction, we knew our books so well that we didn't hardly have to study for the lessons at all because he had taught us that. And none of it had required meant... And he had such a wonderful reasoning there, he would help us reason our problems.

In the rural school that I attended out there on the farm. The teachers hadn't had much education, they were about all probably high school, a little above, or maybe not even college. And they didn't have very good methods. So they would simply say they paid 45, turn, stand, and pass. And that was it. They didn't explain or motivate anything. So I took my work home and my dad would explain how to do the problems and get me interested in reading and comprehension. And all I just had to say that I am very much indebted to him for the wonderful help, and his interest in education. He was really more interested than his sister and brother. His brother who'd passed away at quite an early age. But his sister didn't get to go to school, right [inaudible 01:06:12] she had a one indoor spending you days with girls had to help make [inaudible 01:06:21] from work and she didn't get to go to high school. And when she got married, she had quite new large family too.

But my dad continued his research and reading. And he stayed up sometimes until about two o'clock in the morning and read. Just for his own enjoyment. And he enjoyed talking about the past so I regret very much that I didn't record... Well I didn't have any recorder at that time, but that I didn't take paper and pencil and jot down some of those things. And I really would have had a wonderful pioneer story to refer to. But as I have said before, at that time I would just let it go in one ear and out the other. I didn't seem to be too interested in the past history.

Speaker 2: So you can't remember-

Serena Bali: Too much more of what-

Speaker 2: ... more stories.

Serena Bali: ... my father's stories. I could tell something about my mother perhaps when she was small, how has she almost died because she picked up some poison grass. She saw some other children take... There used to be some wild grass, I don't know what they call it, a wild sauerkraut or what. They used to pick it up and chew and eat it [inaudible 01:07:55] and she was just a little girl at that time, she saw somebody doing it and she had grabbed and started eating too, but here it was poison grass. And my grandmother was alone at that time, she saw there was something wrong with her when she came home and my mother asked if she could lie down, she was so tired and wanted to sleep. And Grandma said, "No, you can't. You can't lie down." She knew that if she had she would have died, she was poisoned.

Grandma worked very fast, she took milk, she had some good fresh milk and made her drink that. And then she put her finger down her throat and got her to vomit. Because in those days you couldn't call up and go to the doctor immediately, you

couldn't do those things. You just trying to have ways of doing things yourself. And she was able to get her to vomit and in a few hours she recovered from it. But that was a very close call, and she could've been killed there. And another time when she was small, well, of course she was the oldest in the family I can't tell you exactly how old she was, but my grandmother was alone with the children, and that was about the time when Jesse James was around, but you probably heard about him, that used to rob trains and go robbing banks and things.

Speaker 2: Um-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: And she thought that he had been in the area because one of their horses got stolen, and grandma was alone well I mean with the children. And she went out the door because she heard some noises out in the barn. And my mother was home then with the other children, grandma stayed out quite a long time because she was looking for this horse. The horse was gone. And when she found it, it was all tied down with ropes. It seemed like they had tried to take it, but had left it there. Whoever was, she didn't know, but she had an idea it could have been some of the Jesse James gang that had picked up the horse. See and grandma was able to save that horse so she had quite a hard time to tie those ropes, untie them, and get the horse free, because there was no men around the help her either. But this just illustrates how the women in those days had to be prepared to almost anything if there was no help around, no telephone.

Now we'll run to the telephone and call up and either get the neighbor or somebody to come and do things, but they couldn't, they just had to... And I often marveled at it how mother could stand we were thinking if someone died to think that her mother would go out in the middle of the night like. And they had heard about Jesse James but she didn't tell much about their fear or anything, it was just you had the other. If her mother could recover the horse and they had faith in God that he would protect her, which he did. And she told me about this several times, how she went through, and feeling a little bit worried there, but didn't mind it like we would have done perhaps in the situation like that.

Speaker 2: What were some of the stories that they told about Jesse James?

Serena Bali: Well wasn't it he that would enter that trains and the old train when the trains came, they'd come through some of the stations, and if Jesse James would come in just like an ordinary passenger and he'd take and slug whoever was around and take the money and then he'll go and rob banks too. Somehow or other I believe he was the one that the reward was out for so many hundred dollars for the one that would find him at last. And I think I'm right when I say that it was his old friend that gave him away, he was supposed to have had a belt that he kept on with his revolver all the time and nobody dare come near him. But at one particular time, this friend who deceived him, knew that he wasn't prepared, he was at home. I think he had taken down some pictures and was cleaning or doing something. He's taken his gun belt so he wasn't prepared, and then he got caught that way.

That's a faint remembrance of what happened to him. And I know I've heard

because I'm sharing away, because his own friend gave him away. He should have do it in I think in a little different way, and not kill him like that, so. But the reward was out to get him dead or alive. So that's both good and bad to give out rewards like that.

Speaker 2: Um-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Serena Bali: If we did this a little bit incoherent, some of the things I'm talking about here. My mother used to have to sew for the other children. She had to learn to sew because grandma didn't sew herself and she wouldn't have had much time either. She started sewing for her dolls and then later on for the rest of her sisters. There was no brother that grew up. They died a little, the boys, when they were small. And I don't think that this story could tell us how, when you're there, and therefore I say that it was really incomplete, there should have been more things about the very earliest time of coming.

My mother's sister married Porter McCumber's brother. Porter McCumber used to be one of our senators. And there were only two girls, my grandmother this her sister who married a McCumber, and I wished that I had kept more of the material that I got because this McCumber's son-in-law got interested in genealogy. And he started writing to me, somehow he found out that I had a few facts about my relatives, and he began digging into the relationship of his wife.

Speaker 2: Okay.

Serena Bali: And there I was involved in some pioneer stories at that time, and I really regret it because it seems to me that my mother could have helped me tell more than if I had a asked for it. I got only some of the information that he wondered about his this [Mr. Barns 01:15:32] who was married to my grandmother's sister's daughter who lived in Minneapolis at that time, who wanted to find out all about his sister and all his relatives. And he kept on writing me and getting material about these relatives. But I wasn't able to go as far back as I would have liked to. I would have like to find out more about my grandmother's location over in Norway, that is her ancestors. She came from a place called Trolla in Norway, a place in Norway.

And grandfather came from a place near Kristiania, I [inaudible 01:16:26] North, which later became Oslo. He lived near where some of the ancestors came from there. And there were so many stories told about how they lived over there in Norway, it was small farms, very small farms. Each one would have small house, and then they have goats and probably a few cattle and they'd have to drive those cattle up in the mountains. It was called a [satter 01:16:59], where they would keep the cattle during the summer it was grass up there. And then they would always leave some of the girls that would stay up there then and take care of the cattle while the men tried to farm what little pieces of land they had.

And that of course meant milking the cows, and that time they had no cream separators, they had to let the milk stand in some vets in a cool place, then they were skim it off, take the cream, and when they had enough cream to make butter

they would have these old fashioned churns. Some were made of wood and they'd turn the kind of a crank and have sometimes it would be a little bit hard to keep on turning because it wouldn't always get to be butters so soon, but they had been had patience. They'd churn and churn and churn, finally when-

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Serena Bali: They'd churn and churn and churn, finally when the whole cream and the whole thing started getting real heavy, that was a sign that the butter was coming. And then the buttermilk would be separated from the butter. And they'd have to start opening that little opening on the churn and let out the buttermilk, put that in a nice little jar. And then they would take the water that was left in the churn, pour some nice cold water over that, then they'd churn some more to kind of wrench out that buttermilk. And they'd let that out through that little opening and then pour some more water in, keep on, because that made better butter if they could get all the buttermilk out.

Yes, they had one of these wooden spoons that they would just keep on hashing at the [inaudible 01:18:54] and getting it all out so there would be no liquid whatsoever left, and then they would add salt. And my grandmother knew how to do this. My mother learned how and I learned how, so I have actually churned butter like that. I've milked cows. My sister and all of us knew how to milk. We had to even do that on the farm, sometimes churn before we started to send the cream to the creameries and sell the cream, before that we'd sell the butter putting in five or 10 pound jars, and sell it. We'd probably get about two or \$3 for a five pound jar of butter. And then we'd trade for that, you see?

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: Get groceries for it. During the depression days up there at Northford and Hatton, way back in the 1930s, would've been. I suppose?

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Serena Bali: Actually some farmers would not have been able to keep on the farm if it hadn't been for their cattle because they weren't getting much of anything for their grain and every thing ... prices went down. And sometimes they had poor crops, and maybe the fields weren't so rich either. They had them fertilized, they fertilized with barn yard manure, which was good, but they didn't always watch and summer fallow because they felt they had to keep on having their land cropped all the time, so they didn't do like now, set aside a piece of land and let it become rich in vegetable matter again, summer fallow or else plant some [inaudible 01:20:35] and alfalfas.

They couldn't afford to do that, so they' keep on cropping the land until they just real ... depleted it planting food and of course, they actually go and produce it in bushels per acre. It's what a waste if they're not taken care of it.

We had that problem too, because we didn't own more than one quarter of land, at that time farmers couldn't because they had to farm with horses, and they couldn't have possibly farmed as many acres as they do now. A farm, about the time that I was about in eighth grade was worth probably about \$8,000, \$50 an acre. Now, if we start comparing that with now, when the farms are sold, I have heard of farms that have been sold now for a thousand dollars an acre up there by Hatton, it's a good farming area. So, there you can see the big changes that have taken place in prices and valuation of things.

I might also mention that on the farm where we lived, we had two horses that we kept. We'd had more before, but they had a sale, I guess, sold some. We moved to town one winter and then after that, he didn't carry on with more than two horses because he started renting out his farm. He'd gotten a little older and he didn't feel like keeping on farming, but we continued keeping the cattle and raising chickens and turkeys. Somehow my dad didn't go too much into farming then, he wanted to continue more with cattle and we never did raise sheep, I wished we had. We raised enough pigs to have for our own pork and they were butchered in the fall and then we'd buy little pigs in the spring, again, I remember.

But my dad wasn't as interested as he could have been in chickens. I wished that he could have raised more of them and had incubators and raised more chickens, but he chose to let the hen raise her own chickens. And of course, that was slower, much slower. One thing I wondered about that, why he didn't go into that more because we lived on a farm that was very, very good for raising chickens and cattle and so forth. We had a pasture with a big coulee there, and lots of grass.

The farm was north of the pasture and I remember that many times when it was raining a lot, we had that coulee so filled with water that we kids could go in wade in it, even swim in that little coulee there. I remember that, and it was fun to go down into the pasture. Sometimes we'd milk the cows right out in the pasture, it was nicer and cooler than to put them in the barn for milking.

I could maybe begin to tell you about some of the experiences that we had going to school out there on the farm. We did not have a very good road. Sometimes my dad had to haul us when it was cold and snowing, but it mostly when the roads were good, because we had to go across the field usually, and it was worth about a mile. I remember how cold it was to walk to school, and many times we had to stay home when it was real stormy, we just couldn't get to school. I missed quite a bit there when we lived on the farm, but then when we moved to Hatton of course we had easier way to get to school then.

We moved to Hatton twice. I was only seven years old that winter we lived there, I was in the first grade then, but we didn't like that because we wanted to go back on the farm again, and we kept asking, "What time can we go back?" And we did.

When I was about, 12, 13 years old, I used to daydream about living in town and being able to go through high school with the folks living in town. I thought that would be much better than it turned out to be, I had to work for room and board

because we did, it was quite hard times. At the time that I started in high school, I had to work for room and board. And I thought if the folks had lived in town, I would have had my home right there, it would have been much easier.

You want any stories about, let's see, I had something in mind I was going to talk about. Earlier years, way back. Trips to town I might mention, were quite a chore because we were I'd say 12 miles from Hatton. Our closer town was seven miles to [Clempton 01:26:55], but we didn't go so often there at first when I was small, I remember. And we would go by sleigh many times.

I often wondered how in the world my dad dared drive off to go that far with horses and sleigh because we could have gotten caught in a blizzard on the way back, which we never did, but we'd have to heat bricks or something and have along to put our feet on because it was cold. And we had heavy, heavy blankets and that along. And when I think of how I froze sometimes. I wonder why I ever enjoyed going to town, but it was a treat for us to get to town. We'd spend the whole day then, and come back sometimes late.

And those two horses that we drove would get so used to those 12 miles that they would go by themselves. And I remember one time, my dad just let them go when we came to the nearby place where there was just a little turn in the road, so it was so straight north, but then just that little turn after crossing the bridge and it would go up to our place. And he thought it was fun to just let the horses go and see what they would do. But do you suppose those horses walked by that turn? No. It was a strange thing. They had gone 12 miles, and he left them alone, up they turned when they crossed that bridge. And was I ever glad. I'd get so bored sometimes driving. And that was the only way of transportation at that time. My dad didn't have a car, and very few had cars. And of course, when he first moved there it was most of small houses, and more-less claims [inaudible 01:29:02].

And of course the neighbors, they had cozy, very cozy homes. They had these radiant home stoves that burn coal, and you put hard coal in and light the fire and it would be real nice and warm in the house, didn't freeze, but you had to watch that fire, of course and see to it that it didn't burn up the house because the chimneys weren't very good. They had what they call roof caps and they weren't brick either. Some didn't have. And if you fired too much, maybe it could start fire. I'm so happy that that never happened, yes, but my dad was awful careful with the fire. But when I was ... Will you stop that a minute?

Speaker 3: Okay.

Serena Bali: Yes. This happened in the middle of the night. We had begun packing to start moving to Hatton. And my dad had loaded the stove, the cook stove, up in the wagon. They had loaded some things therefore the chimney was down, so there was no pipes in the chimney then. And a terrible lightning came up, a storm. We were all asleep. Marie and I were in bed and there was a big medicine chest fastened to the wall, right by our bed.

And my dad who hardly ever slept when there was a lightning storm ... I often wondered about that. I think he must have been born during a thunderstorm or something because he was usually kind of nervous when it was. He never said that to us but we thought that he seemed nervous. And the rest of us were sleeping. Mother was in bed. And my dad was walking back and forth. He was up all alone, which is, he saved all our lives. If he hadn't been awake ...

He happened to look up by the door. There was paper, it was the wallpaper near there it had started a little fire. See, what had actually happened was that when the lightning struck it came down through the chimney because it was drawn by that iron stove, which you can easily see how natural the situation was. It came down. And I suppose maybe the window wasn't open then, so that it had a place to [inaudible 01:31:48], and just knocked down one of these wainscoting, or whatever you call these things. Long nails there, just hanging down on the floor, and then it knocked that medicine chest down. So, it came on the bed where we were lying, but it didn't touch us. The medicine bottles were scattered all over.

And my mother who was lying in bed, heard the thump, and she just kind of woke and it was dark because the lamp went out just as it happened. And my mother got so excited, she thought, "Is this eternity? Am I now dead?" or something, just gave her that feeling. And she wondered, "Is this the end?" And what had happened was the leg of the bed had broke off because it was in bad shape, and that part of the bed had dropped down on the floor, and then she found herself [inaudible 01:32:43].

So, she woke, of course. And when I woke, all this had happened. We didn't know that my dad had put out the fire, it had come down the paper, down. He said if he hadn't been up the whole house would have burned, we would have all been ... So, you can see how the Lord protected us, but it was a very foolish thing to do, to load the stove like that and let it stand overnight. He probably didn't anticipate that it would become an electric storm, but anyway, it wasn't a good thing to do. You can easily see that the lightning would strike coming down the chimney like that and burned.

But I have often wondered about that situation. It happened so suddenly all of that, and we not knowing a thing or even feeling ... My dad was the type that never did rave around with a lot of excitement, and my mother wasn't either. Somehow in most homes, I think, you would think that there would have been really a very great commotion, but as I think of it now, I was only seven at the time, but all they did was talk about how wonderful the Lord had saved them and to think that they were safe and the fire was out and all, yes.

But this is something that I have always wondered about, now when I think of lightening striking places and burning. It goes to show how the Lord is above us all and protects in time of weather. And I think we should always pray that, and I know my dad was a praying Christian, so he never seemed to have the real fear, but he was always cautious when there was an electric storm, to see that everything was all right, cellar, door. It's a cellar, but it wasn't in the basement, to see that that was

covered so that the rain wouldn't come down under the house and so on.

And he seemed to be so fierce and secure in himself, but he was always watching the home. My dad was a man that didn't carouse and go very much. He would enjoy being out and more so when he was younger in his younger days. But later he was the kind of man who seemed to stick more to the home. He would go away, and the longest he would be away from home would be two nights, when he went to visit his sister, this Mrs. Johnson that I told you had moved with them [inaudible 01:35:27]. They'd visited her, she lived northwest of Northford and he'd stay there two nights. Marie and John would go with him and they'd stay two nights. Mother and I would stay home alone, did the chores and we just enjoyed it. They could have stayed a month, but oh, he couldn't. There wasn't anybody that could feed the pigs like he could. He had to be home. [inaudible 01:35:54] Back in two nights, was all, absolutely all. And then mother and I would take a trip and go places alone and the other three would be home.

Speaker 3: Were there any big tornadoes?

Serena Bali: Not that actually struck there, but it was tornados that struck out by Northford and Hatton. And we saw the clouds. We saw how it was shaping up. And then I remember one time that was way out when I was much older, my dad began to get things ready by the house there, so that see that the windows were down and the doors and the cellar door was closed. And I could see the clouds were just moving around. And we heard later that it had taken a church, and some buildings over by Western Lawrence were damaged.

We were very, very close to a tornado then, and also a hailstorm. I can remember a real bad hailstorm there. Hail was about as big as baseballs and it hit the house, made big dents in the siding of the house anyway, but it didn't destroy anything that I can remember. I don't think it even broke a window or anything.

Speaker 3: [inaudible 01:37:12].

Serena Bali: So, there was nothing, no experiencing a tornado. And of course at that time we didn't have radio so we didn't hear so much about tornadoes either. They didn't scan and warn us about it. At time my dad was the type who would watch the clouds and he would look in the Almanac and he would say, "Well, now, this planet has conjunction with that one, and the moon is so and so, and it's a full moon. We can expect this or that kind of weather," but there was no radios and there was no way of knowing what the weather would be, except just look at the clouds.

And before we went to Hatton or Northford to some of those trips we would always look at the ... to see if it looked like it was going to rain that day. That's all there was to that, and I'm amazed that he wasn't more cautious about it, to take the whole family like that, that far, and stay the whole day. As it is now the weather can turn up just in about an hour, and you had a change, but he didn't seem to be afraid of that part.

Speaker 3: When did you get your first radio?

Serena Bali: Oh, I think that was probably in about the year 1920 ... later '20's or early '30's, I think, when I bought that radio in Hatton when we lived in Hatton. We didn't have, on the farm they didn't, hardly anybody had a radio then. I can't remember who in our farm ... In fact, the first radio I ever heard was my landlord, where I attended high school in Northwood in 1923 I suppose it was. It wasn't my first year, but I went to Northwood that second year. First year I stayed with my grandmother, but there I stayed at a place where there a man was making radios, building them, putting them together and selling them. And at that time they had one of these horns. You know? They had receivers that they used most of the time and had to sit with a receiver if you wanted to hear the radio, but then he put them on with these big horns, and set up, and of course that was quite a treat with all the other radio in the room there.

That was my first experience with radio, in fact, because we hadn't had any there. And then it was through high school, when I graduated and started teaching in 1925. It was so rare even then, with radios out there in Grant County. And where I stayed near in [Lansing 01:39:58] North Dakota, the minister of that German church there had a radio in his home. And I remember he came over to us and he said, "I understand you're a ... you and ...", because I was with some other teachers in the neighborhood there, "You're teachers," he said, "in this community. I'd like to have you come over and visit us, and listen-

Section 4 of 4 [01:18:00 - 01:40:21]