

FLORENCE LAMON TSCHIRHART

MEMOIR

Alsatian Customs and Traditions

B16

## PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B in November of 1980. Deanna Hoffman transcribed the tape and Madeline Boubel was the interviewer and the editor of this transcript. The interview took place in Florence Tschirhart's home.

Florence Tschirhart was born April 7, 1911 in Castroville to Edward Lamon and Josephine Keller. Her mother died when she was thirteen years old. In 1930 Florence married Howard Tschirhart and they have lived here most of their married years. Florence, in this interview, talks about wedding traditions. She recalls a wedding when she was 8 years old where she served as ring bearer (Oscar Steubing and Lenora Haby), her own wedding to Howard, then her daughter, Jo Ann's, wedding to David Beck in 1953. The second part of the interview covers Christmas customs as Florence remembers them at home, her own traditions, and her daughter's customs. She compares the customs of today with the early day traditions.

Florence and Howard both worked in Castroville, Howard as a barber and Florence as a clerk in several stores. They both retired in 1970. In 1980 they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a special Mass, a large party and dance at Koenig Park. Howard and Florence have led wedding marches for many wedding dances in the Castroville area during the past twenty or more years.



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Tape # B16  
2 hours  
transcribed

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Today is November the 5th, 1980. This is Madelyn Boubel interviewing Florence Tschirhart at her home in Castroville, Texas. I am interviewing for the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B.

Q Florence, we're going to talk about several subjects today but before we start I'd like to get a little bit of your family background. What was your parents' names?

A Well, my father was Edward Lamon; my mother was Josephine Keller, by maiden name.

Q All right. And when were you born?

A I was born 1911.

Q And what day?

A 7th of April.

Q Where were you born?

A Up at the ranch.

Q Born at home.

A On the old Lamon ranch.

Q Do you have any brothers and sisters?

A I have two brothers and one sister.

Q And what are their names?

A Bertha is my sister's name. She lives in Houston. And Joe is my oldest brother's name, and Eddie is the youngest brother.

Q Okay now, the first subject we're going to cover is weddings. And I know when you were a young girl, I believe you told me about eight or nine years old, you were a

ringbearer. Is this correct? In my mother's wedding?

A Right, right.

Q You were ringbearer. Okay. Do you remember if mother, if they had a shower for my mother before the wedding?

A Not that I can recall.

Q Not that you can recall. Well, how did you find out that you were going to be this flowergirl? (sic)

A Well, your grandmother and grandfather used to come to visit us a whole lot because your grandmother -- was a sister to my daddy and about every other Sunday they would come to church in Castroville and they would bring their children along. They had two boys and one girl, and she kind of got attached to me I guess, and she asked whether I would be their ringbearer. And that's how I got in their wedding.

Q I see. Well, we better identify whose wedding we're talking about. We're speaking of Oscar Steubing and Lenora Haby. And the wedding took place on May the 20th in 1919. Okay. What kind of a dress did you have for this wedding?

A I had a little short dress, white shoes, we had big white bows in our hair. There were two little flower-girls and we were all dressed alike as far as I recall.

Q And what color was the dress?

A White, ours was white.



Q Okay. Now, what -- did you carry the wedding rings?

A Yes. I had a little basket and in this little basket was the little silk pillow, and we had the two rings pinned onto this little silk pillow.

Q Okay. Where did this wedding take place?

A At the Haby home in -- was it Rio Medina?

Q It was called Cliff at that time.

A All right. In Cliff and it was at their home and there was a big porch around their house, and it was built round but kind of in an L-shape and under that porch was the ceremony.

Q Well, what kind of decorations did they have?

A They had garden flowers cut out of their gardens and they had crepe paper draped in different ways, and as far as I recall it was a very pretty day, and they had lots of tables outside with decorations of crepe paper and wedding bells. Then already they had the same kind of wedding bells and decorations as we have today.

Q Well, you said this was held, the ceremony was held on the porch. Was there any kind of an altar or anything like this?

A Yes. There was an arrangement of -- an altar like and if I recall right there were two big baskets of flowers on either end of that.

Q Well, why was this -- excuse me -- what time of the day was this marriage held? Do you remember that?

A I really don't recall, but I think it must have been around in the afternoon about 2:00 o'clock.

Q Why was this wedding held at the house rather than in church?

A If I am not mistaken those days they had -- I don't know whether it was the law of the Church or not, but if one party was not a Catholic they had these weddings at home or they would have them in the church in the back of church rather than up front by the altar.

Q So then this was a mixed marriage.

A That's right.

Q Dad being a Lutheran and Mother was a Catholic.

A Yes.

Q Okay. Who married them?

A Seems to me like the priest come up there and had the ceremony. That must have been Father Hechmann, I'm sure.

Q Was this unusual for the priest to make a trip like that, that distance, or did -- was this done frequently?

A No, not really. They had more weddings like that. And then later on it got to where they could have 'em in the church.

Q Um-hum. Okay. How many bridesmaids were there? And groomsmen?

A There were three bridesmaids and three groomsmen.



Q Okay. What kind of dresses did the bridesmaids wear?

A If I recall right they were pink dresses and they were short dresses. Well -- well below the knee dresses, and they were a pale pink and the groomsmen those days, they just wore whatever suit they had. They didn't have nothing like they have these days.

Q They had pink dresses.

A Yes.

Q Do you -- I know I'm asking you a lot of questions that's hard for a -- when you were only eight years, maybe you can't remember, but the fabric, do you have any idea what kind of fabric it was?

A I sure don't. To me it was -- it wasn't taffeta or nothing like that. It was kind of a flimsy fabric like --

Q Sort of like voile or chiffon?

A Chiffon, something like that, I would say.

Q Did they wear hats?

A Yes.

Q Did the hats, were they the same color as the dresses?

A Yes. Them days they would just buy these forms, whatever you call it, and they would make their own hats.

Q In other words, like a hat form and cover it was a matching fabric?

A With a matching fabric or either a color of net. Perhaps it could be white or it could have been the same color the dress was. And too, them days everybody fixed their

own flowers. There were no bought flowers. Everybody'd go in the garden that morning early, cut fresh flowers, make your own bouquets, fix them up with -- everybody had lace ferns them days, and that was the real thing to fix your bouquets with, and that is what they all had. Now, the bridesmaids in this particular wedding did not have no flowers.

Q They didn't carry --

A They just kind of had a boutonir pinned on their shoulder.

Q Instead of carrying a bouquet.

A Right.

Q Okay. Now, was there a matron of honor?

A There was a matron of honor and she carried a big bouquet exactly the color of -- I don't recall, but seems to me that she had on a lavender kind of a dress to blend in with the pinks.

Q Okay. And with a matching hat also?

A Yes, she had a hat also.

Q Can you describe the bride's dress? Do you recall what that was like?

A Well, her bodice, I think she also made that herself and she had it fixed with a beautiful beaded top on it and it was ankle length and she wore high-heeled shoes and she had a beautiful veil fixed that she made herself, with beads and net, and little ribbon and she had a veil



fixed kind of in a fan shape kind of high around her face.

Q And the groom, what was his attire?

A Well, he just had on ordinary -- those days everybody wore blue serge suit. And if they had a blue serge suit they were dressed.

Q I see. To the best of your recollection did the bride and groom's parents, were they dressed in any special way for the day?

A Not in particular. They also just wore a suit like -- the Mr. Steubing, he wore a dark suit and the mother, Mrs. Steubing, she had on, if I recall, a light gray dress which they made themselves too, and she had some trimming on the skirt part like maybe a wide belt or something like that that was trimmed at the ends with tassels. They used a lot of tassels those days. And the Habys, Uncle Emil Haby and Aunt Lilly Haby, Uncle Emil had a gray suit if I recall right and Aunt Lilly had on a gray dress, a darker gray, and it also was made on the same order.

Q After the ceremony -- or can you describe the ceremony? Did you all come in a procession or how did everybody get to the altar?

A Yes, I recall that very well. They were in, the boys were in one room, the ladies were in another room. And when the ceremony started -- what music there was I

don't recall, but seems to me like Aunt Lilly had an organ, and there was one lady there that could play the organ very well and she played the organ inside the window, played the march, the wedding march, the boys come out one door and the girls come out the other door and they walked along this long porch around the corner 'til to where the ceremony was.

Q I bet that was pretty.

A It was.

Q Well, did Grampa Haby give mother away?

A Yes.

Q That was customary?

A Yes. He and your mother, they come in last like they still do, but all the rest were there waiting for 'em then.

Q Okay. Well, after the ceremony was over, then how soon after that did the reception start?

A Well, they did a lot of talking and visiting and congratulating, and the same order about like they still do, but it was more only a family affair those days.

Q I was going to ask about how many guests do you, can you sort of guess, I mean, you would say 50, 100, just an estimate.

A I would say about 100 maybe, because they had relatives and, I mean, they had a pretty big ceremony, I mean, and



celebration compared to them days, put it that way.

Q Did they have anything to drink? What kind of drinks --

A Oh, yes, We had beer too, them days, don't you know?  
They had beer and for the children they had these big  
crocks fixed with punch and probably lemonade. I don't  
know whether people knew what Koolaid was them days,  
but anyhow, they had punch for the children.

Q Do you recall what the meal was?

A Barbecue.

Q Barbecue?

A Barbecue.

Q Do you know who -- well, I know I'm asking you a lot  
of things that are probably hard for you to remember.  
Do you remember maybe who prepared all of this food?  
Do you have any idea?

A Well, those days usually the neighbors would come to  
your aid. You didn't hire or pay nobody to help you.  
One would help the other.

Q Um-hum. Can you recall what the wedding cake looked  
like? Or who baked it, maybe?

A I don't recall who baked it, but the wedding cake was  
just, well, nowadays it would possibly be a small cake,  
however it was oh, put it that way, a funnel-shaped  
cake, but it was a nice big cake, at that time. And  
they also had the decorations around it. Mainly them  
days with fresh flowers and ribbon.

Q Oh, around the --

A Around the cake. Oh, yes. They put this cake on a -- and then they had it on kind of a pedestal and they had that cake settin' right next to the tables where people eat.

Q Did they go to any extra work or anything to make these -- where did they have this reception? In the yard or in the house or where did it take place?

A In the yard, right next to this nice big porch where they had the ceremony. They put up cedar posts in the yard and they had tarps over them; they had a nice big tent and under that they had it all decorated with crepe paper, ribbons, and the tables were covered with crepe paper, ribbons, and the tables were covered them days mainly with plain white sheets; they would use sheets.

Q All right. Then after the wedding dinner was over, did they have a dance?

A No.

Q They didn't have a dance?

A Didn't have no dance. Perhaps they had just a little music at the house and did a little dancing on the porch. Now that I don't particularly recall, but --

Q What you're saying is they didn't have a dance like we have these days, but they might have had --

A Might have had music and danced at the house.

Q I suppose this is asking too much. Do you know if



Mother and Dad took a wedding trip of any kind afterwards?

A Now that I don't know. But them days too they didn't take a lot of pictures at the ceremonies. They took some but not -- but the bride and groom would always go to San Antonio and take their wedding picture.

Q Now when did they do this?

A Usually after the meal sometime. They would take an hour and a half or two hours, they'd go in there and they'd get that wedding picture made.

Q Do you recall that they did this also?

A Oh, yes, because they have a nice wedding picture.

Q So they left.

A They left and they went and had their picture made.

Q Well then in that length of time then the bride and groom were gone --

A They were gone, yes.

Q -- was there any celebrating going on?

A Well, beer-drinking and eating and chewing the rag, you know how everybody does (laughter).

Q But they kind of waited 'til they got back to --

A Oh, yes, well they weren't gone more than maybe hour and a half or something like that. They would just run in there and take their pictures and then --

Q Was there any studio in particular that took these pictures?

A Studers. Everybody went to Studers them days. So did we.

Q What about the Lewison Studio on Commerce Street? Did some people go there?

A Probably.

Q But Studers took a lot of --

A Studers usually.

Q Okay. Now, we're going to go to your wedding. Who did you marry, Florence, what is your husband's name?

A Howard Tschirhart.

Q Okay. Where did you meet Howard?

A Well, we were born and raised neighbors, you might say, possibly about two miles apart.

Q So you knew him all your young -- as a young person.

A Oh, yeah. He still says he remembers me, I was a little whitehead, hanging on the fenceline when he used to go to school, because he's seven and a half years older than I am (laughter).

Q About what age did you and Howard -- were you when you and Howard started dating seriously?

A I'd say about 17.

Q So he would have been about 24.

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q All right. How long did you and Howard go together before you --

A Two years.

Q -- before you married. Two years?



A A little better maybe.

Q Okay. How often did he come to see you to visit?

A Whenever he could borrow a car to come and see me, which was Burell, man by the name of Burell had a brand new touring Ford car, and he was an old man and he would always say his car would quit running, but them days them cars had these carburetors on it, the chokers, you know, and while they would choke 'em they would turn that choker and it would cut the gas off, so about every week or two he'd come to the barber shop and he'd tell Howard his car don't run no more. He would tell him to come and get the car so he could make it run again, so Howard would get his car and he'd come and see me. Maybe once or twice a week.

Q Pretty tricky!

A But he got the car to run again. Jack Burell was his name.

Q Okay. Did you do anything in particular on your dates, or did he just come to visit you at home?

A Mainly at home. And then on Sunday afternoon, usually Sunday around about noon or before noon he would come up to the house and after we had our noon meal why we would come down to his mother's house and them days young people would just get together; they'd go walking on the street or they'd sit in the yards and just talk, or maybe we played cards like pitch or something like

that. That was our only passtime. And later on he got his own car then, so we would on Sunday evenings maybe once a month is all you could afford to go, we'd go to the Majestic Theater in San Antonio. And Laura Brieden and Leonard Marty usually were the two that would go with us, and that was our biggest pleasure, to go in to the Majestic Theater on Sunday evening. Like I say, about once a month. And then when the show was over we'd go to the Pig Stand on Commerce Street and have us a Pig Sandwich. That was our enjoyment.

Q That was really --

A It was a treat.

Q It was a treat. Well, when did you decide to marry, then?

A Well, we got married then in 1930.

Q On what day?

A On the 29th of April. I was 19 years old on the 7th of April and on the 29th we got married.

Q Do you recall what day of the week that was?

A All weddings them days were on a Tuesday.

Q Do you have any idea why they were on Tuesdays?

A It was just the thing them days.

Q It was just --

A Tuesday was the wedding day.

Q Just a custom

A That's right.



Q I've never been able to find any one person yet that knows why Tuesday was the chosen day.

A Tuesday was wedding day.

Q Okay. So did you have any showers before the ceremony?

A Well, yes, I had a nice shower compared to what some others may have had; however, mine wasn't a very big shower, it was the aunts and it was at Howard's mother's house. She had a big room there and they decorated it then, his sisters and a few other friends, with crepe paper and things like that, and they would take one of these -- anyway that's what I had -- one of these big clothes hamper baskets, they were the straw basket, great big ones, and they decorated that with bows of crepe paper on each handle. Then they had two little girls, his youngest sister happened to be one of them, and they would put all the gifts in there and these two little girls would carry it in to the bride, which I was sitting in a decorated chair also. And when we opened, I had opened these gifts, and I never will forget his little sister said then, she was about six years old, Forence was her name, and she said, "It looks like everybody brought nothing but Pyrex plates." "And towels," she says.

Q Well, you said you got to sit in this decorated chair. Did the little girls dress in any special way?

A No. They just had on little dressy dresses.

Q Did Howard ask your father for -- to marry you?

A Well, uh --

Q Ask permission?

A Them days, you know, they -- well, I guess we're gonna get married. Well, you know, they expected it anyhow, so what?

Q Okay. Then, all right, you had the one shower and it was at your future mother-in-law's home. How many hostesses -- who gave you that shower?

A Well, like, a few friends perhaps, and then he had a couple of sisters like Alma and Corine, they were kind of grown up and they arranged these things. And them days they usually killed an old red hen and they had chicken salad sandwiches.

Q Right. Chicken salad sandwiches.

A That was the main treat at the showers.

Q Your refreshment.

A Oh, yes. And the sandwiches perhaps were made out of homemade bread, these great big loaves that grandma used to bake and they'd make sandwiches.

Q What about the drinks with that?

A They served tea or coffee.

Q How about cake?

A Oh, yes, they had cake. They had homemade cake, made from scratch, no box stuff.



Q It sounds like that was really a nice part of your wedding.

A It was, it was.

Q So you probably had about five or six people involved that put this shower on.

A Yes. There was a few neighbor ladies and things maybe that helped along with it too.

Q Well how many guests about, approximately?

A Well them days they just had the bridal party invited and then the aunts and maybe very close friends, but that's about as many as there were. I would say there were 35 people at the shower. There were a lot.

Q Okay. Did you have printed invitations you mailed out prior to your wedding? Did you mail out invitations?

A No. We wrote ours by hand.

Q You sent an invitation, but it was handwritten?

A Oh, yes, handwritten invitations.

Q Okay. All right. So you had the shower and you were going to be married on the 29th of April. Where did you get your wedding dress?

A Well, my wedding dress was a pretty wedding dress and my daddy took me into Kline's store on, is it Commerce or Houston Street, they're still there; I don't know what street it is. But anyway, there's where I go my wedding dress. And it cost \$19 and some cents, and it

was taffeta dress and it was long-waisted and it was shirred in the front, shirred in the back and shirred on both sides. The side was closed with hooks and eyes; no zipper, and it was long-waisted and from there on it was a gathered skirt on it 'til below my knees from there on it had lace -- we called it them days the Mexican lace -- and it was ankle-length.

Q Umm, sounds pretty.

A And, 'course, white shoes, white stockings, and that's the kind of dress mine was.

Q Did you have a veil?

A Oh, yes. My veil was third-handed. I wore that veil, the one that wore it first was Theresa Hans; she married Herbert Keller; and later on Fannie Hans wore it when she married Gabe. And then it got a little wore from carrying it around and it had a few holes here and there and my mother was dead, of course, I didn't have no help much on my side, so Mrs. Louis Schott, we always -- she said, "I'll fix this veil for you." And it was a beautiful thing; it was long, with a train two or three feet beyond my dressline, and so she went to Kress store, she bought some lace that had some, oh, two or three inches wide, had a rose design in it, she cut some of those roses out and she sewed them with little stitches on all these torn places or places where it was wore, and she fixed it up just beautiful for me.



And that was my veil, and I also had the crown, or whatever you call it, around my head, was also the same one that Theresa and Fannie wore. And we also dressed at her house, I did, and then the bridesmaids.

Q At whose house?

A At Aunt Molly Hans's.

Q What did your bridesmaids wear?

A They had pale yellow and their dresses were kind of a chiffon, thin material. And the bodice was a fitted bodice, and it was down to the waist, and from there on the skirt part was made with -- those days we called it the handkerchief skirt. It was perfectly square cut, great big squares. And these all come down to --- gathered, they were cut off at one corner when they were gathered to the waist and it ended up with six points in your hemline. And they were, the points then, well, I'd say they were kind of deep maybe, 12 inches from the point up to the other end, and that come down to about ankle-length also. And they carried, I think it was just one Easter Lilly in some lace fern. Like I said before, we all made our own arrangements of flowers, and I made my arrangement. It had I think eight or ten Easter Lillies fresh-cut out of the garden in April; they were blooming beautifully, and lace fern, and then we got the little bitty baby ribbons and ever so -- about three, oh, let's say six inches apart perhaps, we'd tie

a piece of lace fern in that little knot. That was the streamers on my bouquet.

Q Oh, I bet that was beautiful. I can just see it.

A That's the kind of arrangements we had with flowers.

Q Did the bridesmaids wear hats?

A No.

Q Did they have anything in their hair or on their head?

A Seems like they just had some kind of little flower or something stuck in their hair.

Q Was the -- where was your wedding held? What church?

A St. Louis Church.

Q And what time of the day was this?

A 9:00 o'clock in the morning.

Q Did you have any flower girls or ringbearers?

A No, but we all, them days, walked to church.

Q Oh.

A We didn't have the automobiles to drive us there, and we all walked from wherever we dressed, we walked to church. The girls come up one street -- may be three, four blocks you had to walk -- we had to walk from Aunt Molly Schott over to St. Louis Church. The boys dressed at Howard's house; they come walking up that street. And they would go back in church, in the sanctuary like they still do, and they'd wait for the bride and the attendants to come up the aisle.

Q Did you walk as a group or separately?



A The bridesmaids and the bride. We just all bunched up and walked.

Q But what I mean, the boys didn't walk with you?

A Oh, no, no, no. They come from a different place.

Q Was it customary that the groom not see you in your wedding dress?

A Right. He couldn't see you.

Q So, it was at 9:00 o'clock at St. Louis Church. Who was the priest that performed the ceremony?

A Father Lenzen.

Q Father Lenzen?

A Um-hum.

Q All right. After the mass -- wait a minute, let be back up here. Did you have a rehearsal before the wedding?

A Yes.

Q What day did that take place?

A What day?

Q What day. Was it the day --

A The day before the wedding.

Q After you had the rehearsal did you have any kind of a party or get-together?

A No. No. Nothing.

Q You just simply went there, you rehearsed --

A After the rehearsal we all went to Howard's mama's house. Then is when we fixed our flowers for the next

morning because church was at 9:00 o'clock already. So we fixed flowers until maybe 1:00 or 2:00 o'clock that morning, so they were nice and fresh we put two-three aspirins in a vase of water -- they told us do that and your flowers stayed nice and fresh -- so there they were. Next morning we had to take them out with rags. We would kind of dip the moisture off of the stems and all, and then we wrapped waxed paper around the bottom part of it. Then we put ribbon, maybe, around it.

Q So instead of having a rehearsal supper as has become customary, you went home and you were busy getting your flowers and things ready for the next day.

A Made our flower arrangements.

Q I see. Okay. After -- first of all, let me ask you, how many attendants did you have?

A Three. Three girls and three boys.

Q Three couples. But no ringbearer, no flower girl. How about a matron of honor?

A No.

Q Just three couples, okay. This was a Catholic wedding, so did the whole wedding party go to Communion?

A Yes.

Q Did you have to fast so you could go to Communion?

A Oh, yes.

Q From what time?

A From the night before at midnight.



Q And this meant doing without what?

A Water or food. That's why weddings were at 9:00 o'clock in the mornings.

Q After the ceremony, you came out of church, was there a reception line then after church?

A Perhaps.

Q Just congratulations?

A Yes, uh-huh. And then from there we also walked. It was just a block from where Howard's home was, and there is where we had our wedding dinner. And his mama prepared the dinner along with the help of some neighbor-ladies and maybe aunts or something.

Q Okay. After you walked out of church, after the ceremony was completed and you came out of church did you go to the priest's house to sign the register or any legal document?

A Yes, yes.

Q What -- did the alterboys do anything?

A Oh, yes. Definitely. They just wouldn't let you get out of that gate. They had a chain and a lock on it and they had you locked in that yard until everybody, the attendants, they'd reach in their pocket too, and give 'em perhaps, well maybe the groom gave 'em a dollar, but the attendants usually gave 'em 25 cents to 50 cents. They'd open the gate and let us out.

Q This is still a custom in Europe today.

A It is?

Q Uh-huh, yeah, it sure is. So you said your reception was held at your mother-in-law's home. What kind of food did she serve?

A Well, she had killed about five or six old hens and she made, she had chicken and dumplings and now, what all the rest was with it I don't know, but those days everybody baked homemade cake. The aunts would bring a cake and that was our -- and I also had a wedding cake, not a very big one, but just a small one, but we had wedding cakes too them days.

Q Who baked that?

A I think it was Mrs. August Mangold. Lena was her name, and she was the next-door neighbor to Howard's mother, and she said she'd bake the cake.

Q Can you describe it for me?

A It was just a round cake; again, just kind of a funnel-shaped cake like most everybody had them days.

Q Did it have a bride and groom on top?

A Yes.

Q Any kind of flowers around it?

A Garden flowers and ribbon.

Q What time did this reception start? What time of the day?

A Well, after -- the wedding was at 9:00 o'clock and then it would have been about 10:30 perhaps, or something --



well them days they believed in eating when the 12:00 o'clock bell rang, so we didn't have no breakfast that morning and we just, with all the excitement we managed to have it out until we had our chicken and dumplings.

Q Well, when did you leave the reception to have your picture taken?

A After we were through eating I would say 1:30 or 2:00 o'clock, and then we went to San Antonio -- then Howard already had a little Model T car, and Clarence Holzhaus and Howard's sister, they weren't married yet, but they took us in the car and drove us to San Antonio to take our wedding picture. We were back maybe an hour and a half, or two hours.

Q And what kind of drinks were served?

A Well, beer again, like usual. (laughter) But in them days most of the beer -- well, I think what we had was the home brew. Everybody made their home brew.

Q Was that during Prohibition? 1930?

A Yes, Uh-huh.

Q So it would have had to be home brew.

A Yes, yes, it was home brew.

Q Your reception wasn't at your home and I would -- do you think that that might have been because your mother wasn't living that it was at your in-laws', or it, was it customary sometimes to not, to be at either one's house?

A See, it was because I really didn't have nobody to help me on my side, and it was nice to have it there because it was right by church, put it that way. And they had a big family, like Howard had nine brothers and sisters, you know. There were ten in his family. And my sister at the time I got married, she was up north like in Pennsylvania or someplace; she wasn't here. But then my mother died when I was just 13 and then that, brother Joe was about seven, like I said, and Eddie was about three. So I really didn't have nobody to help me in that line. And Howard's mother and the neighbor ladies and the aunts and different ones, they all come to help, so it was really the place to have it because it was the handiest thing to do.

Q Here again, there's two questions I should have asked you earlier. Did the groom and the groomsmen just wear ordinary suits?

A Yes.

Q Not tuxedos and anything special?

A No, no, no, no. Everybody wore their best and that's what --

Q All right. And did your father give you away?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q All right. How long did your party last that day? The reception.

A Well, in those days people didn't have cars and things



like they do now, and we left the house the, I'd say about 7:00 or 7:30 in the evening, and then we all went up to Wernette's Garden. There they had a big dancehall and Howard had, I would say, four or five uncles; they were all musicians in them days; by ear, nobody could read a note, you know. They had a guitar, they had a violin, they had a flute, and maybe a drum, I don't know and we had a big dance that night. We danced until 3:00 o'clock next morning. It was a free-for-all then.

Q So you had a wedding dance.

A Oh, yes.

Q Well, did you have a wedding march first?

A No, we didn't know what marches were then.

Q Didn't have a wedding march?

A No.

Q Well, I'll say. Okay. So actually your wedding started at 9:00 o'clock in the morning and didn't end 'til about 3:00 or 4:00 the next morning.

A We danced 'til 3:00 o'clock.

Q And did you stay at the dance 'til it ended?

A Oh, yes, we were the last ones to leave.

Q (laughter) I like that. Did you go on a honeymoon then afterwards?

A No, no way. We had no money and we had no car good enough to take us anywhere. We went, we had two rooms rented from Howard's great-grandmother and next morning

he went to the barber shop.

Q Went to work.

A Went to work.

Q You know, but that was kind of, I think that was kind of neat how everybody helped and everybody did things like that. That was really nice.

A Oh, yes, yes. Didn't cost nothing but the old hens you killed. (laughter)

Q And a few cases of home brew.

A Yes, home brew, yes.

Q So now we have described a 1919 wedding that you were in, then a 1930, which was yours, now we're going to talk about your daughter's wedding. What is your daughter's name?

A Jo Ann.

Q And is she an only child?

A Only child.

Q All right. When did she -- what year did she get married, and what day?

A She got married in 1953.

Q And what day?

A On the 18th of October.

Q Okay. And who did Jo Ann marry?

A David Beck from Rio Medina.

Q All right. Do you know where David and Jo Ann met?



A Well, I guess by going to dances and parties and one thing and another.

Q How long did they date, or was their courtship before they got married?

A Oh, I would say maybe 18 months or something like that.

Q How often did he come to see her?

A Well, in the beginning he could come to visit maybe on weekends, but then later on he was in the Navy and he just got to come home whenever the Navy let him come home, so they got married during the time when he was in the Navy.

Q I see. Okay. I don't know if they told you this or not, but do you have any idea what they did when they went on dates as comparison to what you did?

A Well, those days they all had automobiles and they usually went to shows or they would go to dances or they would have parties, you know, around about the younger people, and --

Q Okay. They set the date as October the 18th, 1953. What day of the week was that?

A That was also on a -- no, they got married on a Sunday, got married on Sunday.

Q What was the reason for the change from the Tuesday wedding date to the Sunday in this particular case?

A Well, them days then most all of 'em got married on Sunday, but just exactly when it changed I have no idea.

Q Do you think that the reason it might have changed is because people had jobs at this day and time where when your marriage was that most people were rural? They didn't have a regular job that they always had to go to. They could get away from work.

A Not really, no, but I don't know. From then on or even before then, why, all the weddings seemed to have been on Sunday for a long time. And then later now, they changed to Friday or Saturday, most of 'em Saturday.

Q How long before this wedding took place did you, were you aware of it, and how long did you have time to plan?

A Oh, I would say six months or more perhaps.

Q Did Jo Ann have a large wedding?

A Too big. (laughter)

Q Too big? Okay. We'll get into that later. I'm getting ahead of myself here. They had the wedding planned, or the wedding date set. Prior to that did she have any showers?

A Oh, yes, she had several showers. She had a nice miscellaneous shower and she had a kitchen shower and she had a personal shower given by her, one of her, well her matron gave her that one.

Q Gave her the personal shower.

A Personal shower.

Q Okay. And you said a nice miscellaneous shower.

A Oh, yes.



Q How large was that approximately?

A Oh, there could have been around about 200 people I'd say. There were lots of aunts and relatives.

Q Those were guests?

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q How many hostesses were involved?

A Oh, I would say about 25 or 30 maybe, which them days was a big shower, or a lot of hostesses.

Q Where was this shower held?

A At the Parish Hall in Castroville.

Q What kind of food was served?

A Those days, if I recall right, I think they had chicken salad, a scoop, they used to have those ice cream measure scoops; they'd put one of those on a plate and they had saltine crackers and then cookies instead of cakes; they'd put cookies on the plate.

Q Was there any special type of decoration for, in the Parish Hall?

A They'd probably -- had some decorations of crepe paper streamers and maybe a wedding bell or two; I just don't recall exactly.

Q Did she open all of her gifts herself?

A All of them. She opened every one and as she opened them the guests were all sitting in a row on chairs, and it was passed from one guest to the other; took approximately two hours or more to get 'em all unwrapped.

Q What types of gifts did she get?

A She got very beautiful things. In those days they got a lot of bedsheets, pillowcases, and some -- she got a number of sets of pillowcases and sheets that were hand-embroidered, homemade sheets and pillowcases. If I recall she got about ten or 11 sets like that, let alone just the plain, and they got a lots of towels and dishes, well, pyrex dishes a lot, and then there was some cut glass and lots of different things like that that were very useful; potholders and all that.

Q Did she choose any particular pattern of silverware or dinnerware or glassware that might have been part of the gifts she got?

A She worked before she got married and she bought herself a set of stainless and paid for it herself, so she had that. But she did choose crystal and some china, and the china, the place setting, which consisted of five pieces, was \$5.90 a place setting, and she still has it in her glass closet, not using it for fear she might break a piece of it. (laughter)

Q Well, I know it's become customary now to do that, and I was trying to establish, did they do it as early as '53?

A Yes, um-hum.

Q Okay. The wedding rehearsal, when was this held? What day?



A Seems like the day before; Saturday evening.

Q Okay. Now, after the rehearsal was there any type of a party or a dinner?

A No, we didn't have no rehearsal party.

Q No rehearsal party?

A No.

Q Okay. What time of day was this wedding held?

A This wedding was also at 9:00 o'clock in the morning.

Q And where was it held?

A At St. Louis Church.

Q And who performed the ceremony?

A Father Schmidinsky.

Q Okay. The wedding you said was at 9:00 o'clock in the morning. Did the wedding party have to fast -- I'm sure they were all Catholics -- did they have to fast like you did in your wedding before they could go to communion?

A Yes, them days they still did.

Q From midnight --

A Right.

Q -- before. Okay. After the wedding was over, was it the alterboy custom still in being?

A Yes, um-hum. Sure was.

Q So can you describe what happened to them as in your case, your daughter?

A Well, after their wedding then they had quite a number of attendants, well more so than we did, but then from

after the ceremony they went over to the priest's house and there's where we all got our wedding certificates, you know, from the priest. So the same routine was when they come out -- but then we had this celebration up at the Koenig Park, that was then from oh, say, 10:30, maybe, in the morning 'til -- that night they had a dance then.

Q Okay. We're gonna -- 'scuse me -- we're gonna talk about that a little bit later on. I want to get into the clothes they wore and that type of thing first. All right? I probably should have done that before I asked so much about the wedding. What, can you describe Jo Ann's dress?

A Yes. It was kind of a V-shaped bodice, had a full skirt on it and Mrs. Jo Brieden sewed her dress and she also fixed her veil for her. She had a long train veil. And kind of a high headpiece, she had because she was much shorter than David was.

Q What was it made out of? What type of fabric?

A It was satin, white satin.

Q What kind of flowers did she carry?

A She had an arrangement of white carnations and fern, and well, those days they had their flowers already from the florist, you know.

Q So her bouquet came from the florist?

A Yes, uh-huh.



Q Okay. What -- how many bridesmaids did she have?

A She had five bridesmaids, well she had three bridesmaids and a matron and she had two junior bridesmaids.

Q What kind of, color dresses did they wear?

A They had orchid dresses with deep lavender velvet little capes over the shoulder part of it.

Q Did they wear anything in their hair?

A They just had a flower pinned in their hair.

Q What kind of bouquet did they carry.

A They had an arrangement of just carnation flowers too, and greenery, whatever was in that.

Q Any particular color? The flowers?

A They were yellow, the bridesmaids, yellow --

Q Oh, yellow and orchid or purple, um, I bet that was pretty.

A Um-hum.

Q What about the clothes that the groom and the groomsmen wore?

A They just wore suits.

Q Still just wore suits?

A Oh, yes.

Q Did the little junior bridesmaids wear the same type of dress as the bridesmaids?

A Same type of dress, uh-huh.

Q What kind of -- did you have flowers in church?

A Yes, they had big baskets of those stemmed flowers, uh --

Q Calla lillies maybe?

A No. Well, they had 'em arranged in baskets. Could have been different ones in there. I just don't exactly recall.

Q Okay. What did you wear?

A I had a gray suit with a skirt and a jacket. The jacket was also gray with navy-blue stripes in it. Believe it or not I still have it.

Q You do?

A Yes.

Q And Mr. Tschirhart, Howard?

A Oh, he had on a blue serge suit with a boutonniere on the shoulder and --

Q Did he give Jo Ann away during the wedding ceremony?

A Yes.

Q Where did Jo Ann and her attendants get dressed for this?

A At our house, right here.

Q And the groomsmen? (pause) Well, we ran out of tape and we were just talking about where David and his attendants dressed for the wedding. Would you repeat that for me?

A Where they dressed?

Q Um-hum.

A Well they dressed up at David's house at Rio Medina.

Q Okay. So we talked about their marriage, the clothes



they wore, and then about having to also pay the altar-boys to get through the gate, and did they take any pictures in church?

A Oh, yes, they took a number of pictures in church.

Q Who was the photographer?

A This Kilpatrick, I think he already took 'em then, uh-huh

--

Q So the custom then had changed from making the trip to San Antonio.

A Oh, yes.

Q And you had your photographer hired --

A To come here and take pictures, yes.

Q Okay. You told me earlier that the reception started at about approximately 10:30<sup>PM</sup>. How many guests were there?

A I would say about 750.

Q That's a big difference from 50 at your wedding, right?

A It sure was. And the pocketbook, too. (laughter)

Q And where was the reception held?

A At the Koenig Park.

Q And who, what kind of food did you serve?

A We had barbecue, beef barbecue. And there was a number of friends and, well, some were hired people. Those days you could get couples to come and do a big wedding for you for about \$5 apiece, and they worked all day . They made the barbecue and all that. But David's mother

and daddy, they furnished the beef, the meat for the barbecue, and of course then we had the potatoe salad and the cabbage slaw, pickles, bread, what goes with it, and the wedding cake, of course.

Q Who baked the wedding cake?

A Corine Mann, and it was in the shape of a prayer book, with a silver cross across it made out of silver beads, and, oh, it was a two-layer cake, but it was a great big one. And the bridegroom was a Navy man, of course, because at the time David was in the Navy, so --

Q Did he have a groom's cake? David?

A No, no, they only had one white cake.

Q So that was considered a cake for the couple.

A Yes, uh-huh.

Q All right. So what kind of drinks did you serve?

A Well, by the time they went home that night at 1:00 they had drank 18 half-barrels.

Q Of beer?

A Beer.

Q Wow. (laughter)

A Eighteen. They wanted to get another one but we said that was enough.

Q I would think so.

A (laughter)

Q You said that they, I believe you told me they had a dance.



A A dance, uh-huh.

Q What time did this start?

A Well, around about 8:00 o'clock, I guess, 'til --

Q Did they have a wedding march?

A They probably had a march, but I just don't recall whether --

Q And you wouldn't know who led it?

A No, uh-uh, no.

Q You probably had too many other things on your mind.

A Yes.

Q Okay. How long did this dance last?

A 'Til midnight.

Q Did the bride and groom stay 'til the end like you and Howard stayed at your wedding?

A They stayed 'til the dance was over, then they left after the dance and they went to Mexico somewhere, and just about between Christmas and New Years Howard and I bought a new little Plymouth car and it wasn't broke in yet, so in February David and Jo Ann broke it in going to Mexico on their wedding trip.

Q Oh, wonderful. Well, let me ask you this. You said they did stay 'til the end of the dance, but during the time the dance was going on did they leave and perhaps change their clothes?

A No, they didn't change into going-away clothes.

Q Didn't change into going-away clothes. Okay. Now, I

understand, in fact I know, because I was a guest, that you had a Golden Wedding not too long ago. In fact this year. What day was that held?

A That was held on the 27th of April.

Q Okay. And what day was your wedding date again?

A On the 19th.

Q Well, why did you choose the 27th of April?

A Because we couldn't get no reservations for the park for that particular day.

Q I see. Would you -- how long did you plan ahead for this Golden Wedding?

A At least six to eight months.

Q How many guests were invited?

A About 550.

Q So you'd increased your guestlist too, didn't you?

A Yes, we did.

Q Now, of the attendants that were in your wedding how many were here for your Golden Wedding?

A Five, there was only one that had passed on. That was Clarence Holzhaus.

Q Oh, I see. Well, did you all have any kind of a rehearsal the evening before?

A No.

Q What did you wear this time for this ceremony?

A For this I had a light blue dress, just a street-length dress, and Howard had a blue serge suit, and the



attendants wore just their Sunday best. We didn't want to go into big expenses for them or nothing like that, and have special clothes.

Q What day of the week was this April the 27th?

A On a Sunday.

Q On a Sunday. So you didn't -- did you have any flowers?

A For this Golden Wedding?

Q Um-hum.

A No. I carried my mother-in-law's golden rosary that she got from St. Ann's Society when she was in St. Ann's 50 years; they gave her a gold rosary, and that's what I carried.

Q Oh, that was nice. Did you have a church ceremony again?

A Oh, yes. We had a mass.

Q What time of the day did this take --

A Four o'clock in the evening.

Q It was, again, a Catholic ceremony. Did all of you take communion?

A Oh, yes. The nieces and nephews sang three or four different very beautiful songs in church, and they played the guitars.

Q Did you have to fast this time before you went to communion?

A No. Times have changed (laughter).

Q Times have changed from a 9:00 o'clock in the morning ceremony to a 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Who else participated in this ceremony this time in your Golden

Wedding?

A Well, we had all the ones there that were in our wedding except the one, like I said, and there was our daughter and her husband, Jo Ann and David, and there was the three grandchildren, Timmy, Becky and Terry. And then our sisters and brothers which were quite a number of them, and then close friends, aunts and uncles, first cousins and the second cousins.

Q I see. Did your family participate in the ceremony in church? Your daughter and husband and the children?

A Well, yes, they all walked down the aisle with us to the front of the church. Communion, they all taken communion and most everybody that was there went to communion; it was very beautiful.

Q Did you have any photos made of all of this?

A Oh, yes. Quite a number.

Q Who was the photographer?

A Jay Arthur. A boy that was just out of high school shortly here; he made a beautiful job of it.

Q Did he take photos in church?

A In church and afterwards and at the reception.

Q At the reception what kind of food was served?

A We had it catered from San Antonio and it consisted of half a barbecued chicken on a plate, potatoe salad and cabbage slaw, pickles, bread, and then of course the cake. This time we had a cake for the bride and we had a



chocolate cake for the groom. So and that was decorated in barber shop tools. We had the scissors and the barber pole and the comb and what-have-you on the brown cake.

Q Why was it decorated in this manner?

A Because Howard was barber for 45 years.

Q Okay. Good.

A And I worked at the stores and at the drugstore for 33 years. Then when he sold the barber shop in 1970 I didn't see why I should work no more if he could quit, so I quit too.

Q Good thinking. (laughter) One more time. What kind of drinks were served at this party?

A At this party.

Q At this Golden Wedding.

A Well, let's see, there was about six half-barrels served from say about 5:00 o'clock 'til 8:00 o'clock and from then on when the dance started everybody bought their own drinks in the hall from the St. Louis Parish, which they took the benefit of selling the drinks and things after that time.

Q Did you have a -- oh, you just said when the dance started, okay. Who played the music for your dance?

A The Jeff Thompson music orchestra.

Q So you, for this dance, you hired --

A Yes, we hired our -- yes. 'Cause all the old uncles that played the first time, they weren't no more, so --

Q Well I would imagine that at your daughter's wedding you had a hired band also, right?

A Yes, uh-huh, but I just don't recall who it was.

Q Well, okay. Did you have a wedding march this time?

A Oh, definitely. That was about the, oh, I'd say about the 45th or 50th march that we've led. We've been leading marches for years already and that was the thing. We were very concerned about, to keep up our wedding march until our 50th wedding and we did it.

Q So you led your own wedding march.

A Golden wedding march.

Q That's beautiful. That's great. How did you get started doing this?

A Oh, well I don't know. Seems like at Quihi several years ago, at the Quihi Gun Club, they had the free barbecue for the Quihi Club members, and that night they decided that a march would be nice. And why Howard and I were asked to lead it we don't know, but that's how we started. That was our first march we ever led. That one didn't turn out so good, but as we went on they got better.

Q Now, do you have a plan you follow now for every -- each one the same.

A Yes, about the same. Of course Howard, he usually watches where I go and he goes the same course.

Q So you really are actually leading.



A Yes, uh-huh.

Q Okay. Now, I understand -- okay, one more question. How long did, how long did this dance last for your wedding?

A Well --

Q Golden Wedding.

A It was Sunday evening and a lot of people left say about 11:00 o'clock, 11:30, so about 11:30 that night there weren't but maybe eight or ten couples there, and then is when we told the orchestra, well, it was enough for that evening, for old people. (laughter)

Q Well that was really nice, to be able to do that after --

A But we have to really give the credit to the daughter and the son-in-law and the grandkids, 'cause they're really the ones that worked hard to have this, and we do appreciate it.

Q I'm sure you do. Well, I'm sure they were happy to do it. I understand one of your grandsons is going to be marrying next year?

A Yes. Timmy has told us that he has set his wedding date for next year in October. He would have like to have the 18th of October which is his mama and daddy's wedding day; also his grandma and grampa Lamon's wedding day, great grandma and grampa, but he couldn't get that special date because this day and time you have to plan about a year ahead before you can get the dates you want.

Q That's right. So there's already preparation beginning for this wedding --

A Uh-huh, yes. And the deposit for the park is already down to have that certain date.

Q Well -- and what size wedding do you think this one's going to be.

A Oh, I hate to think about it. Like my daughter said, "Mother, don't throw the list away you made for your Golden Wedding because we have to follow that partly at least, so it'll be a pretty good-sized one, I would say. Seven-eight hundred or more.

Q I guess everybody's looking forward to it.

A Oh, I'm sure. You know, you can't miss nobody anymore at the weddings.

Q This has been just wonderful, these descriptions of these weddings, and it's brought us through three generations plus then your Golden Wedding. I kind of hate to get into another subject, but I -- another one of my subjects I'm supposed to speak on is Christmas. And now, Christmas, we're gonna talk about Christmas in your childhood. Madelyn Boubel, speaking to Florence Tschirhart on November 5th, 1980, at her home in Castroville, Texas, interviewing for the Castroville Public Library Oral History Project B.

Q What type of a tree did you have?

A Always cedar.



Q And did -- who got the Christmas tree?

A Daddy would cut in in our pastureland.

Q Did you as children ever go with him?

A Sometime we did, bring it home in the wagon.

Q How far ahead of Christmas day did he get this tree?

A Just maybe two or three days.

Q And where did you put the Christmas tree?

A Well, he usually had a big five-gallon can and he'd fill it with rocks and set the tree right in the middle; put a little water in there, would keep the tree fresh.

Q Was there any particular spot in the house that the tree was set up?

A In our big bedroom, which had a fireplace in it, and right in the middle of the room. It was possibly about 24 feet long by 12 or 14 feet wide. It was a very big room. Right in the center.

Q Okay. When was this tree decorated?

A Never before Christmas Eve day.

Q Who decorated the tree?

A Mother would decorate the tree and she'd go in there and she'd close the door and she'd probably put a little piece of paper or something in the keyhole from the other side where she was so we couldn't be peeping all day. She told us she had to go in there and help Santa Claus trim the tree. Of course, if we'd get a chance to peep we would but we never could see Santa Claus in

there, and three-four days before Mother would always bake the cookies and we had fruit, the apples, she'd always choose the apples with a nice stem, and she'd put a string on it, and the oranges, she'd take a big long needle and stick it through the orange to hang on the tree, and the cookies, she had all shapes of cookies cutters, and they were homemade ones. Bill Foos made them in his tin shop. She had one shaped a horse, and a fish, a pig, a star, a heart, and one was a great big one, a peacock. And that approximately was about eight inches long and it set about five inches high, I guess, but it was a perfect peacock, and all those cookies she would bake and then she'd put powdered sugar on 'em and trim 'em with the little Christmas candles, some was sugar, red and green, and different colors, and then some were the little beads they could buy in little packages. And when she had her powdered sugar on there why she'd put these little beads and would decorate it; would put the eyes in place and all things like that. She'd put her string on these cookies and that was our tree decorations.

Q Did you string popcorn?

A No, I don't recall that we ever strung popcorn. Now some people already did in those days, but we never did.

Q You had apples and oranges and the cookies.



A And the cookies, and it was so, you'd walk in the room and that smell was just the thing for Christmas.

Q Did it have any lighting of any kind?

A Yes, we had candles; each little candle was in a little candleholder with a little clip on it, and you would clip that onto the branch. And we were never but never allowed to light one of them candles unless daddy and mother were right there with us. Usually in the evening for, say, about a week, we were allowed to light the candles, and they were taken off because the tree was getting dry and it was too much danger of fire.

Q Did the wax from the candles add to the smell of the --

A Oh, yes, oh, yes, and especially when you put your candle out you could smell that.

Q So you did, you weren't allowed to help decorate the tree. When did you get to see the Christmas tree?

A Well, kind of late in the evening on Christmas Eve when we were through with all our chores, because at the time we had dairy cows to milk and we seperated our milk and had to do all our work and then Daddy would say, he'd go out, and he'd say he's gonna go close the henhouse, but instead he'd have a little whistle or either he would whistle by the corner of the house and we all got excited, "Santa Claus blew the whistle. Now he left; we can go in and see our tree." And we knew every year about what we would get. I knew every year what I got

was a 25 cent set of tin dishes, which they bought at Tondre's Store in Castroville. And the dolls, well we never had bought dolls much; Mother usually would make us some out of socks from Dad's socks, you know, she'd maybe buy a new pair and those days you could buy those nice heavy cotton socks; they had the white heel and toe, and they were gray, and she'd embroider eyes and the mouth and the nose on 'em and she'd stuff them with cotton and those were our dolls.

Q And that is -- that's the cutest idea, those stuffed dolls out of a sock.

A Right. Those socks were gray and then they had a white heel and a toe part on it, and that's how she made our dolls.

Q Well, did she attach arms or something?

A Oh, yes, yes.

Q And legs?

A And she'd take, she'd make this doll out of one sock and then the second sock she'd cut through the center and those were the arms and the legs. And the tip, the foot part would be the hand, and the white part of it then was your hand, and then the other part was the feet. And once in a while she'd fix little shoes yet to put on the foot part.

Q Oh, how cute. Did she put anything on 'em for hair?

A Not that I recall.



Q Just a bonnet or something on the head, or what?

A Well, sometime they'd put bonnets on and then again sometime they'd have like yarn and they'd string yarn or either plait yarn and put it on the doll head like that.

Q For braids.

A For braids, with a little ribbon in it or something.

Q So you got this homemade doll and a 25 cent --

A Set of tin dishes, always tin dishes.

Q What about the boys, what did they get?

A Well, the boys, they usually got like a ball and maybe a little baseball bat perhaps, and most of their balls were made out of store twine; those days you didn't buy too much in the line of toys, and everything you bought in the stores was tied with twine, no scotch tape and all this like we have this day and time, and they would put this twine on -- perhaps the center was a piece of a corncob and they'd just keep on adding this store twine; pull it real tight, and make the best baseball. If you hit somebody with it it would hurt, because it was a hard ball.

Q Well, I'll say.

A That was our balls we had.

Q You said this was in the evening after the chores were done and that's on Christmas Eve evening. Did you give your parents gifts?

A No.

Q It was only from Santa Claus to the children?

A Santa Claus to the children.

Q I see.

A That was just what Santa Claus left under the tree.

Q Did you ever attend midnight Mass then?

A Oh, no, 'cause we had just horse and buggy and the weather was usually cold and all; we didn't know nothing about -- did they have the midnight masses then? I don't recall.

Q I don't know.

A I just can't recall that. But we would go to church on Christmas Day and we had to go to church every Sunday. Hitch up the horse and buggy and we'd go to, usually 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock Mass, whatever time church was at that time.

Q I said I don't know but I do know that Tillie Noonan told me that they had midnight mass when she was a kid, but she didn't get to go because she was too little; the older children went.

A I see.

Q Now, did you follow this same procedure with Jo Ann, your daughter as far as the Christmas tree was concerned?

A Yes, we tried to, but then as time went on people started fixing trees perhaps a week before Christmas and by the time Christmas comes Christmas is old to people the



way they do now. And then when Jo Ann was a little girl we already could buy ornaments to put on the tree, but we still put fruit on and baked our cookies and things like that, which really made the old-fashioned Christmas.

Q I agree. But by -- what you're saying is by this time some people were putting their trees up ahead so it was kind of hard to convince a kid that Santa Claus was gonna put their tree --

A Right, Santa Claus made the tree, yes. No, this day and time they don't do it all anymore like we grew up with.

Q What type of toys did Jo Ann get in comparison to the ones you got?

A Well, when Jo Ann was a little girl we didn't have the means to buy toys and so Howard usually built her, he built the nicest little set of table and chairs out of apple crates and when Jo Ann would go to school or when she'd go to bed at night we would paint those little things and he also built her a little old-fashioned kitchen cabinet with two drawers on the bottom and two shelves on top and opening in the middle and the little knobs he would take the little thread spool and put a screw through the middle for the knob on the cabinets and he would sand it, we'd sand it with sandpaper by hand and then we'd paint it with enamel paint, it was a pretty blue we painted it, I remember that so well.

Q So she had things that were made by --

A Hand-made, yes.

Q -- you two.

A And by then you could buy the little china dishes, she had several sets of the china dishes; also tin, they still had tin dishes, but she had several sets of the little china dishes.

Q Did she ever get any dolls?

A Oh, yes, them days you could already buy the dolls and some were bigger dolls and some were smaller; of course, when they were smaller they liked the little baby dolls, and then when she got to be about perhaps 6-7 years old we bought her a little rocking chair and then they could rock the dolls and things like that. Which I don't know if they do nowadays anymore.

Q Probably don't have time, they're so busy wanting to grow up too fast.

A That's right.

Q So she, you still made things for her but then it was kind of hard to continue this tradition of keeping the tree hidden and some of the things you were starting to get. -- you were giving her you were buying.

A Right.

Q Okay. Now, what about her children?

A Oh, well, her children, they were brought up in a different world.



Q So we're talking about 19, oh, say '20, with you and 1937 or '38 with her and now to past 1953 with her children. What type of Christmas do they have in comparison?

A Well, they have Christmas and more Christmas. They always had three and four and five packages, expensive packages perhaps, like jewelry, clothes, jewelry boxes or leather jackets and as they grew older they wanted more in the clothes line. But when they were little I used to work in the drugstore and I remember three or four years there in succession when they were still little I spent a lot of money on those 98 cent plastic toys like the little cork guns and, oh, tops, maybe, and rubber balls and baseball hats, and there was just nothing that they didn't have as long as I worked and that we could afford to get it for 'em, and David and Jo Ann would buy a lot of things for 'em too, and now their tree for several years already, they have made their own ornaments like using old beads and decorating the styrofoam balls and one year they had a tree made out of that and most of the time they had the artificial tree. And one year or so they fixed a tree with different color velvet bows on it.

Q You were saying they decorated a tree with velvet bows?

A Um-hum.

Q Could you describe that?

A Different colored velvet bows. They would just tie a

bow with a velvet ribbon and then put a little string, a little gold or silver string on it and then hang it over a branch, makes a beautiful tree. Then they had these colored spotlights they put on the floor which reflects the green, the red and the yellow light on the tree, and it revolves and gives it the different colors. And they had their trees by the big window so it can be seen from the street most everywhere. And as her children grew up she always had a beautiful yard decoration at Christmastime and she took several first prizes from the Garden Club and different ones that gave prizes for outdoor decorations. And I remember one year when they were little and she had three big dolls she fixed and the littlest one, the little boy doll, he was Terry, and he was up on a stepladder, and Timmy, he was on the bottom of the stepladder and Becky, she was sitting with a little rocking chair in the yard holding her doll, and she had this big spotlight on 'em and she took first prize for her yard scene that year. And different scenes that she's made already and they make these nice door decorations out of the styrofoam, different things like the keys and all such as that.

Q So instead of baking things and putting oranges and going through all of that with decorating the tree, there's a lot of time spent on different types of decorations for Christmas.



A Um-hum.

Q Well, that's a good comparison of three Christmases, really.

A Oh, yes, it is, it's so different now compared to what we grew up with.

Q Which do you think is the nicer if you'd have your choice?

A Well, I've often said that I think it would just be beautiful to have an old-fashioned tree with the cookies, the decorated cookies and the fruit and the smell you get from that fruit. But then again, our fruit is not what it used to be. We used to have fruit that had a scent, a smell to it. This fruit we have nowadays, it's picked green and it just don't put off that nice smell anymore.

Q That's true.

A It don't. It just, it's picked green and then when it ripens it's just past that stage.

Q You mentioned that your mother made cookies for the Christmas tree; what kind of cookie was that? What dough?

A Well, it was a plain sugar cookie, both then usually for that purpose to put on the tree they would add quite a bit of flour to make it hold better because they would put it up with a string or thread or some kind of twine, and after the cookie was baked, why they'd let it cool and they'd fix themselves a powdered sugar and sometime

they would color this icing and then sometime they just left it white, but they would use the colored sugar and the little bitty beads those days, they had those already, and they were in different colors and they would use some of the bigger ones for the eye part and use 'em in a different way.

Q Were they candy? Those little beads?

A Yes, uh-huh, they were candy, and they were sugar, the colored sugar was sweet sugar like any other kind.

Q Well, was there any other kind of cookie that your mother baked every year?

A Well, there was one particular one that she always made, and it was the gingerbread man. And she had -- didn't have no cutter for that particular one, but she fixed herself, she cut herself a cardboard pattern, and she would lay that cardboard on her rolled dough and she would just go around that with a sharp knife and cut out her gingerbread man. And then she baked different kinds of cookies like the fruit cookie and the old-fashioned molasses cookies which we always had quite a bit of molasses, 'cause we'd make our own those days. And those were usually our main cookies for the holiday seasons.

Q You said the old-fashioned molasses cookies. How many would that be when she got through baking that recipe?

A Well, at that time of the year, you know, usually everything was doubled and I would say it was at least 100



or maybe 150 of those. And then they were put into a tight jar and they would stay nicely in there.

Q Did she ever use the tin cans, the old lard buckets for storage for any of those cookies?

A Oh, yes, those days a lot of things come in the tin gallon cans with the tight-fitting lid and then some things were in the half-gallon cans and they used those for storage.

Q Well, when did she start baking? How far ahead, to get ready?

A Well, usually in the wood stove it would take a little longer than what it does now, but they would sometime bake maybe eight or ten days before Christmastime. And then when the cookies were good and cold they usually, when they took 'em out of the oven they would take a spatula and lay them on a nice white towel or something until they were good and cold. We didn't have these wire racks like they have now either to cool things on.

Q Cooled 'em on a white cloth.

A White cloth, uh-huh.

Q Did she make fruit cake?

A Well, they usually made cake, a loaf cake, but they mainly had just pecans in there and sometime they would buy a little bottle of cherries or something like that, but they didn't go all into this fruit that they have nowadays.

Q It was just the three kinds; the sugar cookies, fruit cookies and molasses cookies.

A Right.

Q All right. Were there any other kinds of foods, sausages or anything like that, that you looked forward to for around Christmas?

A Well, the sausage really was nothing new but then that was our main food we had. We had our sausage every wintertime and of course then we raised our own chickens and we had a stuffed hen maybe for Christmas or New Years or some other day, and, but we didn't know nothing about cranberry sauce or buying cranberries and things like that. That was not on the table in those days.

Q And you didn't necessarily have turkey, either, just what --

A No. Once in awhile we would have turkey but then we didn't have these big come-together celebrations. Seems like those years each family was to themselves. They had a family of their own, well, they just had their family and that was it. People stayed at home and had their Christmas.

Q Do you still make any of these cookies today that your mother made?

A Definitely. I still use the old recipes. I have my sugar cookie recipe and then I have another one that's a white cookie too. It's called the snicker doodle,



and out of that same dough I make my uh, oh, can't think of the name now, put different flavorings in there. You can put most anything in that sugar cookie recipe. Like anise oil. Now I make my anise cookies out of that. Now, there's lot of people have, we never had none, but my mother-in-law had one of those little boards you would press on the anise cookies and make those nice designs on it, and of late I've seen a lot of those in the stores, they now again have 'em to sell, but then some of these older people -- and now too they have those again, the rolling pin that you just roll over your dough after you have it rolled out on the table or on your board and they just roll that rolling pin over it and makes nice designs on your cookies. You just cut each one then, they're kind of in a square, cut each one with a knife and that was your cookie then.

Q I was going to ask you if you all made anise cookies. Did your mother just make her anise cookie dough and just bake 'em right away or did she put 'em in the sun, like I've heard some people --

A Those days she'd just make them and bake the, but now I have heard of different ones that would make them and put them in the sun. But you had to have a nice clear sunshiny afternoon, and you'd put 'em in the sun for half a day and then you would bake 'em and they'd just kind of rise up like little pillows over the top.

Q Is that why they put 'em in the sun, to make 'em get that puffy effect?

A I have an idea; I really don't know why else they put them in the sun. But the dough for that particular cookie, I think it's made up pretty firm, just like the sugar cookie that we used to put on the Christmas tree.

Q Did you make any special kinds of breads or sweets or anything for New Years?

A Oh, yes. We had our New Years bread every year and that was a tradition every year, and I still make it. I have never missed one year making my New Years bread.

Q Is that right?

A Of course, I use it for rolls or New Years bread or any time, any other time of the year I just say my sweet bread, so -- my grandsons say, "Nanny, it can be ate any time of the year, it don't have to be New Years."

Q Well, do you have any special designs you make this bread into?

A Well, some I do. Some I put into a little loaf pan perhaps and then some I have, you just take three stripes of dough and you just fix you a nice -- you plait it, you can make a long loaf out of it, plait it like that, or you can either plait you a bunch of dough like that and then make a holly wreath out of it. You turn it and make a ring out of it, more or less. And it's made with yeast and now we buy the yeast out of the stores,



but we used to have our own home made yeast which -- the older people would start with the sour dough. They would have -- some would keep their sour dough in fruit jars and everytime they'd take so many spoons of that sour dough or a cup or whatever they were going to use out, they would add another three or four tablespoons of flour and perhaps another spoon or two of sugar and stir it up again and then they'd just leave it set out and that sour dough, it would be really sour 'til their next batch, whenever they wanted to bake homemade bread or this particular sweet bread.

Q It would ferment in the jar and then it was like the yeast --

A It would just keep on going. And then in our days most of 'em went to making their own yeast cake. They took cornmeal and put it into this sour dough and they would make it kind of like a cookie dough and they would just make a round roll out of it and they would cut this then with this cornmeal; they'd make it pretty firm, the dough. They would cut it into about a fourth of an inch thick slices, and these would be about, oh, you would take -- and these then they would let dry. They would just lay 'em on a board and just lay 'em in the sun until they were good and dry. Maybe it would take -- depended on the weather -- maybe it would take six, eight, ten days to make 'em, let 'em dry real good. And then when they were dried real good they could fill 'em

into a jar or something and keep 'em. And everytime they would want to bake they would just get a couple or whatever they needed of these yeasts and use them for their dough. And when we made this sweet bread or when we make it still now, we mix our dough and we let it rise for perhaps an hour, hour and a half, and then we take it back on the table and knead it and we shape it into however we want it, and then we let it rise again and put it in the oven about 350 degrees hot, and we bake it, and when it is oh, just about done, then we beat up an egg and mix a little bit of milk in it, the yolk in the yellow, beat it up and put a little milk in it, and I have a little pastry brush, and you just brush over the top of that and put it back in the oven maybe two or three minutes, because your sweet bread is no hot that actually it just cooks that while you're putting it on, but you put it back in the oven about two or three minutes, and then you take it out and you have the nicest glaze over the top.

Q Is that how you get that glaze on there?

A That's how you get that glaze on there.

Q The yellow and the white and a little mix. milk.

A Oh, yes. You beat that up and you just put about two tablespoons of milk in there, take a little pastry brush and you brush it over the top.

Q Um-hum. I remember seeing that, but I didn't know how --



A Oh, I never fail. I make that quite often through the years. I just -- and I also use it for my sweet rolls. I take that same dough or -- and I put it on the table and roll it out and then I melt a little oleo or butter, and I take my pastry brush and I just cover the whole spread of dough with that and I take cinnamon and sugar and sprinkle it over that and sometime I put chopped pecans in it. Sometime I put raisins in there. And then I just roll it up into a roll and I just cut my rolls about inch and a half thick, put it in a pan, let 'em rise, and that's the sweet roll.

Q Yeah. Was it ever a tradition as far as you remember to bake these little braided pieces of New Years bread and give 'em to anyone, maybe your godchildren or something like that?

A That used to be the tradition, that used to be. They would, when they had godparents or something, usually that was something the godparent would give to the child at Christmastime, along with maybe a little pair of socks or a little pair of gloves or whatever they gave. Perhaps just two or three lead pencils for school if they were school age or things like that. That was about as far as our Christmas gifts went from the godparents.

Q But the godparents did give something?

A Oh, yes, uh-huh. And then as for candy, they usually

had the peppermint stick candy that they would get. Then later on they got to where they would have these bigger sticks of peppermint candy you know, the candy canes and different things like that.

Q The recipe you're using for your New Years bread, is that, does that come from your mother or not?

A Well, really, the one I have I think I got from the mother-in-law, from Howard's mother. She, well, they were a big family and she did a lot of that baking, so I really got the recipe from her. The one I now have. But these older people, most all of 'em had about the same recipe that they went by.

Q You mentioned having this sour dough to bake bread. How did you start that sour dough?

A Well, I don't know that they ever really run out with it. You know, I remember, we were neighbors to the Fitz Droitcourts, and we had the DeMontels for neighbors and the old Mr. and Mrs. Joe Mann, and I remember many a time when we would go visiting of an evening, one would ask the other one, "Oh, I'm just about out of yeast. Could you borrow me one or two?" How they ever got it started I don't know. One handed it down to another and if one seemed to run out well there was three-four neighbors that would start you off again with a new batch.

Q I remember that too with mother, but I never could find out who started the first one, you know.



A This is true, but now you know, I just read in the paper in Eloise's column, in fact, I read it, where you can start you some sour dough in the bottle with this bought yeast now, but you should have the cake and not the dry and you can start your sour dough in a bottle. Oh, well, we always made all our home made bread, we didn't have our home made bread we baked corn bread and we'd bake biscuits and that was always on the table every meal. We never knew what it was to buy bread, not at all.

Q Does, did St. Nicholas Day mean a lot to you all --

A Oh, definitely, but we'd always get, we'd hang up one of Daddy's socks, but then later on we wised up on that. We got one of Mother's long cotton stockings because it held more. We'd put it out on the wash line.

Q Oh, you put 'em on the wash line.

A Oh, yes. Well, you know, we always had fire in the fireplace and we couldn't afford to put it there because we didn't want it to burn up, you know. (laughter) So we went out and we hung it on the wash line and put two or three clothes pins on each stocking or sock, whatever we hung out and St. Nick would always bring up apples, oranges and pecans that perhaps we picked up ourselves in the pecan grove, but nevertheless, we had 'em for St. Nick. (laughter)

Q What time of the day did you hang these stockings, and

when did St. Nicholas come?

A Oh, never before it got dark, because, you know, he wouldn't show up, and then usually my Daddy had some hound dogs, you know, and first Daddy had to chain them up before we'd dare put a stocking on the wash line, because sometime he'd put candy in there and cookies, and you know, with dogs around you couldn't very well take the chance. (laughter)

Q Do you have any idea what the tradition of St. Nick's meant, how this got started with hanging the sock out or the stocking?

A I have no idea. From little girl on that was the way they did. St. Nicholas would come on the, well some said the 5th and some said the 6th. When we were school-age we'd get to school the next morning they'd say, "What'd you get from St. Nick?" "Oh, I forgot to hand my stocking out. Well, I'll hang it out tonight."

Q And he still came.

A Okay. He still came the next night then.

Q Did you ever hear this story? Did this ever happen? That sometimes there would be men dressed like in a Santa Claus suit and they'd come around to check on you to see if you had been good or that this was St. Nick, would be checking on his trip to see if you were going to be good for Christmas?

A In our days we didn't have too much Santa Claus playing



going on, but there was, it was usually, he usually wore a heavy overcoat and a pair of black boots and usually had something over the face more or less, like a stocking or something like that, you know, but -- and gloves on, but we didn't have too much of that in our days.

Q He didn't come in the traditional red suit, huh?

A No, no, no.

Q Well, I'll say. That's the first time I've heard that.

A We only seen more or less pictures of him, you know. Then when our daughter -- I mean those days, then the Santa Clauses, they would come and they'd go from house to house, you know, they'd make their visits, and in fact, my husband Howard, he played -- he was Santa Claus a many a time, you know. He would have a lot of fun going and doing like you say, "Have you been good or bad," and everybody was good, you know, you hardly found a bad one. (laughter)

Q No, I guess not (laughter).

A And they would sing, they would ask 'em if they could sing. And they would sing Holy Night and all those.

Q Oh, the children had to perform?

A Oh, yes, they would have to sing. If they had a leader to pull 'em through they could sing, but it took 'em a little while 'til they could started, you know. Some were pretty startled about seeing Santa Claus there.

Q I bet he did have fun doing that.

A He did.

Q I can just see that. Well, I believe we've covered the foods and everything pretty well, and the weddings, so I think we'll end the interview, which I think has been quite good, and you will get a copy of these tapes for your time. And thank you.

A Thank you.



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Florence Tschirhart  
Interviewee's signature

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