

Transcript of Oral History Tape 94 Transcribed by Patty Rivera 01/17/04.

Interview with August A. Herbst Sr. on August 1, 1978.

Interviewer: Jerrold Gustafson and Bernice Tolchinsky.

Gustafson: Uh this is an interview with August Herbst on August 1, 1978. Uh others present - Mrs. Herbst and interviewers were Jerrold Gustafson and Bernice Tolchinsky.

Herbst: Oh yes. It's there now.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: And then the old...what they call the old Haypike Road which is straight now but it wasn't then. They had to go around the swamp. And they...when my grandfather was the county superintendent...[indecipherable]...Starke County and they laid that road with logs across that marsh. They...[indecipherable]... And uh...uh...Bob Berg (?sp) about ten years ago dug through that road and them logs were just as solid as...[indecipherable]...put in there. They sunk in that mud and uh...and just...he had an awful time getting through there to put a...to put a tile through...culvert. And he had an awful time diggin' them logs out with a drag line.

Gustafson: How long did they use that road?

Herbst: Uh...why did...why did they use it?

Gustafson: Yeah why did they put it through there?

Herbst: Well it...to make it straight. It was a county road.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: And...and...it's...[indecipherable]... And they used to go out in the field and they...the field there. Cause you went out in the field and around the marsh. And...[indecipherable]...county made it straight and they told...put these logs in and then they hauled in gravel on top of 'em. In order to keep 'em sinked. Cause that was real soft muck in there. And course it was all marsh hay at that time. And uh...that was on the home place where I was born.

Gustafson: Oh?

Herbst: That's uh...I knew the marsh real well after it been broke up and farmed. But there was one place in that field and that place is still there approximately thirty feet diameter. That uh...when you get to that spot you raised your cultivators or you go around with a tractor. You get across with a team when it was dry. But then they would sink.

Gustafson: That soft...[indecipherable]...

Herbst: It...it always was soft then. That's where I almost uh...sunk. I and my brothers we was huntin' snipe and my brothers walked along the side and I stepped in there and I went...one leg...I just went clear down. And I grabbed a hold of him and he pulled me back out.

Gustafson: Gee.

Herbst: I think it was a quick sand pocket in there. And uh...I happened to be there and the people that found the place...my grandmother rented it to this fellow. And uh...I told him about it and he let me know right away he knew that ground better than I did. I says uh...when you go across with your cultivators you'll be comin' to the house. We was settin' there talkin' and pretty soon there was a knock on the door. And I looked over there and there was old Hank Bean (?sp). He was standin' there at the door. What's the matter Hank? Buried? He says I'm buried. He says I really am buried. He says how'd you know that spot was there? I says I was born on this farm. So we got plank and went back down there and put plank on the two hind wheels and chained 'em and got him out of 'em. And that plank come up over...uh...over and raised him up out of that muck and it got him out. Course after he got wheels coming up and he got his cultivators up...he got through. But the next round he went by and he raised his cultivators. ...[indecipherable]...about for thirty foot across...then you was out of it.

Gustafson: Did you do a lot of hunting...down there?

Herbst: What?

Gustafson: Did you do a lot of hunting down there?

Herbst: I did never really done a lot of hunting. I hunted some...but not a lot like a lot of people do. I liked to hunt pheasant and used to hunt rabbits. And uh...but...I got so we didn't eat the rabbit so I wouldn't shoot rabbits.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: And well I didn't go back to kill anything just to be shootin'. Uh...they got uh...they got too much of a heart...[indecipherable]...

Mrs. Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...

Herbst: Uh as I always said I don't think I could kill a deer.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: The only I could kill a deer would be it was attacking me or someone.

Gustafson: Yeah.

Herbst: Cause I don't like to...uh...actually kill anything that was unnecessary. Maybe I'm kind of peculiar that way.

Gustafson: What did that area look like uhm...

Herbst: What?

Gustafson: This...the marsh area....what...what does that look like? Is it grown up with trees or...

Herbst: What the marsh?

Gustafson: Yeah.

Herbst: Uh...the marsh hay along the Kankakee River was open land. Flooded. And this marsh hay grew and they cut this hay. And it was uh...well they fed it to the horses.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: And uh...but it wasn't really good horse feed. But they shipped it into Chicago from uh...and they made rope out of it.

Tolchinsky: Did they use it in ice houses, too?

Herbst: They used for packing. Packing. And then they made rope out of it in Chicago. They used it in...fact...uh factories and other...[indecipherable]... Then they used it in stock yards for bedding. But it didn't make good bedding. Uh...[indecipherable]...the horses could exist on it. That is, they lived through the winter on it. But they come out in the spring and be rough looking.

Gustafson: Yeah.

Herbst: But uh...they...that was good land and as soon as they got it dredged they broke the marsh up.

Gustafson: How would they cut that hay?

Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...cutting mower.

Gustafson: You could get a mower in there then?

Herbst: Yeah. They used a mower and then some of 'em...uh...the marsh...it'd be a little soft. They had the horses shod and uh...they put forks on the horses feet.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: And then horses learned to walk on them boards. And that kept 'em from sinkin'. And they made that...uh...make uh...the hay...the marsh hay on the ice.

Gustafson: How'd they do that?

Herbst: It uh...mow it just the same way. When the ice got froze...

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: ...they went on the horse and mowed it. And they mowed it, raked it, and baled it. And they...then they shipped out from...they was...well that's what I told you about hay...[indecipherable]... That's where they loaded the hay out on the Pennsylvania Railroad. In boxcars. And that was baled with what they called an "Alligator Baler." Are you man enough? Two hundred pound bales. And put 'em up...

Gustafson: I don't know.

Herbst: ...and put 'em up to the top of the car? I don't think so. ...[indecipherable]...

Gustafson: Yeah.

Herbst: Isn't that...[indecipherable]... I weighed a hundred thirty-five-forty pounds. I could swing 'em. But I never made the hay. But I swung other hay...the big bales. To see if it could be done and it's was an...[indecipherable]...cause I was handling a lot of hay. And I...that...that...them bales happened to get two bales together in one and these old case balers and uh...uh...stationary balers. To make them big bales. Wire bales. And the hay happened to be a little bit wet and you get a hold of one then they're two hundred pound bales. You have to know how to get a hold of it, how to swing it, and put it up.

Gustafson: What else do you remember about the area? Is there a lot of wildlife down there then?

Herbst: Oh uh...it was good huntin', good trapping. That...before they uh...started breakin' it up.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: And uh...do you have...there's two clubs. The Meshabi Club and that was for huntin' for huntin' uh...duck and geese. And...well they hunted everything. Rabbits. But then the Meshabi Club sold out later times. And uh...well the people that bought it from the Meshabi was Hazard (?sp). Out of Chicago. They came out of Chicago and uh...about 1915 or something like that that they bought in there. And they bought that...that was across uh...from out the place where I was born and raised. And every...[indecipherable]... But there was the Meshabi Club and they owned a lot of land in there. Oh they claimed they owned it. They didn't own it. But they claimed it. Course everybody was claiming land down there that didn't own it. Because they claimed meandered land.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: And uh...then when they straightened the River they lost all that meandered land because the State took it and sold it. But there was a lot of...uh well there was a few lawsuits about that. Because the farmers went "oh I own this land. I've owned it for years." They didn't have no deed for it. So they sold it.

Gustafson: You mentioned the...the last that you used to go frogging?

Herbst: Oh yeah. That's when my dad made the marsh hay. That was...that was a big deal for kids. Uh that was south of Stillwell. Along the Kankakee River. Back there in the marsh. That was all marsh hay out in there. That was all swampy. And my dad mowed that marsh hay. I was about four and a half years old. That was just before we moved to Chicago. My mother got sick. My dad quit farming and uh...I get behind and follow that mower around and I'd have a string of frogs like that long. Bullfrogs. They were good eatin'.

Tolchinsky: How did you catch 'em?

Herbst: Just catch 'em. By hand. Just see 'em...[indecipherable]... Keep...[indecipherable]...gotta get my hands on 'em. But uh...it's a wonder I didn't come up with a snake in there cause that was full of snakes and rattlers and all.

Gustafson: Oh really?

Herbst: Oh that marsh was...in the marsh rattler snakes.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: But I never...nobody ever got bit. My mother...they'd come up to the house and us kids would see a snake and my mother'd go out and take a hoe and cut the heads off it. But that was all...all that marsh land down through there had with snakes. Now there's no...I don't...I'm only gonna say there...[indecipherable]...but they found are a few rattlers down through there yet. But uh not many. Course it's just like going to Tippecanoe State Park. People says there ain't no rattlers out here man. I know better. Cause I know I killed one there.

Tolchinsky: What'd you do with the frogs after you caught them?

Herbst: We eat 'em. Clean 'em.

Tolchinsky: The whole frog or just the frog legs?

Herbst: Just the frog legs. Uh...we ate a lot of 'em. They're good them bullfrogs. They're really good eatin'. I...I went down to the south part of the State and that was all river marsh. Well nobody down there was catchin' 'em. And there was big bullfrogs. One evening uh...a boy about two-three years younger than I am. Always stayed around where I was at. Just a soon I moved down there he got afraid with 'em. And I said we'll go out and get some frogs. Well what're you gonna do with 'em? I'm gonna eat 'em. Aaachhhh. I don't wanna eat one of them things. Believe it or not but we had ten pound...[indecipherable]...used to be...[indecipherable]... one of them bull...a bullfrogs...in about twenty-five to thirty minutes. 'Bout a half hour we had it full. And I go on along. You gonna eat 'em? Next morning we had frogs ate up. A meat platter oh about that long...it was just rounded. Full. And...it wasn't over a month everybody in the country was eatin' 'em. So down there you...you might be eatin' breakfast they...they walked in and they'd sample what you had to eat. First they wouldn't sample them frog legs. They'd have nothin' to do with

'em. But then aft...now then they everybody down there hunts 'em. They...go down them old strip mine pits and they get them big bullfrogs. Uh...there's some bullfrogs down here that you couldn't put your hands around 'em. Big. In this little pond down here. They're there for the eatin'.

Gustafson: What do they taste like?

Herbst: What?

Gustafson: What...

Herbst: Uh...they got taste of their own. They're not a wild taste. And uh...their meat is white.

Mrs. Herbst: And real tender.

Herbst: And tender. The meat is real tender.

Mrs. Herbst: Not fishy.

Herbst: No fish taste to 'em whatsoever. That's why I say they have a taste of their own. The best way is just try 'em. A frozen frog leg is...is no good to eat. They're tough. Dry. Ever try just like fish. Some fish is dry when they get froze.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: It uh...not good to eat.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: Uh...at uh...I'll give you Hamlet. Not Hamlet but uh Hannah. Dr. Crawford was a doctor in 1917. Well he was doctor before that in Hannah. 1917, 1918, 1919, and my grandfather started to be...be a doctor with him. Cause he had his education already and then after so much college working you uh a fella could go with another doctor and become a medical doctor. Well my grandfather did not like gettin' up all kinds of nights so he give it up. But Dr. Crawford was a doctor at uh Hannah at that time. ...[indecipherable]...came from Germany or uh...I don't know...I'll take that back. I don't know whether he came or his dad came from Germany. He come...they came over the same time my great grandfather did.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: And uh...they settled in Hannah between Hannah and Wanatah. And he run the store there for ages. And Jones Hatchery in Hannah...well my...I can remember my mother buying chickens there when I was small. And I bought chickens there after I was married. And he also had uh...their Jones brothers...and they had the hatchery in LaPorte. But uh...they quit hatching in uh...just oh 'bout time the war started. World War I...uh II.

Gustafson: They had a fire didn't they?

Herbst: Was he still goin' there?

Mrs. Herbst: After we moved in here.

Herbst: Was he? Well then he uh...he just quit here about twenty years ago. Twenty-five years ago. Because...well the hatchery at Hannah took care of Starke County all through the southern part of LaPorte County and even as far as Valparaiso. That was everybody...every farmer went in and bought a couple three hundred chickens.

Gustafson: At a time?

Herbst: At a time.

Gustafson: How would you get 'em back to the farm then?

Mrs. Herbst: In a box.

Herbst: It was boxes.

Mrs. Herbst: They were just in...in little...

Herbst: They uh...the boxes were about that long. They'd be divided and they was twenty-five in each uh quarter. Generally they put in about three extras. In each one see. So you got a hundred...oh you got a hundred and five or maybe a hundred and eight for a hundred. They uh...allowed for weak ones.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: But Jones...he was a good man at the hatchery there. But...

Tolchinsky: Didn't they burn out?

Herbst: Huh?

Tolchinsky: Didn't they burn out...at Hannah?

Herbst: No. No. No. He just quit. The uh...well farmers quit buying chickens. They don't raise chickens any more like they did then. The eggs went in the...well they have an old hen would come up but uh...eight-nine chickens will lay one egg by twenty-five per that old hen per roost. And if they want fried chickens. They went out to the barnyard and they run that chicken down and they had fried chicken. And that fried chicken tastes better than one you buy outta the store. I uh...cause it's meat is more firmer.

Gustafson: Oh?

Herbst: And just better flavor. And if they wanted a...[indecipherable]...for uh Sunday dinner for chicken and noodles they went out and got one of them old heavy hens and they had chicken. But uh...see Dr. Crawford he came to LaPorte and he was in LaPorte. Now the boys that farmed this place...that was their doctor when they was born. And there...but he came to LaPorte. He was uh...I think Dr. Gonner (?sp) came in after Dr. Crawford left. There was another doctor there but I don't know whether he was a veterinary or a doc...a medical doctor. And that was Dr. Salsbury (?sp). Uh...and he had two boys. Rick Salsbury and Bill Salsbury. And he bought a lot of that marsh land down there. And whenever he died I had his will in my abstract. And them boys got all that land. And they owed fifteen dollars an acre to the federal land bank. Bill Salsbury...I bought the place from him and he told me that he was gonna...[indecipherable]...up. And he did. He drank up over a thousand acres. The best land in LaPorte County. It was a little wet. It's still wet. But it was ideal land. Good land.

Tolchinsky: For what?

Herbst: Huh?

Tolchinsky: For what? The marsh...the marsh land?

Herbst: After...see the...after it was drained that marsh land...

Tolchinsky: What did they...what did they raise on it after it was drained?

Herbst: Corn. Wheat. Oat. Hay. Anything. Potatoes. ...[indecipherable]...

Mrs. Herbst: Green beans.

Herbst: It's uh...ideal land.

Gustafson: How did they drain it? How did they get the water off it?

Herbst: Uh...when they came with the big uh...shovels...steam shovels...down and straightened the Kankakee River which now is uh actually called the Place Ditch.

Gustafson: Uh-huh.

Herbst: Because there...there is no Kankakee River anymore.

Gustafson: Hmm.

Herbst: They call it Kankakee River but it is Place Ditch. See Place is on that dug the...[indecipherable]...and straightened the lines. The old Kankakee land was then but sold and meandered land was sold to the farmers or whoever wanted to buy it. The old Kankakee River bed you can see it yet. You...you...and there is a few old bayous where it's too deep that still's there now. Horseshoe Bend is one place. ...[indecipherable]... And they use that as good fishing

right there in that Horseshoe Bend. But I think...that...that is down in Porter County. South of Kouts.

Gustafson: Was that steam shovel...was that on a boat or a raft?

Herbst: Yeah on a floating shovel. Not a drag line. A shovel. I uh...I was about...[indecipherable]... My dad was farming that place whenever it went through. And uh...one place my dad lost some corn to the shovel. They got in a...[indecipherable]... That was down below Stillwell. And my dad had twelve acres of corn out and it was up there real nice. They got a...[indecipherable]...dig into the river, the ditch or the money. And they set the shovel right square in there and flooded his corn.

Gustafson: Gee.

Herbst: And he lost the corn over the deal.

Gustafson: Hmm.

Herbst: But it was something about money proposition on the contract. And them days back then they got hot headed they...they didn't back off from nobody. They didn't care either. It's what I say...people...the men they was more rough a character. They were good people. But they didn't take nothin'. And they didn't believe in this here hand...uh...glove stuff.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: Uh...such as...[indecipherable]...these prisoners these here uh...[indecipherable]... That...[indecipherable]...of them people was...[indecipherable]... I talked to one prisoner. Uh one of them convicts. And he says you know he says uh...they don't...they never uh...didn't ask us to come here. We knew when we was comin' here that uh...it was sposed to be rough. But he says you know them guys were uh...we hate them guards there. There ain't no such thing as...[indecipherable]...the guard. He says you never wanna trust one of us. Cause he says you can't trust us.

Gustafson: Hmm.

Herbst: But he said after we get outta here we're all right till we get sent back in.

Mrs. Herbst: I don't know if you have any power or not.

Gustafson: Yeah it's...it's on.

Herbst: Uh...down uh...at...[indecipherable]...

Mrs. Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...get back to the River er to the drainage of the marsh. You didn't...

Herbst: They drained that marsh and that was the end of it. The water was out. Then they dug the ditches in. ...[indecipherable]...was one big one in Starke County. Uh...there's several ditches...Tewsburg (?sp) Ditch in Hannah. There's another big ditch that was dug in. That went down through the marsh.

Gustafson: How'd they dig those?

Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...or drag...uh some of them was mostly was dug by drag lines. Then they come out with a walking drag line. ...[indecipherable]... And those were dug by drag line after the River was dredged. See they could uh...when they started down through...they had to have a floating dredge. Because there was no way a walking dredge was gonna go down through that marsh. It would just sink right there in the ground.

Gustafson: Right.

Herbst: And buried. Cause they're too big. Too heavy. So the floating dredge is the only...only way and they would haul the coal and then load it in boats and then run down...[indecipherable]... They dredged and unload it.

Gustafson: What did...the coal...

Herbst: Yeah. They fired it up with steam you see.

Gustafson: Oh. Steam shovels.

Herbst: That was all steam shovels. They were...they were steam shovels. They didn't have diesel engines in them days.

Gustafson: Right.

Herbst: And they had very few uh tractor engines. There were a few tractor...they was coming out with uh the tractors then but they was...well...they'd pull one by a plough and it was the experimental stage.

Gustafson: Right.

Herbst: It was still all horse when they drained the river down there. And then...they had good...there's a lot of good land down the Kankakee River down through the big game reserves. ...[indecipherable]...

Gustafson: Would that...before they...they ditched that and drained that, would that flood every year?

Herbst: Oh yes. It would flood...you uh...from Davis Church you could get in a boat and go to Hamlet in a boat. And that's four and a half miles. In a boat.

Gustafson: Would that wipe out a lot of crops every year?

Herbst: Uh...they didn't try to do too much farming. It mostly was all marsh hay. They'd raise a little corn and uh...milked a few cows. In other words they...it wasn't a big production deal. It was more...cause they was cuttin' the timber in them days...they were cuttin' the timber, cleanin' the river and cleanin' the land and gettin' ready for...more for farming.

Gustafson: Right.

Herbst: Uh the farm...uh what they farmed was high ground. Sand. That didn't flood. After the river went back down then they could uh...farm the high ground. The rest of it they just left in the pasture and let the cattle on it. It's...they do that down in certain parts of the...[indecipherable]...

Gustafson: What were you telling me the last time about Al Capone's hideout or?

Herbst: Yeah. Yeah...that was at Midway. That was in Starke County. He had one in Starke County. He had one down at San Pierre...south of San Pierre.

Gustafson: What's the story behind that?

Herbst: Huh?

Gustafson: What's the story behind that?

Herbst: Well it was uh...well they sold their booze there and had the parties there. They sold to people...

Tolchinsky: During prohibition?

Herbst: Bootlegging...[indecipherable]...

Tolchinsky: During prohibition?

Herbst: Yeah. That was same with Perry's Camp. That was a bootlegging joint.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: On the river there.

Gustafson: There was a lot of that? On the river?

Herbst: Uh...that was the only one. Well Bomb's Bridge. Now that was on down further. That was a bootlegging camp.

Gustafson: Bomb's?

Herbst: Bomb's Bridge. That was a bootlegging joint there. And there was one at English Lake. That was a bootlegging joint.

Gustafson: Were those hooked up with those hunting clubs that you were talking about?

Herbst: No. They were separate. Individual. Hunting clubs. Uh...one was down by uh...[indecipherable]...and the other one was up there by Davis Station.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: Uh I can't think of the one...uh...my dad farmed that farm that uh...Anderson owned that. Bought the other club farm. But I don't know what the name of that club farm. I...only one I knew was the Meshabi.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: And then that was sold out. Oh no, that uh...them bootlegging joints they were all individuals.

Tolchinsky: Now did they have gambling there at Perry's Camp also?

Herbst: What?

Tolchinsky: Did they gamble...there at Perry's Camp?

Herbst: Oh yeah...had dance...[indecipherable]...the whole works in that place. Yeah they had a big dance uh...hall there at uh Perry's Camp. My dad took...was gonna burn it down one time...told me. If they didn't straighten it up...clean it up there he was gonna burn it because it...it joined the...the farm there.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: Oh my dad was rough. He was raised. He was big. He didn't take no..."B.S." from nobody. Not even from the Sheriff in Starke County. I had to...[indecipherable]... That happened in San Pierre. My dad was movin' from Hobart to Medaryville. And we stopped at the tavern there and got something to eat. Sat there drinkin' a beer. That old truck it was...well it was beat up kind of...it was...it was a good runnin' truck but it was kinda beat up pick up. And we had it loaded down with a bunch of farm stuff and uh...Lloyd Wylan (?sp) he walked in there with his uniform dressed up and he said who's old truck's that sittin' out there in the road? And dad turned around and looked at him and says if it's any of your business he says it's mine. Now what do you want us to do about it? Wylan says nope and turned right around and walked out the door. He...he...that was enough. He wasn't gonna tell...tell you about that but Wylan...his dad knew me. He came to me and tried to get me to run for Sheriff in Starke County.

Gustafson: Oh?

Herbst: And I turned it down. Cause I had a family and I didn't get mixed up in politics. I was...I was...[indecipherable]...I wasn't a politician to begin with. But he wanted...they wanted somebody that was born and raised in the area to run for Sheriff. That knew the country.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: And uh...I told him no. I said I...I wouldn't make a good politician. I wouldn't have nothing to do with it. But uh...no...that was a wild country down there. Now it's Shepard's (?sp) was ones that had the...had the place at English Lake. The dance hall and the bootlegging joints.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: Now them Shepard's was all...they were raised with my dad. They was all the same age. See where I get that is my told me. And I...I knew Clyde Shephard. I met him. And I met Moe Shephard at the...at the dance hall. And I talked to both of them. Now they both are dead. That's why I say it coulda went back thirty years and coulda got them fellas. Course Moe Shephard would not tell ya everything. He'd tell ya a lot about that river. Cause he lived on the river. He was strictly a river rat.

Gustafson: A river rat?

Herbst: Yeah what you call a river rat. He lived on that river. Yeah but he wouldn't tell ya everything but he could tell ya a lot and uh...I would like to know everything that happened down there at English Lake though. That was rough...that was a tough place.

Gustafson: Was there uh...killings or...[indecipherable]...something like that go on in these?

Herbst: There was some. There was a lot of...there was been quite a few bodies found in the Kankakee River.

Gustafson: Oh?

Herbst: But uh...most of 'em they never found out how they got...they knew that somebody dumped 'em. But most of 'em that dumped 'em was out of Chicago.

Gustafson: Hmm.

Herbst: Chicago gangsters and stuff like that just dump 'em. And they'd find 'em. Although there should be some kegs...kegs of whiskey in that river yet.

Tolchinsky: Did the Chicago people come to these...to English Lake and places like that?

Herbst: Yeah.

Mrs. Herbst: That was mostly...

Herbst: Huh?

Mrs. Herbst: Mostly who was there.

Herbst: Yeah...them was...

Mrs. Herbst: Mostly Chicago people right.

Herbst: Chicago people.

Mrs. Herbst: That's the reason that people in the neighborhood were so against it. But they weren't strong enough to uh...move 'em out.

Herbst: And uh...well my dad straightened out Perry's Camp. They'd get a little rough down there and he'd go down there and help straighten her up. Oh they walked guard. Hell...well one fella is still living that walked guard on that dance hall.

Gustafson: Oh?

[Side one of tape ends]

[Side two of tape begins]

Tolchinsky: ...that would be some...

Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...

Tolchinsky: ...[indecipherable]...

Herbst: Now see he took a trip for Bill Perry.

Tolchinsky: I didn't know that.

Herbst: Yes he did.

Tolchinsky: What do you mean by he took a trip?

Herbst: Cover up.

Tolchinsky: Why?

Herbst: Cover up. See and he got paid though. But it was covered up.

Tolchinsky: Was that common to do that? Did they do that a lot?

Herbst: Uh...a lot of that before they would talk they'd...[indecipherable]... Uh...under the game land rules you don't talk. They better take a trip. And...then to get tangled up with it. So you keep your mouth shut and that's it. See my dad was a...was a detective in Chicago. Why and that's...course then he didn't like it in Chicago and came back to the farm. And uh...my dad he didn't take nothin'. He was...he was a big German. He was hot tempered and he didn't...he didn't put up with none of it. Course none of them fellas did down there. Course so many of 'em is gone. There's ones that thirty years ago them old timers was livin'. Now they're gone. [indecipherable]...it's uh...right around there is one of the oldest men livin'...uh for now. Of that group. The one boy is thirty days...uh thirty days younger than I am but now he's...he lives up in uhm...

Mrs. Herbst: Hobart.

Herbst: Hobart. He lives in Hobart. The other one is dead. And his...they're. There's Frank Bale (sp?). He's dead. And is uh...[indecipherable]...for Frank Bale that's...course he's dead now. Thank was on Rick Salisbury's place.

Gustafson: Uh-hmm. What do you remember most about farming. Say your dad's farm in those days? What...what was the farm like then? Was it...

Herbst: It was all...mostly all horses. A few tractors was startin' to come in.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: Uh...dad...[indecipherable]...wide front end tractor and then the all the cultivating and thrashing was done by teams.

Gustafson: What kind of crops did he raise?

Herbst: Uh...corn, wheat...soy beans were just startin' to come in.

Mrs. Herbst: Oats.

Herbst: And oats was big crops. And their...the hay. ...[indecipherable]...was the biggest hay in...[indecipherable]... And...but their wheat and corn was the main crop. Wheat was the...well...that made uh...for summer money. And they had the corn crop and the hogs in the fall. Which was fattened off with corn. They were uh...uh...going back now what they're talking about the hundred and sixty acre farm the government set up. Then whenever the tractors started comin' in the farms started gettin' bigger.

Gustafson: Uh-huh.

Herbst: There were a few big farms. But they were far between. Uh...once in a while you'd find a three hundred or a three hundred and twenty...and now and then somebody owned a section. But then they had a great big house. They had a lot of horses and they hired a lot of men.

Mrs. Herbst: And a lot of kids usually.

Herbst: That's why sometimes you can see these great big farm houses. Oh they had a lot of hired men at that time. And they...that's what my grandfather...he had a bunch of...always had eight-nine men.

Gustafson: Just hired help?

Herbst: Of hired help. Course he would had uh...they cleared timber and then he had 'em workin' on the road.

Gustafson: How would they do that? Clear timber and work on the road? What...what does that involve?

Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...as long as my grandfather had the teams. And they would drive teams...[indecipherable]...gravel. And he was county superintendent. You know how that all worked in.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: That was politics. And he hired the men there at work and they stayed there. He had uh what you call a bunk house. Till one guy drunk and burnt the bunk house down. He stored a whole

arm load of dynamite in the stove. And burnt it down.

Gustafson: Gee.

Herbst: And that was the stove...they said the stove melted right down. See dynamite won't explode long as there ain't no cap. He had to store it and then he...uh...well he had it stored there for a while but that...he put...[indecipherable]...after he burnt the bunk house down.

Gustafson: Did you have chores to do?

Herbst: Oh yeah.

Gustafson: What...what kind of things did you have to do?

Herbst: Got up at four o'clock in the morning and I had so many cows I had to milk. Horses to feed and water. Hogs to feed. Uh...that was one thing made it kinda bad for me going to high school. I had too much work to do. By the time I got ready for school I already done a day's work. Then I done another day's work when I got home. And it was up to me I could milk two-three cows and my brothers one. And it wasn't no milking machine. It was by hand.

Gustafson: This milking machine.

Herbst: Right. And that was my hand. And I had to break all the young heifers when they come...[indecipherable]...to milk. That was my job.

Gustafson: How would you do that?

Herbst: Uh...just go in under there and just hope...hope...hope...hope...hope...you don't get kicked. I got kicked out here. I didn't get kicked. She just turned. I just turned a complete somersault. Sittin'. And I...[indecipherable]...across the gutters. And I got up and I looked at that cow and I got done. I didn't hit her or beat her. I just took my foot and kicked her on the shin of her leg. Every time she kicked I kicked. Pretty soon she stopped kickin' and I set down and milked her. But uh...I've seen people use...pick up the milk stool and hit a cow. I never did. I don't know why. I never could stand to hurt anything. Even a horse. If a horse acted up I...I wouldn't hit that horse. I just talked the horse out of it. And pretty soon I had the confidence of the horse or the cow. My one son pretty...is good at that. Uh...handling livestock. He'd just work around with 'em and pretty soon he got 'em doing what he wants 'em to do. And that's where...that's where a farmer was a farmer. If he could handle livestock. He was...he was a farmer. And if a fella couldn't handle livestock and uh couldn't get along with livestock he wasn't a farmer.

Gustafson: What other kind of chores did you have to do?

Herbst: What?

Gustafson: What other kind of chores did you have?

Herbst: That was the main thing was uh...the milking of the cattle, feedin' livestock in the morning and that is...that was ten below zero or twenty below zero or a snowstorm. You got out there and you got them chores done. And I had to do them before I went to school. You get up at four o'clock in the morning but I never thought much of it. And I still don't think much of gettin' up at four o'clock in the morning. But you know I wake up at six o'clock just as easy. And I retired...[indecipherable]... Not much sleep shoot. Now I get up and don't need the alarm clock.

Gustafson: Hmm. What kind of chores would the girls do in those days?

Mrs. Herbst: Chickens. ...[indecipherable]...they had. Gather the eggs. Feed the chickens and water.

Herbst: Now some of the girls went out in the barn and...

Mrs. Herbst: And milked.

Herbst: Everybody had to milk.

Mrs. Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...family you know. If the boys were busy in the field then the girls took over the chores around the barn as well as washing dishes. Washing the separator.

Herbst: Yeah. They separated the milk.

Mrs. Herbst: That was one...I had never talked to any woman that ever did that. That thought anything of it you know. It uh...have you ever seen one?

Gustafson: No.

Mrs. Herbst: Well you'll have to...if you come over to Auggie's tonight we'll show ya.

Gustafson: Okay.

Mrs. Herbst: It has...there's a long thing. Looks like a huge safety pin about this long. What is it twenty-two bits I believe. They're just like a large funnel and it's about that big and then it goes down the whole that's about like that. And these fit right one on top of the other.

Herbst: They're numbered.

Mrs. Herbst: But they...they fit on this...like a safety pin. And you have to wash each and every one and then scald them in boiling water because they're tin. They aren't a little...[indecipherable]...or anything stainless steel. They're just tin and they have to be dried so they don't rust.

Gustafson: Right.

Mrs. Herbst: So they have to be scalded in boiling water and they have to be clean or the milk...or the cream will...[indecipherable]...the next time. We were talking about that Sunday.

Herbst: You know the girls never went out in the field but they had to take care of the milk and equipment like that. And of course a lot...most of the girls did milk cows too. Once in a while you'd find girls that didn't milk. And most all of 'em learned how to milk. Cause that was a job nobody liked.

Gustafson: What were some of the things you did for fun then...when you didn't...when you weren't out working or doing chores? What kind of games and stuff did you play?

Herbst: Well it was uh...the boys would get together and play baseball and stuff like that. And a lot of times we'd just get out and just get along the ditch and just roam all over the country.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: Not doing...destroy anything. And uh...well...[indecipherable]...we had a...a gallon bucket if it was in the season we'd get us a few roasting ears and uh some potatoes and we'd bake them and just have a good time. Not destroy...one big hill of potatoes was our neighbors we'd dig one hill of potatoes. We didn't want to...to destroy anything. Maybe we'd get some watermelon when they was in season. Or a cantaloupe. And we'd fix a meal out there whenever or like on Saturday or Sunday and we didn't have nothin' to do. We'd be out in the woods all

day long. Or just going up and down the ditch or...learned not to destroy. But we had everything...them woods all had things we grew up with. ...[indecipherable]...green apples and uh...sweet potatoes er uh...sweet corn and uh potatoes and bake 'em and throw in the fire and bake 'em. Ashes and all.

Tolchinsky: That sounds pretty good.

Mrs. Herbst: It sure does.

Herbst: That's why I can't uh understand why boys can't go out and have fun without destroying stuff. We had good times. Nobody was why...[indecipherable]...can't tell ya...we had horse tanks. We...a lot of times in the evenings we all ended up in the horse tank. That's a real big horse tank. Out behind the barn.

Mrs. Herbst: I think the automobile changed all that.

Herbst: And uh...there'd be maybe six-seven of us boys in that horse tank swimming. And we'd have to drain it. Course we had a windmill. Didn't have to pump the water. Turned the windmill on and have all fresh water for the horses. Cattle.

Gustafson: Was this a...a well that...did you dig the well yourself?

Herbst: It uh...it was a grove well. ...[indecipherable]...a pipe with a point on it down in the ground. Then they'd pump it up with a...well they had a cylinder on the bottom. And the wind pumped the water up. And they had one here. I still got the well here. Part of it. Uh...I made the bigger well out it. And the windmill stood out here and I...I took the windmill down.

Gustafson: What kind of games did the girls play?

Mrs. Herbst: Tag and hide-and-go-seek and walked. It'd depend on the age of...[indecipherable]... You know after they got...

Herbst: Girls would play baseball too.

Mrs. Herbst: ...older why they'd sit around and visit or...maybe sew or teach one another how to embroidery or something like that. Or just get out and walk. We'd walk for miles. I never thought anything about it. We knew about how far we could go and then we'd have to turn around and go back.

Herbst: Uh I...I...well in them days you didn't have no automobiles. And uh...the neighborhood...uh kids and girls and they could walk down the road without being afraid.

Mrs. Herbst: One thing was to sit and listen to the older people talk because you could hear so many stories you know and uh what they did when they were little. Just different things. That was always the real big deal with me. To sit and listen. I lived with my Grandma. And of course

that was...to hear her tell stories of her childhood and these other ladies they'd get together and talk. It's a real big thing.

Gustafson: Was that...assuming everybody did...if you didn't have radio or television would a lot of people do that?

Mrs. Herbst: Oh yes. Go to Church on Sunday morning and maybe there'd be four or five buggies or wagons whatever. We didn't have a car until uhm...I don't know I must've been about eight...eight...eight or nine before we ever had a car. And uh...there might be three or four wagons. Grandma'd say well come on over for dinner. You know. And we may not eat until up in the afternoon I can remember I'd be so hungry I'd think I couldn't stand it anymore. But uhm...there'd be a whole house full of people and everybody'd just have a real big time and that. But time to do chores and they'd all go home you know which is...

Tolchinsky" They all had chores to do, too.

Mrs. Herbst: Oh yes. Uh-huh. There were cows and chickens. They had to be fed as well as the family you know. You just didn't leave 'em go over for till midnight or something because you wanted to visit a little longer. And then too getting home before dark. That was another thing to get off of the roads before it got dark. I guess. I don't know. I don't ever recall that. Well no because we went to Church at night. So that wouldn't have been the thing of it either. And I can remember Grandpa walking in front of the buggy with the lantern. After it stormed to see if there were any limbs down. You know. On the road. But uh...I guess they just went home because they had chores to do. Mainly.

Gustafson: What would you say is your favorite memory from those days?

Mrs. Herbst: Well one thing that's really stayed with me and now...this is not anything real big...but we had a strawberry patch. Which to me was a huge field. I don't suppose it was all that big. But we had had uhm..a big order for strawberries. Then Grandpa and the pickers had been there then Grandma decided maybe we should pick some more. So she and I went to the strawberry patch and we got a downpour. But she had me standing on the uh...table along the wall and the water came to...she wore long skirts down to the ground you know and the bottom of her skirts were wet. Now why that stands out in my memory...but that...it's just...of her holding me on this table and I was petrified of storms. Thunder and lightning was just something. But I couldn't have been over four years old at the time. And it uh...but that has just always stayed with me of how she was so protective of me during that storm but still she set there and got her shoes full of water and her skirts all wet to keep me dry.

Gustafson: Mr. Herbst what would be your favorite memory?

Herbst: What was that?

Gustafson: What would be your favorite memory from your childhood say on the farm?

Herbst: Well uh...I...I was going to school. I enjoyed that. Up to the eighth grade. Course one of...the school I graduated was a one room school. That was not in LaPorte County though. I...I graduated in Pulaski County.

Gustafson: Oh.

Herbst: Uh...that was uh...a good time...course...uh...on my memories is just us boys getting out and going up and down them ditches and well building our castles. And...you know...talkin' and uh...and just getting along you know with one another how you boys would...uh...we just had a good clean fun. Oh we'd pull tricks on one another but uh...

Gustafson: What would you do to pull tricks?

Herbst: Well our mother was sick. And uh...and this one boy he was really was a card. He's still living. Oh he could just make people laugh easy. Well they always come to our farm...[indecipherable]...out there swimming in that horse tank. Out behind the barn see. You couldn't nobody could see you from the house. Course uh...in them days we didn't know what a swimming suit was. And uh...so they all got to talkin' and told this boy to go up to the house and get a towel so he could dry off with it. ...[indecipherable]...that...that woman's up to the house. And we finally convinced him there was no woman at the house. And we sent him to the house after a towel. And he was just about ready to open the door and this woman walked out. Well he...he turned and ran and my mother had a basket of these here hot peppers. Make good peppers. Well he grabbed one of them and broke it open. And he went and got about three of us with these hot peppers right across our face just like this. Oh was they hot. But we was just dyin' laughin'. Course he was kind of uh...comical anyhow. And uh...we had a big laugh out of it. Now that was uh...that was most of our...you know we'd pull little tricks like that.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: And...he...he didn't let us forget it for a while. But uh...as I say...kids can have good clean fun if they want to. They don't have to have uh...going up and down the road ninety miles an hour. If they wanted to they could really enjoy themselves but they don't. And when we was going to school...oh of course we always liked to play baseball and uh...we'd...in that one room schoolhouse you have to get the girls to play baseball if you don't have enough...enough to play but uh...just the boys. There was eight of us in eighth grade and we had seventh and eighth together. Eight of us. And I do have a picture of the eighth grade that graduated from that one room schoolhouse.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: But there was the seventh and the eighth grade together. And eight of us graduated out of that school. But the...but the uh...I'll put it this way. There's a big difference in uh...well...in the way the...oh the children cooperate. Uh...when I moved to Chicago I was starting school in Chicago and I seen it then even in the first grade that I had no business in Chicago.

Gustafson: Oh?

Herbst: Uh...I was soon let known that I didn't know anything. Until one day the teacher had a picture on uh...and asked what was in the picture. Oh everybody in the room said it was grass. And I finally I held up my hand and I said uh...that is wheat...a wheat field. And the rest of the kids all told me I didn't know what I was talkin' about. The teacher quieted them all down and told him that is right. It is a wheat field. It was green wheat. And of course I knew what a...how'd it grow. I could see the wheat was in the rows. It was green. And I...them boys thought it was grass cause they didn't know what wheat was. They never seen a wheat field in their lives. And if they did they didn't even remember it. But uh basically I uh...I think children on the farm has uh better opportunity all the way around. With the livestock they had their pets. They learned what life and death is. They learned it right there.

Gustafson: Uhm-hmm.

Mrs. Herbst: Well I think one of the most rewarding things that you can have is to see how a...[indecipherable]...duck come out from under the barn with a whole string of little ones behind her or a newborn calf or a litter of pigs or something. A baby lamb in the spring. And those were always big days. Here we farmed at one time we had a big barn out here. And milked cows and that. And lots of mornings we'd have the doorbell rang and our oldest son'd have a calf across his shoulders holding it's legs bringing it to the house to be the first one to show it off to the family. Or you'd hear a scream and you'd run to see what was going on and here'd be an old duck coming across with a bunch of little ones or...an old...little chickens you know. I miss all that. I do. I miss it.

Herbst: I always enjoyed laying in bed listening to a rooster crow in the morning.

Tolchinsky: And know you had to get up pretty soon, huh?

Herbst: Yeah but I could just lay there and listen to him crow and I'd go right back to sleep though. Listen to the...[indecipherable]... Then the neighbors...well they'd farm more. Course that rooster wakes 'em up in the morning. Uh...I don't...maybe I look at it wrong. Now you go to Texas and people has their chickens and cows and that. They'll have a pen. They'll have...in Arizona they'll have their chickens right in...a real nice part of the town. A home worth eighty-ninety thousand dollars have the little cages back there with their chickens in it. The old rooster's crowing. But here you do that in LaPorte you'd have the police department, the fire department, and the mayor and everyone down on your neck because you got a rooster inside of town. But they let chickens inside of town.

Mrs. Herbst: ...[indecipherable]...you'd have to go back.

Herbst: In Europe they all live together in the same building. All chickens, cows, all in one building.

Gustafson: What would you say has been the biggest change uh...well let's say in farming?

Herbst: The day the horses went out and the tractors came in. Or when...when the farm went industrialized.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: Mechanicalized. That was the biggest change and development of the farming in uh...in the United States. What the next change is...uh...I...I don't know. I kinda think I can answer. We're gonna take a step backwards.

Gustafson: Oh?

Herbst: Cause when the oil and the gas goes out you'll have to go back to the steam engine or horses. Of course the steam engine they can still use the steam engine out west. They could go back to that. Or they could modernize the tractor to steam. Cause we have coal. And we could develop that. But if the price gets too high the fuel there has to be a change made somewhere because when a farmer can't make money he can't farm. He's just staying in the business. And there's gonna be a big change and it's gonna come within the next...well the next fifteen years. That's why I say our scientists are gonna have to get on the ball and develop a better engine. A different type of fuel engine. Now they already started hollering about using this alcohol for fuel. It always...now they can't use it in automobiles anymore. You know Illinois has two or three places they was sellin' that ten percent alcohol with gasoline mix. They can't sell it now. And...environmentalists has stepped in and says we gotta check that out first and see if it's gonna kill everybody. Uh...the farmers are hollering about some of these sprays that we...we're gettin. It don't kill...it ain't doin' the job it's sposed to do. Uh...they took away those...parastrene (?sp) and the uh chemicals actually what kills bugs. Now then they're getting fat on 'em. What we get now. I try to kill potato bugs out here. Sprayed and sprayed and like I did control 'em...I didn't kill 'em. I just control 'em. And boy that hurts production on a farm.

Gustafson: Right.

Herbst: So there must gonna have to be a lot of changes within the next fifteen years. Because uh United States feeds the world. They depend on the United States to feed the world. Every country that uh...has the drought or something they gotta buy grain. And if they don't have the drought they still gotta buy grain. India uh...they'd be dying over there by the millions if it wasn't for the United States feedin' them. All along Kenya the United States feeds 'em. It can...in a time the next fifteen years is gonna tell the difference. Them countries will not control their population. Uh...I don't like to see people starve to death. But we're gonna have to take care of our own country first.

Gustafson: Hmm-hmm.

Herbst: And LaPorte's an agriculture county...well...I read an article in the farm magazine on this here uh...energy. The farmers was not represented when they had that there uh gas shortage and like that. It was not represented in Washington, D.C. They were not taken into consideration. So they had an article about it and at the bottom...the farmer will eat first.

Gustafson: We've got really time for me to ask each of you one last question and that would be what from the past would you bring back that you think would help out now.

Herbst: What in the past would help out now?

Gustafson: Yes something that you...you wish you could bring say...

Herbst: Well there's uh...I would like to see better parents and children relationship. That is lost. Uh...the parents are not letting uh...their children uh...start on their own younger. That is uh...well here's a fourteen...twelve-thirteen-fourteen year old boy he can't go out on the farm anymore and learn anything. Because of the laws. A boy can't walk across the...a group of boys are not allowed to walk or go across my farm anymore. Because of the law. That has killed uh...the...as I said the relationship between the children and the parents. Uh...I...I don't like to tell a bunch of...some boys that I'd like to go across...just walk across the farm go down there to my lake. I like to go fishing down there. I can't do that. I can't say yes. Because of insurance. Even though the parents we could be good friends. I'd still have to say no. Because friendship has been lost. Understanding. I was a boy. You was a boy. Girls were girls. And uh...as I said about the uh...the horse tank...the neighbor girls they had their horse tank too. But uh...it was all clean. There was no filth. We knew there was girls over there swimming in that tank. We would hear 'em yelling. We never bothered to go over there.

[Side two of tape ends]