

Interviewee: Lois (Olhoff) Breitbarth and husband Eldor Breitbarth

Interviewers: Erin Mead and Benjamin Vennes

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Location: the Breitbarth farm in Truman, MN

Transcribed by: Erin Mead and Benjamin Vennes, April 2001

Edited by: Thomas Saylor, June 2001

Lois Breitbarth was born on 11 October 1927 on a farm in Wheaton, Minnesota; she grew up and attended high school here during the war years. In addition to farm chores, Lois worked part-time in a grocery store during the war years, and remembers various shortages and rationing of food and other items.

Following the war, Lois attended Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, and then went to Concordia Teachers College in Seward, Nebraska, to obtain a teaching license. She then worked in a Truman, Minnesota, parochial school, teaching grades 1-8 in a one-room schoolhouse.

Eldor Breitbarth was born 15 December 1925 in Watonwan County, Minnesota. He grew up on a farm. He adds memories of being 4-F, deferred from military service, and of farm life during the war years.

In 1948, Lois and Eldor were married in June 1948, in Wheaton, Minnesota. They continued to live on a farm in Antrim Township, Watonwan County.

Eldor Breitbarth died on 29 February 2008.

Lois Breitbarth died on 5 January 2016.

Interview key:

L = Lois Breitbarth

E.B. = Eldor Breitbarth

E.M. = Erin Mead

B. = Benjamin Vennes

[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation

(*) = words or phrase unclear**

NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

L: As far as the war, I remember quite vividly the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. That was December 7, 1941. And I was in high school, and it really shook everybody, it was a surprise attack. You know we had been following what had happened over in Europe with Hitler taking over the various countries. In high school, in history class, that was a big item and we talked about that a lot, but everybody was really surprised by the attack on Pearl Harbor, and then that war was declared then right away after that. I remember President Roosevelt on the radio, because there was no TV then, (*laughs*) and I remember sitting by the radio and listening to him declare war on Japan. The day after and then following that, I don't remember what day that was, we declared war on Germany and Italy, too.

I think what I wrote down here (*looks at diary*) is, "December 11, war was declared on Germany and Italy," and the thing that I remember mostly about the war, people really pulled together. It wasn't like it was in the Vietnam War, that was such a dividing thing, but people, there was mixed feelings I am sure. My grandmothers, both of them came from Germany, and my paternal grandmother especially, she didn't like the idea that we were going to fight against Germany. You know, which is understandable, she didn't think at that time that Hitler was that bad a person, which is understandable, and she had family and relatives yet in Germany. She didn't really at first like the idea, but here the United States was going to fight against her homeland, which is understandable, too. So I think, again, that people really pulled together when war was declared after it all, after people realized what was going on.

E.M.: I just have a quick question. During Hitler and Germany, do you feel our government told you the truth about what was happening in Germany, like the Gulf War [of 1990-91], when we knew exactly where the US was positioned, or did they keep it secretive, or was everything pretty much up front? Do you remember anything like that?

L: Well, I guess I believed the new reports, but there was some skepticism about some things.

B: What did you know about Nazi Germany before they declared war? Was there anything that was big, like...?

L: Well, the persecution of the Jews.

E.M.: So you did know that?

L: Yes.

E.M.: Yes, okay.

L: People knew that the Jews were persecuted. Well, then of course, being war was declared, you know we had to get the manpower to fight that war, and the big thing then of course was the draft. And a lot of boys did volunteer, too. Patriotism was high, I think, and the big thing was the draft boards. You know you were classified, the boys were classified.

E.B.: You were classified either A or B or C.

L: Yes, they were classified to different, in different areas, and there was a man in each county that had to determine whether these boys, a lot of them were farm boys, of course. And he had to determine if they were needed at home to help provide the food for the country or so forth, or if they were non-essential and could go and fight the war.

B: What were your experiences, you talked about being drafted and stuff, but what was your personal experience?

L: Well, I had some family, there were five from one of my cousin's family. So that was big.

B: And what effect did that play on your family? Was there a lot of pride in sending those people?

L: There was pride, but we were fearful, too, of them not coming home again. But all those five came home again.

E.M.: Were they sent to Germany, or were they sent to the Pacific?

L: They were all, let's see, of the five, two were in the Navy. No, none of them were sent to Germany. Yes, they were most in the Pacific; in fact, two of them that were in the Navy met, and I don't recall exactly where they met in the Pacific, their boats, their ships that they were on met and I wrote to them. I wrote to both Billy and Barney, they all had names. And the other ones were in the Army, but I don't think they ever had to go overseas, as I recall.

E.M.: You heard about the news of Pearl Harbor during school. Did school life change after the US entered the war? Did the teachers direct any classes differently, like history classes or anything?

L: Well, we pretty much kept up on a lot of things in history, there was a lot. We talked about it a lot in history class.

E.M.: Were their announcements made about progress in the war?

L: I don't remember that. The things I remember, I was in high school, so Savings Bonds and stamps were a big thing, with each class trying to outdo each other. Buying the Savings Bonds, the stamps. We had stamps that you pasted into a little book--I wish I had one of those, but--and then bonds were sold, too. Well, they called them war bonds at that time, and there was a big incentive for which class was going to sell the most, or buy the most Savings Bonds.

And then we had, after the war started, this probably didn't happen right away, but then we collected scrap iron. I remember our scrap metal was collected. We collected all kinds of scrap iron, all kinds of metal, copper, tin, aluminum, and iron. I remember our school yard; we had a big, big pile on the yard of scrap iron. And that was for the war effort, the scrap iron pot, the saving the metals. And then we saved, I think, oils too like fat. Well, they saved a lot stuff. Paper, I think, was saved, but the big thing was the scrap the iron they saved. I think they did that around here, too.

E.B.: Oh, yes.

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E.M.: Were you employed during that time, during high school?

L: I was employed in a grocery store. I mean that was a hassle (*laughs*) because it changed so much. You know, I don't remember what these are all for. See, one you get every month, you got a book (*pauses three seconds*) and then the grocer--I worked for a little store, Strong's Grocery was the name of it, on Main Street of Wheaton [Minnesota]. And besides the price of an item, when people came into buy, you also had to take stamps out, too... You know, that got to be really, especially the meat, was hard, you know, and people would come in and buy a little. You had to weigh it up and then figure out how much, how many coupons you had to take out for the meat and coffee and sugar. I can remember my grandma hoarded sugar. (*laughs*) I might just well say it, and a lot of people did.

B: Yes, did you notice a lot of luxury items that people weren't able to buy?

L: Okay, nylons, were the big thing for ladies. You couldn't buy them and, you know, I don't know if other places did this, but I remember I don't think I ever did, girls would buy a kind of like lotion that you put on your legs to make your legs look

brown like you had nylons on; they actually did that. *(laughs)* What else was hard to get? I know nylons, or any kind of stockings were hard to get. I can't remember. Let's see, well, any kind of machinery. Now my folks built a house during the war, and they had to get a permit, probably, for every piece of lumber they used. Lumber was hard, too, anything like that was hard. If you wanted to, I know you couldn't hardly buy tractors during the war. No, or automobiles either. All of those type of things were hard.

E.B.: We bought, that was in '41, we bought the last '41 Ford that time, the next day everything was froze. You could not buy a car.

L: And you couldn't drive cars any faster then 35 miles an hour. *(laughs)*

E.B.: Yes, 35 miles an hour, that's right.

E.M.: Was it hard to get gasoline then?

L: Yes. You had to get coupons for gasoline, too. I didn't have any because I didn't have a car. But yes, you had to have coupons for gasoline. And of course for young people that day, tires were hard to get.

E.B.: That was all recast tires then.

L: Shoes even, I think were rationed. I don't know if they had coupons for shoes; I don't recall. I don't remember that at all.

E.B.: I don't remember that either.

E.M.: Did your church come together to help out? And how did they contribute?

L: Okay, one thing that I remember, the church always, there were prayers always for the servicemen, of course. And then each church I know had a plaque or something up to recognize all those that were in the service. Of course, now this is, I went to a Missouri Synod Church in Wheaton, and we were called the German Lutheran Church. Well, you know, when the war started, Germans were really frowned upon; you know they were discriminated against, they were hated by some people, you know, so I don't think we were having German services than any more.

E.B.: We did in our church.

L: Yes, did we keep on with them then? Well, of course around here that didn't happen, but we would hear about that, but the Japanese on the West coast, they were hauled off to camps and everything, and I remember hearing about that. I didn't see that personally, but we heard about that.

B: Maybe another question we could ask, like an average day. What was an average day for you, and did it change much from when the war started? Was there anything you did differently?

L: I don't think so. We were in kind of a rural community, and everybody just pulled together for the war. I mean, that was the thing that, although, like I said, there were some feelings at first you know, "Should we go in and fight? Does the United States have the, should we have to be the patroller of the world?" You know, whatever you want to say. But...

B: How did holidays change? Was there any change in holidays?

E.B.: I don't think so.

L: You know, electricity was kind of off. I don't think we decorated. Of course back then we didn't decorate as much as we do now anyhow. But there were times when there were blackouts, you know, when you weren't supposed to have the electricity on. That I remember.

E.M.: Was your financial situation for your family the same during the war, or did it kind of go down a little bit, or was everything better?

L: Everything was probably tighter. I mean we watched more what we spent. Of course there wasn't a lot, you know, and there were things that we couldn't get. I remember I worked for 25 cents an hour. *(laughs)*

E.B.: Yes, I picked sweet corn for 25 cents an hour.

L: Twenty-five cents an hour. Well, besides working in that grocery store I would do babysitting, and I helped out some ladies in town, do that kind of thing.

E.B.: That sounds crazy. Boy, we thought we had something. A ten-hour day, three and a half bucks a day.

L: The women were quite active. You want to know about what women did?

B: Yes.

L: Yes, the women were really... you know, that was kind of unheard of, women in the service, but I had a friend, a good friend, that was in the WAVES. That was the Navy, and the WACS [was the Army equivalent]. I didn't know anybody personally in the WACS or the Air Force, and there were others, but I don't recall. I think the Marines, there were women Marines, too, but I don't recall what they were named. There were some in the women's Army nurse corps. And then a lot of them, you know we talk about Rosie the Riveter. *(laughs)*

I had a cousin, Cousin Alice, she right away left because she was sister to those five in the service. She right away left and went to work in a defense plant in Ogden, Utah. And I know I would write to her. She worked in a defense plant, a lot of women did, they would go. And if the farmers, you know, if the farm boys had to go to the service, a lot of women had to do more farm work.

E.B.: We had during the war, then we had German prisoners [of war].

L: Well, we will come that to at the end.

E.M.: So in your opinion women gained more respect, during the war?

L: I think so.

B: Another question along that same line would be Victory Gardens. We talked about Victory Gardens in our World War II history class at Concordia University, St. Paul.

L: Yes, Victory Gardens, I remember that; that was kind of a big thing, Victory Gardens. People would plant gardens so they wouldn't have to buy so much canned food, they would have their own food. That was a big thing, Victory Gardens.

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B: Yes, maybe to just keep moving along here, we talked about like an average day. During the first two years of the war, 1941-43, did anything change? Once we got into the third and fourth year, 1944-45, did things become more serious?

E.M.: Yes, was the attitude ever like, "this is never going to end," or something similar?

L: Well, people were looking towards, hoping that it would soon end, and there were times when it didn't look very good. Especially in Europe and all; Germany was taking over while they were bombing England. There was concern that maybe it would come over to the United States, too. There was concern, I am sure, that there was a lot that went on in the larger cities, you know, that we did not know so much about in the rural area. You know that people were taking a lot of precautions about what would happen if they drop bombs over here. I don't recall in our area, because we didn't have that much to do with defense. We didn't have any factories or anything like that.

E.M.: Here's a question on politics. Was there a lot of push towards Roosevelt? Did people like him, agree with his politics, his views?

L: Well, I don't know. I think there were some that, after the war got going, weren't so *(pauses three seconds)* in favor of things that he did. But still the country kind of

pulled together. I mean, we were in it now, and we had to see that it was ended in a good way for us. I got sheet music yet from the war. (*shows sheet music*)

B: Oh, really? Did you notice a lot of things being more turned towards the war, the war as a theme for things?

L: Oh yes, like music.

B: Yes, that was a pretty big thing?

L: Yes, the music. This (*sheet music*) is "Bell Bottom Trousers." I wish I had some more. I remember some other ones, like "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree with Anyone Else But Me," and I wish I could remember more of those. "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," that is another one. But this if you want to just look at the words of that, they were different, yes. And there was a lot, of course this is just things that I heard, you know. The USO, a lot of the big stars were going overseas and entertaining the troops. There was a lot of that going on, like Bob Hope, he did a lot of that.

B: Did you notice a lot of propaganda? Did you notice a lot of signs that told you about the war?

L: Yes.

B: Did that have any effect on daily life?

L: Well, I think it made me more... I think patriotism really was high, and I think that helped. There would be signs up, you know, for... I remember there was always one with Uncle Sam, something about "needs you" or...

E.M.: Yes, pointing.

L: Yes, that type of a sign up.

E.B.: Well, like Daylight Savings Time, that really got started during the war. I can remember that, yes. A lot of people set their clocks, a lot of them didn't.

L: (*laughs*) There were some that would never set their clocks. Well, getting back to them in high school I just happen to have my... there was two, we had a small class to begin with, and then there was two of them that were in the service when we graduated in 1945. Yes, so that made our class a little bit smaller. There is one of them. (*shows picture of Wheaton HS class of 1945*)

B: Was there concern about the young men in the high school about joining the war?

L: Yes, we as a class felt, well, proud of them, you know it was kind of mixed feelings. We were proud of them, but we were concerned that they would return home safely. There was another one in there. *(looks at picture again)*

E.M.: Was that you?

L: Yeah, that's me, in 1945. *(locates self in picture)*

E.M.: Did you go further on to school after you graduated from high school?

L: Yes, I went to Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm [Minnesota]. And then, it was during the time when there weren't very many parochial school teachers. So then the Missouri Synod had kind of a crash course at Seward [Teachers College, in Nebraska], and I went there during the summer, and then I taught. For a couple years.

E.B.: Yes, she taught school two years and the last year she taught 25 kids in one school room, all eight grades.

L: I taught kindergarten off and on. We used to have spring kindergarten classes. I taught that for 22 years. And then I went into food service, I did that for 25 years. Now I'm back working at the rest home. I'm still working, in fact today is my only day off.

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B: Did you notice a lot of change after the war was over? I know I am kind of fast-forwarding this, but you already started talking about going to college after 1945. Was it easier, did it seem easier for people, especially for women, to move after the war?

L: I think so. They had a little more respect, I think.

E.M.: And when the soldiers came home were they just loved?

L: Oh, yes, they were. Everybody was glad to see them come home. And one thing I still remember, every home where there was a serviceman, they had a plaque in the window, kind of a flag type of thing. And when the serviceman died it was a different kind of a plaque they put in the window.

B: In your community was there a lot of people that went into the service?

L: Oh yes, there was quite a few.

E.M.: Did most of them come home?

L: Most of them did. I think back here they were quite proud of those that were in the service. They had it all listed. Those that had graduated from Wheaton High School and were in the service. Of course there were a lot of them did not go to high school at all. Oh yes, there is... Shannon Griffith is the other one. (*shows picture again*)

E.M.: So you graduated right after the war was ended?

L: Yes.

B: Speaking of graduation, I know things happened with V-E Day [in May 1945] and V-J Day [in August 1945]. What were some of the feelings when you found out the war in Europe was over?

L: There was a lot of elation, the church bells rang and...

E.B.: Whistles blew.

L: Yes, whistles blew. And of course in our little towns we didn't have as much as some of the bigger towns. They had the parades and things like that. But it was... and the churches, in our church anyhow, it was remembered in our prayers, and everybody did. Thankful that the Lord had seen us through this.

End of Side A. Side B begins at counter 000.

L: So, you know, there were a lot more servicemen.

E. B.: None of my brothers went, either.

(*tape disturbance*)

Well, I only had two brothers; in fact, I had a twin brother. Good Lord took him just like that. Heart attack six days before our seventieth birthday.

E. M.: I want to ask about Japan now. How did your community approach that when the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Japan? Did the government inform the US citizens that they were going to do this before it happened?

L: No. I don't think anybody realized that that was going to happen, as far as I know.

E. M.: Okay. So it kind of just happened?

L: Yes, we kind of wondered first. There were mixed feelings, I am sure; you hated to see all those people killed.

E. M.: Did you ever realize the effect of what a nuclear bomb could do to children?

L: Not at first. I don't think anybody realized how bad the after effects were.

E. M.: Like the birth defects?

L: Yes. No, I don't think that anybody knew about that.

(tape disturbance)

B: Lois, was there a difference with the victory in Europe to the victory in Japan? Was there a difference, do you think? Did you find that one was celebrated more than the other?

L: I don't know, probably the victory in Europe, you know, because that involved so many countries, and so many people in this area had ties to those people, to the people over there in Europe. You would be glad that it was over, probably that would be the main reason why. Japan, sure we knew, but our ancestors weren't from Japan, you know, they were from Germany. That is probably the main reason.

B: Okay, another question. President Roosevelt died during the war, on 12 April 1945. Where were the feelings on that?

L: I remember that day hearing it on the radio when he died. I don't know, I guess we have the way it is in our country, we have things in place that nobody's indispensable, you know. I don't recall anything special.

B: We'll just continue on with some more questions here, and then we'll give you some time at the end to add things. We talked about kinds of work and stuff after the war. Did your community change after the war, or did it continue on as you had remembered it during high school? Was there still that sense of pride?

L: I think it pretty much continued on. You know, I think patriotism in those days was higher; people respected the flag and the servicemen, what they had done, I think.

B: And even with the ration cards, did a lot of things change right away, did your life change after the end of the war?

L: Oh, it was nice to have some things again. Everyone was so supportive and I think things pretty much came back to normal.

E. M.: Did the men return to their jobs?

L: Yes. *(pauses three seconds)* But no, some people that had gone off to work in the defense plants, some of them never returned, returned to the area. Like Alice, you know, she stayed out there and then went to California to work. Some of them, it changed the lives of people. But the servicemen, especially like in our area, they

were mostly farm boys, the majority, they came back to the farm again and that is just about it.

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B: Another question. Did you realize the magnitude of World War II? Was it something that was a highlight for you?

L: I think so we had teachers in our history classes, that we really talked a lot about the war and what was going on. We had some pretty good teachers, especially in history and, we would usually talk, sometimes we would talk every morning about current events. My dad, too, was quite well informed on what was going on with the war. My mother not so much, but my dad was pretty well informed about what was going on.

B: And I forgot to ask: What did your family do? What did your parents do for a living? Did things change for them during the war?

L: Yes, we lived on a farm and we still kept on farming and, as I mentioned, we did build a new house during the war. At first it was hard to even get enough carpenters to work on that, but then some came home yet, one came home yet from the war and helped, and we had to get permits for all the lumber and stuff like that.

E. M.: What kind of farm did you have?

L: It was just a regular with only 160 acres, I think, maybe a little more. We had a little bit of everything. In those days you did, you had some milk cows, and we had some hogs, we had some chickens, we had ducks and geese.

E. M.: So you were always well fed during that time?

L: Yes, farmers probably had a little better time, better than people in town.

E. B.: I can remember milking cows by hand. Had a hard time sitting there milking them.

L: I never liked it that way; we would always drink... Me, I grew up in the 1930's, and it was hard times, Depression, and we never got to drink the whole milk; you had a cream separator, and separated the cream, and then we always drank the skim milk. You know it was the milk the pigs got, too, we always got it too. *(laughs)* I just had two, a sister and a brother, and later on a I had another sister, but being the pigs got that too, we always called it piggy milk. We got the piggy milk. *(laughs)*

B: So did you notice a lot of change from the 1930's to when World War II started?

L: Well, the times weren't quite as bad as they were during the 1930's.

B: So would you consider that you were you better off? Did you feel that the war maybe was not a good thing, but it helped along with the economy?

L: Yes, I think the economy stayed pretty good. I don't really recall that much about the prices during the war, if prices for corn and other crops were...

E. B.: That I don't remember either.

L: ...if the prices were that good, which I know during the Depression. I remember my father said once he only had a nickel in his pocket when he went to town one time, and he had to sell eggs in town for groceries and stuff. And I am sure you have seen... Well, when I was, see I was born in 1927, so I was in grade school way out in the country when it was so dry. The thirties, it was so dry.

E.B.: Oh, the 1930s. You wouldn't believe it, there were days you couldn't even see the sun, it was just like a snow storm.

L: Yes.

E.B.: Yes, I can remember, my dad had a field of corn and he never picked it, he just stuck the cows in there because the ears were just shriveled up.

B: At this point our questioning is pretty much done. We want to give time for you (*toward Lois*) and then for you (*toward Eldor*) to share anything else that you might want to. We'll start with Lois, and just go ahead.

L: Erin and Ben, do you have any more questions?

E.M.: Yes, I just have one.

B: We'll start with that.

E.M.: After the war, when the US was allied with England and the Soviet Union, they divided Germany [into occupation zones]. Do you have any ideas about that, or were you skeptical about teaming up with the Soviet Union for what they did during World War II, in that they killed people?

L: Yes, I think I was...

E.M.: Was communism really a threat here, or did you know much about what communism was?

L: Not for a while, I don't think, maybe not during the war, but later on I think we realized, because especially in church, the pastors would tell us what communism was really about.

(B, 541)

E.M.: After the war, were your feelings that the US should get out of Germany and just stay out, we did all we could do, or did you believe that the US should stay in Germany until it was rebuilt?

L: Well, I don't know. I think to a point I thought we should help them rebuild, but I think there were things that needed to be done in this country too, so there was kind of a mixed feeling about that, you know; we should take care of our own people too. I don't think I have too much else; I think we pretty much covered what I wrote here, the draft, (*has draft that she wrote before Erin and Ben arrived*) you were going to tell about our neighbor friend out on the farm that had an airplane. They had an airplane; this might be interesting.

E.B.: Yes, he had an airplane. I can remember it was a Sunday afternoon, that when us kids we would go over there and get airplane rides and stuff, and I was the last one to have an airplane ride that Sunday. Monday morning the city cop and another guy come out and took the carburetor off the thing. So they couldn't fly.

B: And was that at the beginning of the war?

E.B.: Yes, just about. And he was a mechanic and a farmer, you name it, but anyway, he took the motor out of that plane and cleaned it all up, it shined just like a mirror, took and put it in the house and then the house burnt and there goes the motor. Oh he was... I'll never forget that, because all the neighbor kids were over there after airplane rides. I know I was the last one that Sunday afternoon to get onto that plane.

L: On account of the war they didn't want him flying?

E.B.: Yes, it was on account of the war, there was no local airplanes like that. And he even built airplanes, but this was... I can remember my grandma saying, "Well, you guys can't go over fly that airplane no more." I used to love them airplane rides Sunday afternoons; you could see everything. It looked pretty from the top, it did, it looked just like that.

B: Was there anything in particular you (*to Eldor*) remember about the war, anything that changed in your life?

L: You got called up for the draft.

E.B.: Yes, I got drafted. I had to go for draft and get a physical, but I never passed. And why, I don't know; I should have asked. All that I can remember when I went through that physical, the last place I went, the guy looked at it and read us and put a big red "X" across the sheet.

E.M.: So were you relieved that you didn't have to go?

E.B.: Yes, I was 4-F then.

E.M.: Were you a farmer during this time, or what did you do?

E.B.: Yes, I was a farmer all my life. Except the last years, then my second oldest boy took over and then I went to (***) and processed chicken, hamburger, oh, the pounds of hamburger that we ground, oh my...

L: A lot of that you did for the war, too.

E.B.: Yes.

L: Yes, but that wasn't for this war.

E.B.: Yes, I don't know how many pounds of hamburger we ground, and I had to run the grinder.

B: So, Eldor, did anything in your life change personally? Do you remember big things changing? Did your days start differently, did it end differently?

E.B.: Not really.

L: Well, the gas.

E.B.: Yes, the gas.

L: It was during the time he was running around a lot. *(laughs)*

E.B.: Yes, that gas, that was something. You had to have ration tickets and always have a card for so much gas; if your book was run out, you was out of gas. That was it.

E.M.: Was it easier to get gas because you worked on farms, to run the machinery?

E.B.: Yes, that was hard to get tractor gas, yes, very hard. You had to figure out how much, how many gallons it took an hour, and all that stuff.

E.M.: So you had to figure everything out, I see. Did you work harder during the war just because you were helping out the country?

E.B.: Well, I don't know, I think it, I was never out working much. I was home, but I can remember during the war that during harvest, in those days they shocked oats

and threshed it. We had some German prisoners. German prisoners helped us thresh the fields.

B: Do you remember how they allocated those? How did you receive these prisoners, was it something set up by the state, or what?

E.B.: Yes, it was from the state, they were *Wehrmacht* [German Army], and they could only work for you one day, just one day, and the next day they were some place else. I can remember we had a sheet of paper, that one guy, he was really nice and, in fact, we wanted him to come back the next day. By golly, he did come back, and they were good. You know, I'm German, and I could talk a little German—now I can't hardly talk it, but then my mother talked German to us and we would answer in English, but my grandmother, she come from the old country. She felt bad, too, when all that was going on...

E.M.: Southern Minnesota is made up of a lot of Germans. My grandfather is German and he lives in St. Peter, another big German community.

L: Yes, Truman [Minnesota] is too; it had quite a few Germans. Where I grew up in Wheaton, there is quite a lot of Norwegians, Swedish, and German, too. You were called the Germans and we still, the older people, kind of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church down here, German Lutherans.

E.B.: I went to school out in the country, and that is where I went to church, too. The church is still going yet, but they consolidated the school with South Branch [Minnesota].

L: Almost every country church around had a school.

E.B.: Parochial school. I went to school with horse and buggy, Shetland pony. About a month later the pony laid down and died after school, after us kids were out of school. That was hard.

Otherwise the German prisoners come out during harvest time and shocked grain, and course some of them, you had to tell them just what to do.

L: Well, some of them probably didn't even live on a farm.

E.B.: No, no some of them we felt sorry for, well first time, and then some people were really mean to them.

(B, 638)

B: What was the feeling towards these prisoners? Was it something where you looked down upon them, or what?

E.B.: Well, not when they worked for us, no. Everybody associated with them, and treated them all good.

L: But some places didn't.

E.B.: No. Well, I can remember this one place, one guy said, when they came to pick them up at night, "Well, I should get the gun now." That was uncalled for. I don't care; they couldn't help it. They were against the war just like we were.

L: They were hoping it would end.

E.B.: My folks could talk German, and that's what they enjoyed.

B: What else would you like to add?

L: I can't think of anything else. Are you doing a study kind of on this, the Second World War?

B: Yes, pretty much. Our main goal was to find out about the home front and life for people that stayed home, because I think a lot of history deals with what all happened overseas. I think it is a good time to ask what happened here.

L: I do, too.

E.B.: I felt sorry for, I don't care who it was to go to the service, even my worst enemy. I still didn't want him to go. And like I say, I never passed my physical, and I had two brothers, neither one of them passed either, except my twin brother, he went for a physical three times. The first time he went for the physical he was supposed to leave the next day, then he got an appendicitis attack. He wasn't even out of the hospital a month and he got drafted again, and he had to go for a physical again. They asked him, the last time he was there, "What in the world are you doing here? We sent you home before." He said, "I've got nothing to say about it." We found out after all this that somebody pushed him [to go down there].

E.M.: You helped out here, so that was good.

E.B.: We figured we were doing our duty, too.

E.M.: So were you afraid the Japanese were going to bomb like the US after Pearl Harbor?

L: I didn't think they would come.

E.B.: I was kind of worried about it, that they would come over here and...

L: I think a lot of people were worried that it would happen.

E.B.: A lot of times you would listen to the news and then wake up and you would wonder if you would wake-up the next morning.

E.M.: Did bomb shelters develop then?

L: Yes, I think they had some bomb shelters. I think at school, too, we were told where to go.

B: You practiced that then?

L: Yes, but that is kind of...

B: Well, at this point I want to thank you both for the interview today.

E.M.: Yes, thank you so much.

L: I don't know if we helped you too much, being Eldor wasn't in the service, you know, not as much as someone in the service could have told you.

B: This is what we came for. I will be shutting off the tape recorder.

END OF INTERVIEW