

Interview with Unknown ISUE Student

Interviewer: Charles Petranek

1980

A: ... G-0-E-B-E-L.

Q: He came from Germany?

A: At the age of eighteen he came by himself. He was born July 26, 1862.

Q: What would he be to John Goebel?

A: Joe Goebel. I don't know. I think they're first cousins. I'm not sure about that, but they are related. They only lived about a mile from each other--my mother and Joe Goebel.

Q: Who was you mother?

A: My mother's name is Agnes Daugherty, D-A-U-G-H-E-R-T-Y.

Q: Okay. If we do an expanded version of this study, I have a name to use.

A: She could tell a lot more than I can, but this is really interesting to me to go back and see who these people were.

Q: One reason I wanted to interview you is because I have been interviewing the old-timers. I wanted to get your impression on what traditions have been passed, although you aren't all from the same family it will still be a big help. Your mother's dad was eighteen when he came here?

A: Right. He lived with his uncle. His name was Wiessendanger--W-I-E-S-S-E-N-D-A-N-G-E-R.

Q: Okay, lived with his uncle.

A: He married Caroline Berandes.

Q: Frank Goebel?

A: Yes .

Q: Caroline Berandes?

A: B- E-R-A-N-D-E-S. She was born here but her parents came from Germany.

Q: When did they get married? Do you know?

A: They were married in the St. Joe schoolhouse after the church burned down. She didn't know what year that was.

Q: The first church burned down?

A: Yes. We still have relatives in Germany. There is an Anton Goebel. I don't understand what she's written here. That's their address.

Q: Does she still write to these people?

A: My uncle, Philip Goebel, did. He was from Haubstadt. He's dead now. There were eight children in my mother's family--four boys and four girls.

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Q: Nobody writes now do they?

A: No, but he's only been dead over a year. It's been pretty recent that someone has corresponded with them in Germany.

Q: How many children are in your family?

A: Four.

Q: Are you the oldest?

A: Yes.

Q: How old are you?

A: Forty-two.

Q: Did you speak German at all when you were growing up?

A: Yes, I did, up until the time I went to the first grade. There were several children that spoke German when they went to the first grade but after that that all faded away. After First Grade nobody spoke the German language.

Q: When did you go to school? First Grade would have been 1943?

A: Yes, it was during the war.

Q: When were you born? 1938?

A: I gave you the wrong age. I was born in 1936.

Q: 1936. So, you are forty-four? You will be forty-four. So, you were in First Grade in 1942, around there?

A: Yes.

Q: You live in St. Wendel?

A: I live in St. Joe.

Q: Were you a farming family? Did your dad work in town?

A: He farmed. My grandfather farmed. It was all the same farm. My grandfather farmed this. He was an insurance agent.

Q: He was an insurance salesman, too?

A: Right. My dad was a toolmaker who also farmed.

Q: Where was he a toolmaker?

A: At several different places.

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Q: Did he have to go into town?

A: He worked for Burch Plow Works for years before he died. He died at age fifty-nine. He died young.

Q: How old were you then?

A: That was thirteen years ago.

Q: So, you were about thirty. What I'm finding out when going to St. Wendel and St. Joe is that at St. Wendel all of the children were speaking German when they first went to school. At St. Joe it seems to be half and half.

A: You're backing off. You're getting closer to town--Evansville.

Q: I'm kind of surprised that you did speak German that much because your dad did work.

A: The reason I spoke German was because my grandmother lived with us or we lived with her, however you want to put it.

Q: Oh, okay.

A: My grandmother got a weekly newspaper from Germany and she read that newspaper like a religious book. It was all in German. Everything was printed in German.

Q: She showed this to you?

A: Yes.

Q: Was your grandmother a pretty influential person in your family?

A: Yes, she was.

Q: She must have been because it seems like she carried on the traditions. It seems like she was saying you were only going to speak German here. Did she speak English at all?

A: Yes, she did. There was a lot of German between my aunts, my mother, and my grandmother. My dad spoke no German at all. He was an outsider. (Laughter.)

Q: He was a German, wasn't he?

A: No, he was not. He was from Kentucky.

Q: Oh! He was from Kentucky. Did he have any ethnic background of any sort? Or just from Kentucky?

A: I don't know hardly anything at all about my father's background.

Q: I find that people from the South don't have any notion of ethnicity. Their families have been there...

A: He didn't leave us with any impressions. Everything we got we got from our mother's side of the family. Everything was done their way. He just followed along.

Q: He went along. He didn't speak any German at all.

A: No.

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Q: Did he understand it at all?

A: I don't think he did.

Q: He didn't even pick it up?

A: No. My mother and grandmother could talk to each other and he didn't know what was going on.

(Laughter.)

Q: Poor guy!

A: No, no kidding. It was really that way.

Q: I believe it was that way. So, Dad didn't understand any. He was in the dark. Your grandmother was probably a very forceful person?

A: My grandmother and grandfather both were very strong people. They were very respected in that community.

Q: That was Daugherty?

A: No, that's the Goebel's. The Daugherty name was from my dad.

Q: Right, your dad.

A: The Goebel family was Catholic, but the Daugherty family was not.

Q: How did your mother ever marry this guy? What happened here?

A: He moved into St. Joe. He bought several acres of ground. He and his mother bought this property two farms away. They met going back and forth to work.

Q: Did the people in the community take very well to him? He wasn't Catholic.

A: No, he wasn't Catholic. Like I said, my dad was an outsider. He really was. He just did not fit into this.

Q: It seems weird that he could even buy the land there.

A: Well, I don't remember what the situation was on the land, but I think it was during the Depression and this was land that was put up for sale because of taxes due. I kind of get this impression.

Q: But your mother did marry him? Did he ever turn Catholic?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: When? At the wedding?

A: Right before they got married. They were married Catholic.

Q: So that would smooth it over then, too?

A: Yes, that helped but it was never like... You could just tell the difference with the people who married into German families.

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Q: What were some of the differences that you would pick up? He was an outsider?

A: I could see it more in Grandma's relationship to her in-laws that were German and the ones that were not.

Q: She did more and talked more?

A: Yes, she just favored those people.

Q: What were some of the other things? Was he in on any of the planning?

A: My mother and dad did buy the homeplace when there were eight children, so I feel that along the line somewhere... I guess it was because he was the only one who was into small farming. This was only eighty acres--forty acres in one place, forty in another. When you go to farming that's not very much ground. Philip Goebel, the one from Haubstadt, had a larger farm. That wouldn't have suited his needs, so he really didn't want the homeplace. Frank Goebel had a grocery store on the west side on Mt. Vernon Avenue.

Q: Which store was that?

A: Do you know where Will's Grocery is? Well, it's the next one towards town. She has flowers and things in the windows now.

Q: Oh, yes, it is Goebel, isn't it? Goebel Motors.

A: That's Harold who has the motors in there. That's Frank's brother. Philip lived in Haubstadt and Frank had the grocery. Harold is a retired fireman. Edward was County Treasurer at one time.

Q: Edward Goebel?

A: Yes. That was in the late forties or early fifties.

Q: Was he a Democrat?

A: Yes.

Q: Was everybody a Democrat out there?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay. Do they run a lot of the county politics from out there?

A: I think it is more split now than it used to be, I think. There are new people moving in all the time. It's really building up. It's changing more than I ever thought.

Q: St. Joe is?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: Do you notice St. Wendel changing as rapidly?

A: I think there are more people in St. Wendel who are children of people that are there. They are building. But in St. Joe there is more development.

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Q: So, St. Joe is going into development. Why do you think that is?

A: Greg Camp just bought a large section of property and has sub-divided it.

Q: Was it pretty easy to buy that land?

A: I don't know how he got hold of that land. My mother has land too. The farm that he bought, the people are still living so I don't know why they sold it to him. It's the property immediately south and southwest of the church.

Q: Are there signs up there with some type of estates advertised on them to the right as you are driving?

A: No, there's no sign there, I don't think. It's on to the left just before you get into St. Joe. It's St. Paul and St. Joe really. What type of people are moving in there? I'd say upper middle class.

Q: Are the townspeople concerned about this? Do they care? Does it matter? Any particular feelings?

A: My kids care!

Q: Why is that?

A: They liked it the way it was. Everything being country. It won't be country very much longer.

Q: How close are you to this development?

A: My mother's ground is right across there. We are three-quarters of a mile away from there.

Q: You feel that there will be some sort of pressure mounted toward your mother to sell?

A: Right, there will be. She has good ground. It's some of the best in the community.

Q: Who farms your land there? Do you rent it out?

A: My brother-in-law has rented it now, but Clayton Koester had rented it ever since Daddy died until about ten years ago.

Q: What type of German tradition do you think your mother passed on to you? The language, definitely. Any sort of little things that you might do? What type of tradition do you keep?

A: Well, I think Christmas and Easter are big family holidays where everybody goes to somebody's house, like our house or to my sister's house. Since my dad has died, we have never been to my mother's for Christmas or Easter or anything like that. She just refuses--no celebrations at her house which to me seems kind of odd. Maybe I will change, I don't know.

Q: Well, it might be just too big of a hassle.

A: That might be, too.

Q: There are so many memories there that she could be saying let's develop other traditions. It just might be too awful. Holidays are tremendously rough on people.

A: I think it is depressing to her.

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Q: Well, believe it or not holidays are a very depressing time for a lot of people. To forty to sixty percent of the population holidays are very depressing. Suicide rate goes up and all kinds of things develop.

A: Well, I think one thing is that my dad went to the Mayo Clinic and came back on Christmas Eve. They knew that he had cancer and would die within six months. That was on Christmas Eve. I think she associates that.

Q: Yes, and she probably doesn't want any of that.

A: We had put a Christmas tree up before they came home. That was the last Christmas we had.

Q: Did you know?

A: We didn't know that he had cancer until my brother who went with them told us.

Q: I can see why she wouldn't want to have celebrations. What about St. Nicholas Day? Was that anything special to you?

A: Yes, it always was. We would always hang our stockings on the doorknob because we didn't have a fireplace. We would have an orange or some hard candy. When Grandma was living, we would have a Holy card. Nothing elaborate. Just an orange or a piece of candy.

Q: Your grandmother is dead, too?

A: I was in eighth grade when she died.

Q: So, she would give a Holy card? Did Santa Claus ever come to your house? Did you ever have a Santa Claus?

A: The pretense of Santa Claus was that the living room was locked up for three or four days before Christmas to get ready for Christmas. We didn't use our living room like we do now. It was just heated for Sundays and special occasions. That was locked up for about three or four days before Christmas because Santa Claus was getting ready. (Laughter.) One morning we would wake up and everything would be there under the Christmas tree.

Q: You never saw Santa Claus?

A: No. We never saw Santa Claus while we were little.

Q: I have run across some people who had a Santa Claus come but he was a very stern Santa Claus who was respected.

A: Santa Claus used to come to school and the older boys used to get a whipping.

Q: Get a whipping? (Pause.) Now, you mentioned Santa Claus coming to school.

A: I can remember him giving the older boys whippings.

Q: Why was that?

A: Because they didn't behave. I guess just like boys are now or girls either one.

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Q: You mean they just goofed off when Santa Claus was there?

A: Oh, no they did that stuff all year long.

Q: They saved up stuff so they could tell him that they were good.

A: They did this all year long.

Q: So, Santa Claus would come in and give them a whipping?

A: Yes, he would give them a whipping.

Q: Now that is really different from our modern-day Santa Claus. Were you girls scared of him too? It didn't matter.

A: I don't think the boys were scared either.

Q: But this happened in school?

A: Yes.

Q: Those are the holidays--getting together and family traditions. Any special foods that you would fix?

A: We had goose a lot of times for Christmas. I don't know why a goose. I guess because that is what they raised.

Q: They raised them? Did you have goose other times a year?

A: No. I don't remember having goose any other time but Christmas. (Laughter.)

Q: What about other types of things that you would say are German traditions that were handed down?

A: I think a lot of the pork dishes that they cooked were German traditions. Like pork ribs and sauerkraut. They cooked cornmeal and made a mush and put liver sausage and pork sausage in there.

Q: What's that called?

A: Hahnhoess.

Q: How do you spell that?

A: Don't ask me!

Q: That is liver sausage and pork sausage?

A: Liver sausage and pork sausage cooked in a cornmeal and mush.

Q: Did it have cornmeal in it, too?

A: And different spices. I know it had nutmeg in it.

Q: Do you know how to make it at all?

A: No, but my mother makes that every once in a while. It is so good.

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Q: Can you get your mother to give me the recipe?

A: Sure.

Q: Get it and bring it here. We will put it in the book. We have a few recipes. It is hard getting recipes.

A: Now that is really a German thing.

Q: People have a difficult time identifying a German-type dish. You are the first one who has really labelled something--not the first one maybe a couple dishes, but there is not a lot. You ask an Italian about food and they go on and on. The pork sausage isn't really that seasoned, maybe some garlic.

A: Sage.

Q: See sage and garlic are it. Some people say yes, and others say no. Salt and pepper is real basic. You can buy that type in a store right now without much trouble.

A: Kuchens, homemade bread. My grandmother made kuchens and bread every Saturday. I can make kuchens.

Q: Bring your kuchen recipe and your homemade bread recipe. That would be interesting. Any values that you can think of as far as working, saving, cleanliness, or doing things?

A: I think that we were always taught that idleness is the devil's workshop. You had to keep busy. I find myself doing that also. Not to just sit down and do nothing. You've got to do something. I think that that is something that was passed on.

Q: Did you play very much? Did you have very much recreation in your household when you were growing up? The emphasis of this idleness thing is that you work very hard. So, Germans worked hard.

A: Yes, we did. I don't really remember that much about recreation except that when we got finished at night, we were ready for bed. We used to sit and listen to the radio. We'd listen to Nashville's Grand Ole Opry on Saturday nights. We didn't have electricity until I was in high school during the war. I think the only reason I...

Q: In high school you had to be...

A: I was in Eighth Grade when we first got electricity and a telephone. The only reason that we got the electricity to our house was because we had dairy cattle.

Q: Electricity came through during World War II or after?

A: It was during World War II. The only reason we got it was because of the dairy cattle. You couldn't get it any other way.

Q: How did you listen to the radio then?

A: We had a car battery that the radio was connected to.

Q: People in the city would have electricity already?

A: They had electricity, but we didn't.

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Q: Was that kind of a novelty for you?

A: Yes. When we got electricity that was fantastic. We had a refrigerator and everything.

Q: How did you preserve your food up until then?

A: We hung it down in the well. Everything was preserved in cans. Sausage and everything was canned. We were more self-sufficient than we are now. If the electricity goes off everything in the freezer goes bad.

Q: Did you get a phone at this time, too?

A: The phone was a year after the electricity.

Q: The phone came after? I talked to Tony Koester in St. Wendel and his phone came in earlier.

A: No, ours came after we got the electricity because of the cows. I do know that.

Q: That is interesting. A lot of things have happened in that whole area in a very short time-- the phone, TV, and radio. The changes are astronomical.

A: We got a TV in 1954. That was when I got married in 1954.

Q: Let's look at the changes. You got electricity ten years before that. You had the radio with the car battery and then the TV. When I was growing up, I never got TV until 1957, but we had electricity earlier.

A: We listened to the radio only on Saturday nights because you didn't want that battery to go dead.

Q: You would take the car battery out?

A: No, we left the battery out.

Q: How would you recharge it?

A: I don't remember how they did that.

Q: Just on Saturday nights. Anything else? Any other traditions? What I am picking up is there are not a lot of things that are really passed on. The language was, especially the further you out go toward St. Wendel. Some foods, thriftiness, friendliness, and picking up your yard, is that true? Do you always keep that clean?

A: Yes, it would always look pretty neat. I think most everybody's did.

Q: What about bierstubes? Did you have anything comparable to that when you were growing up? Like church socials?

A: Church Socials at St. Joe I think during the war or right after the war they cut it out. Now it's going strong again.

Q: Do people celebrate a lot during that time? Was there some recreation or did most people just work at putting the whole thing on?

A: You mean at the social?

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Q: Yes

A: That is just like a big family get together. Everybody enjoys it. They work together but it's still fun. I think the more you are involved in it the more you get out of it.

Q: Did you go the high school?

A: Yes, I did. I went to Mater Dei.

Q: Were you one of the first people to go to Mater Dei or was it a tradition by then?

A: In our family?

Q: Well, just around your area.

A: I think more people from St. Joe than St. Wendel went to high school. My husband is from St. Wendel, but he went to high school and was in the first graduating class at Mater Dei.

Q: When did Mater Dei start?

A: 1950 and 1951 were the first two years but they went to the Memorial Annex for the first two years. 1950 was the first graduating class.

Q: So, people really didn't go to high school up until that time, did they?

A: Well, if they did, they went to Reitz or to Cynthiana.

Q: Were there buses back then or not?

A: To Reitz I think there was. But there was such a strong thing on religious education that you were nearly shunned if you did not go to a Catholic school. There was no other Catholic school except for Memorial High School at that time.

Q: So, you were one of the first people in our generation that went to high school? Before World War II I don't think too many would go.

A: I don't think so.

Q: When you were in grade school were there a lot of people going to high school?

A: No, most of them did not go.

Q: So, it was eighth grade up until then. So, after the war.

A: After Mater Dei was built and after the war things really picked up. You were more compelled to go to school at least until you were sixteen.

Q: I wonder when they passed the law that you had to go until sixteen.

A: I don't remember what year that was when they passed that.

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Q: What was amazing to me is that I have run across a lot of people in their forties at St. Wendel's who just have an eighth-grade education. They don't even apologize for it. How is it then that you going to college? From the interviewing that I have been doing up there this seems to be a departure. People don't seem to value education.

A: I value it very much. I wanted to go to college right after I got out of high school and my dad said no way. He said girls don't need an education. It was just a waste of time.

Q: They probably don't even feel that boys need it very much up there. I haven't run across a lot of people that impressed with education.

A: My brother didn't go either, but he didn't want to go.

Q: What I am saying is the framework there is one of needing a basic education.

A: You need until eighth grade.

Q: Eighth grade so that you can do the farming and whatever else you need to do. After that is, is kind of a luxury.

A: Right.

Q: It's nothing defined. You don't just do things for the sake of doing them. You just don't go to school to learn because that is a waste of time.

A: Well, I feel that education is very important.

Q: Where did you get that idea? Do you know?

A: I really don't know.

Q: Maybe just going to high school for one thing.

A: That may be because I had a nun as a teacher who was super great. She really encouraged me to go on. She said one day you could be a certified Public Accountant. You really have one knowledge for it.

Q: So, are you in it?

A: I am in accounting.

Q: Good. How far along are you?

A: Some grades didn't transfer out here. I went to Lockyear's.

Q: Well, some of it does, doesn't it?

A: None of it.

Q: None of it does?

A: I tested out of some things.

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Q: Why don't they accept it? Isn't Lockyear's accredited? Oh, that's the problem. We accept credits from anywhere.

A: Not from Lockyear's .

Q: No kidding? Lockyear's probably isn't any worse than... Have you heard of the Jasper branch of Vincennes University?

A: No, I haven't heard of that. My son went to Vincennes University for two years.

Q: Well, that is all right.

A: He got a lot out of there, and his credits transferred. He's taking some classes out here now.

Q: We accept credits from just about anywhere as long as the places are accredited. Lockyear's is not accredited?

A: That is right.

Q: That's too bad. Did you test out of everything?

A: Well, I tested out of some things but it takes me so long. I'm a dialysis patient and my time is so limited that I can only do this much stuff.

Q: Do you have to go on dialysis three times a week?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you see on "Phil Donahue" the other day where they had this thing that is not a machine at all? They just shoot it into your abdomen.

A: Yes, but it is not very good. There is a lot of infection problems there. It's not affective. I have been on it for six years and feel comfortable with it.

Q: That is something!

A: Yes, but that is six years I wouldn't have had otherwise.

Q: That is true, amazing. Education has been coming upon you gradually. I would suggest you take all of the CLEP tests you can.

A: Yes, I have been . I took some when I would take one or two years off.

Q: If you have some background you should be able to pass them. If you took the CLEP in Social Science, you would be out of this class and also the Political Science course.

A: I didn't take the CLEP test because I thought I would like to take this class.

Q: I think it is a good class.

A: There are some things that I want to test out of but there are other things that I don't.

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Q: What is encouraging as far as education is that I see people going to high school more and eventually they'll want to go to college. There is just a whole market out there that hasn't even been tapped yet. I think there are a lot of people who will eventually see that college is worthwhile.

A: I think our kids in our family do. Our oldest daughter has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Evansville. She is in the high-risk nursery at Welborn. She's been on the transport team. Our second son went to Vincennes University and studied automotive.

Q: So, you got married pretty early, then?

A: I got married when I was seventeen. If I couldn't go to school I might as well get married. (Laughter.)

Q: Is there anything else you want to add because we have to wrap this up before class.

A: I don't think so.

Q: Okay. Did your folks make wine?

A: No, my dad didn't. My grandpa did but he died the year I was born so I really didn't know him. He did make wine.

Q: I stopped at Joe Goebel's and had two glasses.

A: You can't believe he makes wine!

Q: I had to have two glasses. I couldn't stop at one. I had two. They were good. His was a little dry wine and all of the others I have had have been sweeter. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate this.