

***Marjorie Edith Mosel Chapleau***

Interviewed by Marie McCabe on September 29, 1984 at an unknown location.

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*This is Marie McCabe, doing an interview for Historic Madison, Incorporated, on September 29, 1984. I am talking to Mrs. Marjorie Chapleau. Mrs. Chapleau, will you give me your full name, where you were born, and when?*

Marjorie Edith Mosel. I was born in 1901 at 931 Jenifer Street, Madison.

*And what did your father do?*

My father [Frank Mosel] was in the Madison Candy Company. He was president of the firm.

*Oh. Where was it located?*

In the 700 block on Williamson Street.

*I see. And did that mean you had a lot of candy when you were little?*

Oh, dear, yes. Too much. The pantry was always filled with chocolates and good candy.

*And your mother was at home?*

Yes. My mother was a marvelous homemaker. Our home at 812 Jenifer Street was built by my Dad. It was a large, eleven-room house. We did have some help from outside, but there was a lot of work all the time.

*What was your father's full name?*

Frank Mosel.

*And your mother's maiden name?*

Emma Hecker Mosel.

*And were they married when they were both fairly young?*

Well, my mother was 24 and my father was 28.

*Do you know how they met?*

Yes, I know how they met. My mother's father was a harness maker in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. My Dad was born in a little town near Sun Prairie, Bristol. He came down to Sun Prairie to learn the trade from Mr. Hecker. I think that's where they met.

*Well, how did he get into the candy business? That's a far removal from harness making.*

After they were married, they moved to Deerfield, Wisconsin, and my father was the harness maker there. Three of their children were born while they lived there.

*You were one?*

No.

*Who were your brothers and sisters?*

Let's see. My oldest brother was Frank, Junior. Then a sister, Ella Margaret Mosel.

*What year was she born, do you know?*

She was twelve years older than I.

*That would have been about 1889.*

Then there was another son, Joseph Henry Mosel.

*All right. Then from Deerfield, what happened?*

I don't recall how long... they were small children. I mean, they were maybe ten or twelve, fifteen, along there, when they moved to Madison. I was born soon after that. I think it was the following year after I was born that we moved into the home on the site at Jenifer Street where my father built this large home.

*But how did he get into the candy business?*

Well, that was probably through his brother-in-law, Joseph Kleiner, who was the husband of his sister [Margaret Mosel]. That was when they formed the Madison Candy Company. And there was another family in there, the Prendergasts. Let's see, one of them was Jim. I can't recall the name of the other one, but there were two Prendergasts in the firm with them. My father was president.

*I was wondering how he learned to make candy from harness making.*

He didn't have to make candy. He was in charge. No, he had nothing to do with making the candy. That was all done by other people.

*So they just bought this company that was already going.*

No. They formed a new company and they named it "Madison Candy Company," which was well known in the early days of Madison, and for many years.

*From about 1900 then, I guess.*

Yes.

*So you were the youngest child?*

No. I had a sister, Dorothy Mosel. She was about I think eighteen months younger than I. She was born at 812 Jenifer.

*Oh. So you had a fairly big family, to live in an eleven-room house.*

Well, by the time father built that house – and I can't remember just what year – some of the family had gone. My sister Ella was married to Harry Merrill in the home, in a large wedding, and my oldest brother Frank had left home by that time. He was two years older than Ella. Then there was Joe. During the First World War, my brother Joe served in France, so he was gone.

*But when you were little, when you were just a baby, you were all there?*

I suppose, as far back as that. They were so much older.

*That's what makes it different. I suppose they helped take care of you when you were little.*

Well, my sister Ella was really always like my mother. She was twelve years old when I was born and it was a big thrill.

*So you remember having a pretty happy childhood?*

Oh, yes. I had everything to be happy about.

*What sort of neighborhood was it there on Jenifer?*

Well, in those days I always thought it was tops. We had that gorgeous view of the lake. We

were across the street from it, but it was beautiful! The moonlight went right through our big windows in the living room.

*There were other large houses there, weren't there?*

Yes. It was a neighborhood of real nice homes, along the lake shore. Right across from us were the Alexanders. He was a professor at the university. They were very, very... they were from Scotland, and they were an awfully nice family.

*Do you remember other neighbors?*

Well, the Sperles lived right next to them. These two houses on the lake, across the street from us. Then there was a Harlowe Ott right there directly across from us. That was really just at the head of that park along there. What is that called? [Orton Park].

*I know that little park, yes. There were some people down along the shore, too. Were the Kronckes there then?*

They were farther out. I'm not out that far yet. A commanding view of the lake was had by the Albert Stondahls, who lived just a block from us, on [901] Spaight Street, on the lake. I used to go there a lot because I was a very good friend of Helen's.

*Oh, yes. I was going to ask you about your playmates.*

Yes. I had her right there, and there was Katherine Klueter, who lived in the next block. They're all on the lakeshore. There was a family by the name of Fauerbach that was very well known, too. They were in that block.

*Well, do you have recollections of your mother doing the cooking and the cleaning?*

Yes. My mother, even though she was a rather small person, had a lot of energy. She just loved her home and her family, and she was a marvelous cook. She got that from her own mother, Augusta Hecker.

*What nationality was that?*

By the way, Augusta was brought to this country from Germany by Governor Rennebohm's grandfather. He brought her and her sister Doretta Rethke, who lived all of her married life in Chicago. My grandmother was sixteen when she came over to this country.

*To do what?*

Well, she was married after she got here.

*But why did this Rennebohm bring the girls?*

Well, I don't know, really. I think that a lot of people were... I just don't know the conditions of the family, but apparently he decided to come and they must have wanted to come along. An interesting thing is that I have her trunk in my home, the one that she brought with her on this small ship that she came over on. On that ship there was a baby born when they were coming over to this country.

*Did you ever talk to her about it?*

Oh, yeah. I knew my grandmother real well. They lived in Sun Prairie. Her husband was John Hecker and they were a lovely couple. I used to love to go out there and so did Dorothy. We used to go out there and visit.

*And they would tell you stories?*

Yes. And, as I say, she was a German cook. She'd start right after breakfast getting dinner. And she had an organ. I was always intrigued with that. I always liked music and, of course, I started taking piano lessons when I was about eleven.

*Oh. So your mother had a big cooking range. Do you remember what kind?*

Well, in the first house that we went into. Of course, I was too young then. But I remember as I got to a few years old before they built the house, we had to live temporarily in another house that my father owned, right in back, on the street back. I do remember the old range in that home. But, of course, when we went into the new house, it was gas.

*And electric lights?*

Oh, yes. Our house was really lovely. It was made of the finest, like the [unclear] golden oak woodwork, which is handsome. It was decorated and a little later over years... well, yes, I was in high school. I was studying art and my mother let me pick the colors and the designs when they decorated. There was an artist came from Milwaukee, a Mr. [Roman] Pfeigel. I never forgot him. He was such a wonderful elderly man and could do anything with a brush. He made his own designs and his own stenciling, and he did everything by hand. He could be aesthetic. He put stripes right in the paint that would hold it. I used to go in the basement with him when he mixed his paints. I wouldn't miss it for anything. It was just what I really enjoyed.

*Did you have carpeting on the floor? Or were they rugs?*

No, they were rugs in those days. They weren't using carpeting at all.

*And what kind of heat did you have in the house?*

We had hot water heat with radiators.

*And a coal furnace?*

Yes. It was a large home to heat.

*How did the coal get in the furnace?*

My mother did most of that. I can remember shoveling some myself, if it had gotten cold. We had to keep that furnace going. That was one thing about it, but that's all they had then.

*And then you had to bank the fire at night, I remember, so it would keep until morning.*

But really it was a marvelously built home and the heating plant was perfect. We were always comfortable.

*That's good. With the radiators. And did you have a coal bin?*

Oh, yes. The coal was shoveled down from the outside into the bin.

*It slid down on a little slide.*

Yes.

*Yes. We had that, too. Well, I think that was a fairly common method of heating in those days.*

It was dirty, too. That's one thing about it.

*Yes. Probably soft coal in those days.*

No. They always used hard coal.

*Well, it's still dirty.*

But it made a wonderful fire. When you opened the door, I can still see that wonderful fire. We kept a big fire in there all the time.

*How did you clean those rugs? Your mother?*

Well, I think they had vacuums in those days. I'm not sure.

*I know they had carpet sweepers for a while.*

I'm sure we had one of those, yes, for every-day use.

*Do you remember spring cleaning?*

I think she probably did have somebody come in and clean the rugs. I don't think she could probably do that.

*Well, spring and fall cleaning used to be a big thing, I know.*

Tear up everything. I don't like to do that, do you?

*I don't think that's done very much any more, to take the curtains down and wash them out, take the mattresses out. I just don't think we feel that it's essential to do that.*

Oh, it used to be real hard to go through it, for everybody.

*But everybody did it, I guess. Well, what sort of meals do you remember your mother cooking? What sort of dishes?*

She was of German descent and she learned those wonderful dishes from her mother. I liked everything she made. In fact, I still have and use in my married life some of her recipes. There's one dish in particular I don't think I could have brought my family up without it. That is what we call German rice. Steam rice in milk until tender and then you beat eggs and sugar together and add it, all in the double boiler. It makes a sort of a custard. And then you put it on a large platter and pour over melted butter, sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon. It's fit for a king!

*This is dessert.*

Well, we use it more for a main dish, like a lunch. Still to this day, when my children come home, I make it.

*A favorite. Well, did you have things that I think of as being German, like hasenpfeffer?*

I don't think my mother knew how to make that, but my husband's mother did. She was also German and part Luxembourg, so that she made that. But my mother, everything that she made in the kitchen was perfect. She always made her own noodles and cut them real fine for chicken soup.

*Did she bake bread?*

Oh, yes. I'm glad you mentioned that. She would make the caramelized rolls, too. And she made Parker House rolls, more probably at the time that she would have her clubs, to entertain. She always had her homemade Parker House rolls. I never forgot. I have that recipe and I still make those and the caramelized rolls, and the coffeecake that she made.

*Did she bake on certain days and do laundry on certain days? Do you remember a schedule that she had?*

Yes, it seemed to me that it was a pretty regular program that we had.

*How did she do the laundry?*

Well, I can't remember the days when she didn't have a machine. I think there were days before she had a machine to wash with that she did it by hand. All of them did.

*On the washboard. And she hung the clothes outside?*

Always.

*And what about winter time?*

Well, I think in the winter since we had a large basement, I think she hung them inside.

*I think that's pretty typical. Well, what were your father's working hours? Was he home every evening and weekends?*

My father traveled and sold candy for the Madison Candy Company as long as I can remember. He was gone from Monday morning until Friday night. He covered a lot of towns in southern Wisconsin. Madison Candy Company was famous for their Yankee taffy, it was called – sometimes called peanut brittle. That was sold all over southern Wisconsin, for years.

*And did he deliver it then, or just take orders?*

Just took orders. The interesting thing to my sister Dorothy and me was what he called his candy case that he carried with him. It was terribly heavy. It was so large! It stood up off the floor maybe four feet, something like that. And when you opened it, you could just... it was sort of like an accordion. You could open up those shelves and he had all those chocolates and candy on display. That was so attractive to us. In fact, it was so attractive to Dorothy that one day when he was home she got into this case and did a lot of damage. I never touched it. I liked to look at it. We had so much candy around all the time, I didn't feel like I wanted to do that. They were glued in into the case. I think she found it interesting to pull those out.

*So what other kinds of candy did they make?*

Well, they made lots of different kinds of candy. I remember one called the "ting-a-ling." It was sort of a taffy foundation and then it hardened and then they coated it with chocolate. They were kind of hard to bite. Those were awfully good. And, of course, their caramels! I never ate caramels like they made!

*Did they have chocolate candies, too?*

Oh, yes. The big deal was the chocolate-coated bon-bons. The one I liked best was the maple centered one, the maple-nut center. Of course, I used to go to the factory frequently, just to see the women dip those chocolates. They'd have chocolate up to their elbow, really.

*How did they do it?*

Well, they were fast. By hand. They'd take that chocolate, you know, and then even after a certain time where it set, they would put the initial on, like "M" for maple, and that would stay so you could see it. That chocolate had to be a certain temperature.

*Did they hand dip them, are you saying?*

They were all hand dipped. They used nothing but the very highest grade of chocolate. They were really well known.

*And women were mostly employed to do this work?*

Oh, yes. All women. And they stayed for years with the company and did it.

*This didn't later get to be Bob White or Keeley's or something like that, did it?*

Well, Bob White came after that. It wasn't connected with the Madison Candy Company. But my brother Joe did go into the candy business of his own. He had on University Avenue a factory, a smaller factory, and retail candy.

*What was it called?*

I wonder what he did call that. I can't remember what he called that. I think it was before that that he was in business in the first block on State Street. He had a store there where he made carmeled corn. Do you remember that? Oh, they sold so much of that.

*That was your brother's? Just down a block from the Square.*

Yes.

*Sure. We used to get that going to movies and things.*

Now, my sister-in-law, Mary, my oldest brother's wife, made all that caramel corn. She worked there for years. Joe could not have run the place without her, I don't think. They had other candy, too, that she made.

*I remember. It was right on that pointed street, at Fairchild. Caramel corn was fairly new then, it seemed to me.*

I think so. It was awfully good caramel corn. She just had a knack.

*It was good, I know. Well, you had your father at home, then, weekends, and I suppose you were always happy to have him come home.*

Well, we were happy to have him, of course. But he wasn't any more than in the house when he'd take off for the Elks Club. He spent practically his weekend there. He had friends at the old Elks Club off the Square, and he played billiards and skat, a card game. He used to play in tournaments. That was quite a game. And so after supper Saturday night, he would go. But very often when Dorothy and I were small, Father had tickets for the Orpheum, which was across the street from the Elks Club uptown.

*That's Monona Avenue [now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard].*

We would meet him when the vaudeville started. My mother, Dorothy, and I would come up and meet him there and, of course, we heard all this wonderful music playing and singing. My sister Dorothy was born with a natural talent for music from a little girl on in that she could just hear these tunes and she could hardly wait until we got home. Then she'd get up on the piano stool that we used to have and she'd play them and sing them, whatever we had heard that day. She was really talented.

*So your mother really ran the house then, I take it.*

I would say that she did, yes. Without her we would have been lost. She was a wonderful person.



*How did she get groceries?*

Well, we lived so close to Breitenbach's grocery store, which was on Williamson Street, the far end of the block. It was just two blocks down to the grocery store. Of course, we had regular delivery. But I made a lot of trips down there, special, too.

*Did your mother call? I suppose you had a telephone and she'd call and order things over the phone.*

Yes.

*And then they'd bring them in a cart. Oh, I was going to ask you how your father traveled? By what means?*

By train.

*Around southern Wisconsin.*

Until when my brother was in France in the First World War, when I was the only one driving the car at home and I used to take my father to these towns.

*Do you remember when you got a car? That was pretty exciting, wasn't it?*

It seems to me we always had a car. I can't remember when I was in my teens, before my teens, but when I was driving a car, well, I was in high school.

*What kind of car? Do you remember your first one?*

Well, we had several. I remember several different kinds, because my father was also in the car sales business. They handled Maxwell and there were two or three others. One was the Rio. We had one. I remember driving one Rio sedan, seven-passenger, that was really the most wonderful riding car. It had all glass windows, but in order to put the windows in if it rained, you had to take them out of a place in the back of the car, a seat, which was very difficult. I remember many times. Sometimes we would travel with it home. Then if it would start raining, I'd have to stop and get those glasses out and they fit right in.

*Weren't they isinglass?*

Those were real glass. They were awfully heavy! That was kind of hard.

*Wasn't it unusual for a girl to be driving in those days?*

Well, I had a cousin, Gretchen Kleiner, that she drove her, as she called it, her "Lex," her Lexington. She always had that car.

*But I thought you got a lot of flat tires and had problems.*

I remember it wasn't anything. All I'd do was just sit and somebody would stop and fix it on the road.

*Didn't you have to crank it to get started? I thought that was sort of heavy for a girl.*

Not that car. That was beyond that. No, we didn't have to crank that. I couldn't have done that. That was a beautiful car, that Rio. I drove several different kinds of cars. The last one I remember was a Packard.

*Oh. Where was this dealership? Was it your mother's father had it, you said? Who was the car dealer?*

My father.

*Oh, your father. Besides the Candy Company.*

Yes. He was running the two of them. And my brothers were working for him in that, too. Joe, I think, was traveling for the Madison Candy Company, too, before he had his own business.

*Well, do you remember playing games as a child? Did you play any family games? Or just with neighborhood playmates?*

Well, the fact that my mother was forty years old when I was born and my Dad forty-four, you see, by the time we grew up, they were quite along in years. There was always a card table up, though, in our living room. If anybody came, and we had a lot of visitors, they'd have a game of, well, I think we played Casino quite a bit and 500, those games.

*Hearts, did you play?*

Hearts, yes.

*And rummy?*

Oh, yes. My mother, that was a relaxation for her. In fact, somebody that lived in the neighborhood told me just recently that they could see her up in my Dad's den in the window, playing rummy. I suppose she just got away from everything and relaxed doing that.

*So did you all play? Or just the parents? Or you all sat around and played?*

Well, whoever was there. If my sister Ella was home visiting, you know, she loved card playing. She was an excellent player. And, of course, we finally got around to bridge in later years. But, as I say, nearly everybody that came to the house liked to play cards.

*Oh, that's good. Well, did your parents go to church? Did you belong to a church nearby?*

No, they were not churchgoers. My father was brought up Catholic; when they were married, though, they were married in the parsonage. My mother never did join the Catholic Church. She was a Congregationalist. It just resolved itself to the fact that neither one of them... he got away from his church eventually, too, I think when he moved to Madison. He sang in the choir, the Catholic church choir, in Sun Prairie, in his younger years.

*So he was musical, too.*

Oh, he had a marvelous bass voice! Just unusual! In later years I got so I could accompany him, and I also loved to play when he played his cornet.

*I thought maybe he played an instrument.*

He could play the triple tongue, which was exciting. And he could sing. He wasn't so easy to accompany though. It had to be just so, just the way he wanted it. I knew I'd have to wait certain places. But we got along just fine. I thought a lot of him.

*What did you do on Sundays, then, when you were little?*

Well, how little do you mean?

*Well, the earliest memories you have. Your father came home weekends.*

As I say, he wasn't around the house much. He would go up to the Elks in the afternoon. He did come home for dinner. We had a nice dinner Sunday night. But he had always had to go up there

and see his friends.

*And Sunday, too.*

Oh, yes.

*Well, I wondered if you did anything on the lake. Did you swim or boat?*

He didn't care for the lake at all – just to look at it. That's why he picked this lot. I think he had a little fear of a boat. He was a United Commercial Traveler, UCT, a member of that, and we'd have a picnic every summer over at Esther Beach. The whole family would go down to the Wirka Boat House and there'd be a big steamer there that we'd all get on. But my Dad wouldn't go with us. He wouldn't go across the lake in that boat!

*He drove around it.*

Well, he'd have somebody drive him around. It was funny.

*How about your brothers? Did they learn to swim?*

Oh, yes, they liked the sports of the lake, my youngest brother, Joe, in particular. He had a nice boat, a sailboat.

*And did you swim? Did you go to the beach?*

Yes, well, the swimming... we did go across the street. We had friends that lived there and had piers and we did swim there, but it wasn't very nice because of all the fungi.

*Yes. The weeds and algae. I see.*

But we'd go anyway.

*Where did you go to grade school?*

It was called Irving School. That was in the 1000 block on Jenifer [1005], so I didn't have far to go to school. They didn't have seventh and eighth grade. I went there through sixth and then I went to Marquette for one year, and I was lucky enough to get back to Irving for the next one. For eighth grade.

*Oh. By then they had eighth grade.*

And from there I went to high school. The Irving School was renamed Harvey. In late years it was called Harvey School.

*I never heard of that one. Well, so you walked to school with your friends and your sister, I suppose.*

Yes. I had a very close friend, Charlotte Bremer, who lived in the 900 block on Jenifer [929]. We both went to the Turner Hall.

*Oh, did you! What sort of activities were there?*

Well, it was general calisthenics and most anything. I remember the German, Mr. Metler, who conducted the classes. He seemed to think we could do anything.

*Gymnastics?*

But I know when he wanted me to make a circle on the bar, I wouldn't do it. I couldn't do that. He was very strict. Gretchen Kroncke, Judge Kroncke's daughter, also went with us. I remember

so many happy times with her. Her grandmother lived right in back of the Turner Hall. We used to cut through there after our class and go to see Grandma and have cookies and something to drink. Then we'd walk home together.

*Oh. Did you do that all year-round?*

I don't think we did it in summer. I think that was a fall-winter thing.

*After school?*

Yes, it was after school. It was quite strenuous, tiring. I remember that.

*Yes, walking there and back. Do you remember any of your teachers in the school? The grade school?*

I remember Josephine Brabant. She taught fourth grade. Later in her life she taught at the University of Wisconsin for many years. There was another teacher, Mrs. Hoyer. I think she was the third-grade teacher.

*Do you remember playing games at school?*

Well, at recess we were pretty active. Let's see, what did we play? I suppose softball. I remember that they had wonderful ladders and playground equipment.

*But I was thinking about jumping rope and playing jacks.*

I think we did. Oh, jacks, yes. That was one of our real... and such a competition, you know! We had some real good jacks players. But it was always busy. We were always doing something.

*And I suppose you played the circle games, "Cat and Mouse," "Farmer in the Dell." But you may have done those earlier, in kindergarten. Did you go to kindergarten?*

Oh, I was lucky. My sister Ella taught at that school and so I got to go two years. It wasn't that I couldn't have gone on, but I was too young. Miss Emily, I think her name was, McConnell, was the head kindergarten teacher there for years. And, oh, we just loved her. And then I had my sister El teaching. It was pretty happy situation for me. I took cooking, I remember, and I remember the teacher. Her name was Winifred Miller.

*Now, what grade would that be?*

Oh, that must have been probably fourth, wouldn't you think? Or fifth? How old would I be?

*Oh, I don't know. We didn't have cooking until we were in seventh grade.*

Maybe it was sixth grade. But a tragic thing happened during that, during one of our cooking classes. We were on the first floor of the school and the kindergarten was across the hall on the first floor. During the time of our class, we were suddenly told that Miss McConnell had been shot to death. Her admirer came to the school with a gun, went to the kindergarten room door, and got her out into the hall. I remember we all had to file out past her covered body.

*Did you hear the shot?*

No. No. We were just busy in that room.

*Oh, what a terrible thing!*

That was a tragedy. She had been a friend of his but she lived with her elderly mother and she decided to... she was going to take a long trip and she decided to not see him any more, and this

is what happened.

*That's a terrible thing to impress on all those little children.*

Yes, that was.

*He didn't have to do it at school.*

He was out of his head, I guess. He was just demented. But to leave her mother, too. Her mother was so dependent upon her.

*Well, I wanted to ask you about your family holidays. Do you remember Christmas when you were little?*

Do I remember Christmas!? Yes, you know, the Germans are strong on Christmas. We just had wonderful Christmas, with all the fancy candies that were made, the candy with all the little pictures inside. They used to make that at the factory. It was very interesting. And the red cherries.

*Oh, yes. On a wire.*

We had those on our tree, all over our tree.

*And did you have candles on the tree?*

Yes, we had lighted candles. Now I wonder how my folks could just let Dorothy and me trim that tree and light those candles. She had curtains, those fine curtains, at the window and the tree was right up against it. We'd light the candles. Nothing ever happened.

*I'm sure they had to be careful. But you had lots of ornaments, I imagine.*

We had a great big box. I think my father got those through the candy business, probably. They were imported. The interesting thing is that I have two or three of those now that I have on my tree. But the rest, they were fragile... I think the historical library really could be interested in them.

*I imagine. Well, did you have Santa Claus come at night? Or in the morning?*

Yes. He came in the morning, I think. Well, he must have come during the night, because we'd get up... Dorothy and I were up so early to see what was around.

*Do you remember any of your Christmas presents especially?*

Well, that was quite a few years ago. It just seemed to me that if we would make our wishes known, we usually would get that for Christmas.

*Did you hang stockings?*

Oh, yes!

*Did you have a fireplace?*

We had those great big walnuts. Yes, we had a beautiful fireplace. I've never seen one like it. It was green tile, dark green tile. Handsome! Such a pretty mantle. I remember the andirons. They were brass, really heavy ones, with a huge ball on them, that just set it off. I feel real bad to think I didn't see that I had those. I should have. I didn't do it. They were gorgeous.

*I suppose they went.*

I never knew what happened to them.

*You said you had walnuts in your stockings.*

Oh, great big English walnuts. I always loved those. And what we called nigger toes, the Brazilian nuts, and hazel nuts. There were all kinds of good things. And candy canes, which they made, and we had those on the tree.

*Did you have an orange in your stocking?*

I don't remember. Probably more like an apple. I don't remember. The nuts I remember. It was a big stocking. It would last us for quite a while.

*Did your mother make fruitcakes and other things?*

Oh, my. At Christmas she baked... she just baked everything. One thing that I remember, we all remember, are her almond cookies.

*Pfeffernuss? Did you have those?*

I used to help make those. Roll them, you know. She baked everything at Christmas time. She had so many good goodies that she would fix.

*Did you go to your grandparents for Christmas? Or did they come and visit you?*

Of course, I was smaller then, when they were around. I think they died when I was probably eight or so.

*So you had just your immediate family.*

I think most of the Christmases were at our home. I can't really remember going out to Grandma Hecker's for Christmas. I went in the summer, but in the winter it was harder to get there.

*How long would you leave the tree up?*

Oh, not as long as I've left mine up. I'm known for that. But I think probably two or three weeks. We always had the old-fashioned Christmas tree.

*Oh, the double balsam.*

No, the short-needle. Was it a fir? It was the old type. I have tried and I have had one in my house, but they don't hang together at all so they're not really practical any more.

*That was a magic time in a child's life, wasn't it? And I suppose you did have wagons and tricycles and roller skates and skates?*

Oh, yes. We were always doing something. I used to go to Orton Park to roller skate. It was a couple blocks down. The cement was so smooth that it was different roller skating there. Right straight through. Right through the park. It was just wonderful skating! And it didn't seem to have any separations in the cement. I remember that was the place we always hit for, was Orton Park to roller skate.

Of course, the lake, you know, in the winter. I must tell about a harrowing experience, though. It was real cold and everything had been frozen on the lake. All the children, all the kids from far around would come and they'd skate. That was just by the park where I lived. So I came up to the house for something; I was gone maybe just to get warm for a little while. When I came back, the ice had broken. I think down the lake about two blocks there was the brewery, the Fauerbach Brewery, and the heat had come up under the ice. Here all these children were

floating around on great big pieces of ice. They had to try to get people along the shore that had boats in their boathouses to help. They did rescue all of them, but it was pretty bad for a while. It looked terrible.

*I bet they were all screaming.*

I witnessed it! I wasn't out there, but I saw it from shore.

*You just missed it.*

Oh, yes. I was real glad.

*Well, where did you go to high school?*

Well, that was the Madison High School. It was the only high school in Madison at that time, except for the University High School.

*How did you get there? That was quite a ways.*

I walked.

*Did you?*

We had streetcars and I sometimes took the streetcar. My friends, Helen Stondahl and Charlotte Bremer and Janet Breitenbach, she lived farther out on the lake a block or so, we walked to school together usually.

*It could get pretty cold, though, and big pretty snowdrifts in the winter.*

Well, it seems to me that it is funny that we could get through. I think it was pretty hard sometimes. I used to get awfully tired, going up King Street, and then we still had to go around the Square and down a block off the Square to get to school. And usually we were always in a hurry. It was kind of pressing.

*But I guess everyone was conditioned to... you just planned to walk in those days.*

But the streetcar went right by our house and in the winter, of course, it was heated a little, but not much.

*So on really bad days you could take that.*

But the summer streetcar was glorious! It was all open. We used to ride up to the cemetery from my house and ride back, just for fun.

*On a weekend, on a Sunday?*

Oh, yes, any time. After school.

*What did it cost to ride that?*

I think a nickel.

*You could go all the way out and all the way back.*

Well, I think we probably had to give him another nickel to come back. But it wasn't any more than that.

*Of course, a nickel was not to be sneezed at in those days. I remember you could get a great big candy bar for a nickel.*

The funny thing of it was, you know, with all the candy I told you about that we had at the house... I liked those licorice ropes. On my way to school, just before I got to school, there was a little tiny store that carried all these, and nigger-faces, and stuff like that. If I had any change at all, that's what I'd spend it on.

*And then you'd have black teeth for school.*

Yes.

*Did you take just ordinary classes? Did you plan at that time to go on to university?*

Well, I was really awfully busy in high school, because I took my piano work at the Wisconsin School. You see, I'd been taking lessons twice a week from Ada Bird, the founder of the school. By the time I got to high school, I continued those two lessons a week, which was pretty demanding.

*You went after school for the lessons?*

Yes.

*And then you had to practice every day, too.*

Oh, yes. I had to be prepared twice a week instead of once. Of course, I loved to practice. I really liked to do it.

*What kind of piano did you have at home?*

We had an Emerson upright. A good old Emerson.

*And you had had that before you started to play?*

Yes, that had been in the family. I remember Dorothy playing on it when she was a little girl. She played long before I did, you see.

*And did she take lessons, too?*

I was going to say that I can thank Dorothy for my starting piano lessons with Miss Bird. Miss Bird's family lived next to my grandparents in Sun Prairie and my mother, when she was a small girl, took lessons from Ada Bird when she first started teaching, when she came back from Europe. She was so afraid of her. She was so rough that she just couldn't continue on. One day she went over there. She had her one finger all wrapped up with a cloth and Miss Bird's mother came. She said "Emma, what's the matter?" "Well," she said "I cut my finger. I can't take my lesson."

Well, I tell that because when I was ready to take lessons, she knew all the Bird family and she knew that Miss Bird was a wonderful teacher. She wanted me to take from her, but she was afraid I wouldn't be able to take it. She just kept putting off starting me. Dorothy, my sister, got tired of hearing about it, so she took it in her own hands and she called the school and she said "Mrs. Mosel wants to start Marjorie in piano." She made an appointment for Miss Bird and Nettie Gale, who was taking care of the office, a personal friend of Miss Bird's, to come out to our house one evening. I remember that very well.

*Dorothy was your younger sister, wasn't she?*

She was only about eighteen months younger. She was a different type of person entirely.

*You said you started when you were eleven.*



Yes. But she took things in her own hands. She always was that way. But, you know, I might not have started. I feel really that I'm indebted to Dorothy, because they came out and I started in a couple days and kept right on going. I was just very fond of Miss Bird. I felt just awful. She died in her early fifties of apoplexy. She worked very hard.

*Weren't the Kayser sisters there?*

Oh, Stella? Stella Kayser? Yes, she taught piano there for years. Stella was a pupil of Miss Bird's, as was... no, Idelle Strelow didn't study with Miss Bird. Lucille Olson did and Adelaide Otto-Broman studied with her. In fact, Miss Bird trained most of her faculty herself and they were all wonderful pianists.

*Well, did Dorothy take lessons then after you did?*

Then my mother thought, well, she has talent and I'm giving Marjorie lessons. So there was a teacher that came to the house: Arline Coffman, her name was. She was known all over Madison.

You could see Miss Coffman walking on the streets going to her homes where she taught in those old days. She had Mrs. Coffman come to our house to give Dorothy lessons and, of course, it just didn't work. Dorothy just knew so much about music, she couldn't apply herself and she didn't apply herself either. She didn't want to take lessons. Mother didn't know what to do. I guess that Mrs. Coffman was pretty insistent on continuing. But what Dorothy would do, on the day of her lesson, she would get on the streetcar in front of our house, she'd go out to the Last Chance on the east side. Then she would stay on the streetcar and ride out to the cemetery on the west side, and then she would come home. By that time, she'd be gone.

*She didn't want the discipline of lessons, I guess.*

Well, she couldn't apply herself to it. Anybody that had that... she was a prodigy, really. And she developed into a real performer in her adulthood. She played in all the charities, all the shows here. She put on her own act.

*Well, didn't she ever have lessons?*

No. She could improvise anything! My father was so proud of both of us. I was studying and working hard and memorizing pieces. When the company came, he wanted us to play. He'd ask me to get up first. I would play my piece. But she could hardly wait until she pushed me off the bench. She'd get up there and improvise and make it sound like an orchestra. You can imagine how popular she was! It wasn't very easy for me.

*You had to work for it.*

But I was used to that. She was so different.

*And you got along well anyway.*

Yes. I would give anything if I had recordings of her. She played the "Missouri Waltz" like I never heard it played.

*That would have been nice, wouldn't it?*

Her daughter lives in Detroit. She's sorry now, too, that she didn't see to it. Even after Dorothy got into a nursing home, she played. They'd take her to different nursing homes and she would play.

*Oh, she was a performer then.*

Yes.

*Well, I wondered in high school if you remembered any of your teachers there?*

Oh, yes. I studied Latin. I had Leta Wilson and in French I had... what was her name? I don't think I remember that name.

*Were the Moseley sisters still teaching?*

Yes. Grace. Grace was in high school. I never had her, but she was there.

*Walter Frautschi mentioned her.*

I had in math... I haven't thought of this. I can picture her. She was a very good math teacher. But the one I liked when I got to algebra, geometry, was Voyta Wrabetz. He was principal of the school, I think, at the same time that he taught. I'm not sure about that. What was the name of the fellow that was before him? He left for service in the First World War and he was killed, so that was when Mr. Wrabitz became principal.

*Was Emma Glenz teaching there then?*

Yes, she taught German. I never took German. I knew Emma from the time I was a small girl. At the Wisconsin School of Music. She was a first cousin of Stella Kayser. She came to every recital. I knew her real well.

*She was active at Turner Hall, too, when she was little, I know.*

Did she tell you that?

*Yes. Her father was.*

Oh, yes.

*They lived near there.*

Then when I was in high school I took a course... you see, Mrs. Glenz had to give up teaching during the World War. They took German out of the schools, so she went to Chicago and got her art training. Miss [Elizabeth] Buehler had her. Miss Buehler took Miss Bird's place as head of the school when Miss Bird died. Miss Buehler had been Miss Bird's pupil at the university before Miss Bird started the School of Music, so she just naturally inherited that. And then I took from her from then on, twice a week, until I graduated.

*In the summertime did you continue your music?*

Every summer.

*What else did you do? Did you go on any family vacations?*

Our family didn't travel. I don't know whether so many people did it in those days. The people that we knew around there, it didn't seem to me they took trips. Of course, we used to go in the car. We didn't go very far. We had relatives... Mother had sisters in Sun Prairie and DeForest. I always did the driving. We had many a good time out there.

*But you didn't go to northern Wisconsin?*

No. Not until I was married and my husband liked that.

*Or to Yellowstone or anything?*

We went on our vacations up there. Well, I tell you, there was so much. We went to Tenney Park a lot to swim. There were a lot of things to do. In the summertime we used to have the May pole dance. I think that was at Tenney Park. I took part in that. That was an awful lot of fun.

*I suppose there were ballgames to go to.*

Oh, yes. I always liked baseball. And, of course, I still practiced all the time. I was practicing and I was playing in the neighborhood, playing with the young folks in our back yard. We used to play softball a lot.

*Did you help with the cooking and housework?*

Yes. I really liked to do that. I learned a lot from my mother by being in the kitchen. I was real good about cleaning up afterwards, she always thought.

*And your older sisters were gone then?*

Dorothy didn't do one solitary thing!

*You were the one who was steady.*

Well, she was just built that way. She had more... she had a big following, you see, with her playing. Everybody wanted her around. She could just drop in any place and entertain them, so she was gone a lot from home. I was the home gal. I liked to be at home. My mother, she was the sweetest person that ever lived.

*Well, and with your father gone so much, it was nice...*

That's right. We were very close. It was hard for me to give her up. But, you see, I had her so many years. She was eighty-eight.

*That is amazing. What year did she die?*

Oh, dear. When it comes to dates...

*I was just wondering when she was born and I was going to count back, but maybe you know that. She was forty when you were born, so she must have been born about...*

My children, I think Joan was about ten or eleven and she's forty-five now.

*Well, I would say if your mother was forty when you were born, then she was probably born about 1860 or 1861, isn't that right? So if she lived to eighty-eight, that would have been about 1942, about 1950 almost.*

I would think. Yes.

*Well, did you go on from high school to the university?*

Yes, I went two years. But I was still... you see, piano was my interest and I knew then that I wanted to teach. Everything pointed to it. I also had taken art all through and I loved art in the grade schools. I was always competing. I drew posters, and drew a great deal, and painted. I did that all through high school. I spent a lot of hours on a lot of different art projects. So I had to choose. It got to the point I really didn't have the time to follow through with both of them, because they both take so much time. So I had to choose between one or the other. And, of course, I couldn't give up my music. I hadn't thought of teaching art, but I just loved it. I did

give up the art work. No, I didn't at that point, because I went to the university and I took art for two years. I had Burgess Ahlers. Strangely enough, I had her in high school. She was teaching art there and just at that point she went to the university, so I had her there. She was excellent. She was marvelous at figure drawing. Just wonderful! That was hard.

*So what did you do after two years?*

Well, you see, I was getting ready then to get my diploma in piano with Miss Buehler. Of course, it was just understood I was teaching in the school right away, at the Wisconsin School. In the meantime, about that time, you see, I met my husband. I was twenty, I think, and he was twenty-four. We went together four years, so I continued teaching.

*You taught then?*

Yes, that's what I did. I taught piano.

*Right there at the Wisconsin School?*

And I also had a class at home. I know on Spaight Street we had an apartment and I had a nice class there.

*What did your husband do? How did you meet him?*

Well, it was really... you know how those things happen. It was Thanksgiving and he was a Delta Chi, a fraternity man. He had a friend in the fraternity who was engaged to a girl from the East who was coming to Madison to see this man. They got the idea of having a big party out in Middleton for the whole day. I was invited and we could bring somebody. At that time I knew somebody else and I asked him to go with me. I was driving the car and I also took a couple that lived, one next to me on Jenifer, one across the street. We went to the party and who should sit across from me but my future husband.

*And what was his first name?*

Elmer.

*Was he of French extraction?*

Oh, yes. He had several nationalities, though. His mother was German, Luxembourg. Her people came from there. And some English. But his father was German and French-Canadian. There are a lot of Chapleaus up in Canada.

*And so you met him at that party?*

He sat there. I met him for the first time that night and well, I thought he was pretty nice. Apparently it was mutual. When it came to dessert, we had pumpkin pie. I noticed that he ate his pie right... he didn't hesitate about that at all. It was gone like nothing. So I offered him mine. I think I was probably watching my weight, you know, how in those days you do when you're young. Or else I just had a hunch it was the right thing to do. I don't know. I gave him the pie and he just ate that one, too. It wasn't very long before he called me to go to a real nice formal dance at the Park Hotel. He was on the Badger Board and that was the beginning. We went steady for four years. We took in all the concerts that came and all the plays. He was wonderful to me.

*What sort of business was he going into?*

He did change. He was with... at the time we were married he was with the Highway

Commission. It was always office work. He graduated in commerce and advertising, and it was the Highway Commission that was his first job. What was his next? I think it was the Straus Printing Company. He was head of the office there. And then he was with Paul Stark Realty, too, for a while. I can't remember if that was before that. He went on in real estate. Took care of the office there, too. I think from the Stark Company he went to Eldon Russell Associates Real Estate and Bonds, and he took care of all the real estate. He sold real estate.

*Where was your first home? You had an apartment, did you say?*

Yes, that was on Spaight Street.

*And what year were you married?*

1925. We had a lovely big wedding in this lovely home of my folks. But it was an awfully hot evening, August 29, and it was a terrifically hot day to be getting ready. I remember my uncle, my mother's brother, who lived in Sun Prairie, worked for a tobacco man whose wife raised gladiolas as a hobby. Uncle Henry came in his car and the whole back seat was full of beautiful gladiolas for us to use. Beautiful!

*And did your sisters stand up with you?*

My sister Ella, my oldest sister. Yes.

*You didn't belong to a church, so what minister did you have?*

That's very interesting. My husband had a very good friend – maybe you've heard of him, Oscar Christianson. Did you ever hear of that name? He had been a well-known lawyer here in Madison, but before that, when he was in school, he was ordained and had a ministry, but then he went on into law. Well, it was an understanding with Christie and several other fellows that he knew, that when they got married, he would perform the service. I thought a great deal of him, too. All through our married life they were friends, Oscar and [his wife] Lucille, along with several other couples. We had a dinner club once a month, potluck. We just had wonderful times.

*And then you had children?*

Yes. Craig was born four years after we were born, 1929. He's now fifty-five years old.

*Is that your only child?*

No. Ten years later Joan was born and I think eighteen months later Jimmie was born. I've had a very interesting family, and I'm fortunate enough to have my two sons live in the Milwaukee area, so I see them real frequently. They're wonderful to me. And I have six wonderful grandchildren. Besides that, I am a great-grandmother, as of August 30. My grandson Mark has a little baby daughter down in New Orleans. The nice part of it is that they're coming up here in December. He has finished his Ph.D. in cardiac physiology down there and they're going to Iowa City, where he has a wonderful post.

*Oh! So he'll be not too far away.*

That's what they wanted. They wanted to get back up so they can go to Greendale where their folks live. Her people live in Greendale, too. And I do hear that the mother, Colleen, says she's bringing the baby up.