

Page # 27  
Side B

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
OF  
RUSSIAN-MENNONITE IMMIGRANTS  
of the 1920's (Ontario)

Part 2 of Interview #16 conducted by Henry Paetkau, Graduate History Student of the University of Waterloo on behalf of Conrad Grebel College under the direction of Walter Klassen.

Date of Interview: Friday, July 30, 1976 - 9:30-10:30 a.m.

Place of Interview: Residence of Interviewee, 12 Chestnut St.  
Kitchener, Ontario

Interviewee: David Wiebe

Interview:

PAETKAU - Mr. Wiebe we talked about the Revolution and so on last time. Do you recall after the Revolution what conditions were like and then the government brought in a new economic policy ???  
12

WIEBE - Yah. I remember although I wasn't at home at that time. Really when we heard about ~~some as it was~~ was an accomplice in the army but it might have been end of <sup>16?</sup> ~~maybe~~ before I was drafted. Yes, they, one day they praised the glory of Communism that everything would be the same, everything is going to be alike and everything and the song we sang, "the International,"  
22

some of the old ones over here know what I mean, "He who have nothing, he who have all." and so on. It can only be achieved when it is owned by everybody, everything and everybody and the government does it all. They have in no way gone as far as the plans were you know, Unions plans, they kept that a little quiet, not to stir people up you see. Every child should be raised with them-- ? 27

But now they have their nurseries you know and they do partially raise them you know but they still when the mother has finished work and the little child is there she picks it up but that wasn't like that. That's not what our <sup>30?</sup> troop told us--the brain washer. He said everything would be on. They would raise a society, a real Communist society. According to them there shouldn't be

~~35~~

a church-goer in Russia long before this but there's still more, you see. So ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~Union~~ works from one side and the other works from the other side, and then I almost wanted to use the phrase, 35

that one book I remember a lot from, " Who ? Whom- "Who will get Whom" . That means" yourself- you'll bury you. That's all on the same line.

Then all of a sudden they praised that the Union and his wisdom has allowed smaller business places , smaller farms and smaller this and that, not the really big ones you know but the small ones to operate on their own--back to the old system just to get us out of the lurch. See now they had again the plan on the Russian peasant and on our people, I always say their bread basket was filled by our people. Not the Mennonites alone, all the Lutheran Germans, around the ~~Volga~~ <sup>Volga</sup> , all the ~~Swiss~~ <sup>Schwab</sup> Germans, 47 they all, they were all number one farmers. Maybe our homes were a little bigger, maybe our farms were a little bigger but they were all good farmers. And noone but ~~noone~~ at no time has the Russian government bought one kernel of wheat from anybody else. Wheat that solded, solded, solded and solded by <sup>the</sup> millions of tons, maybe not in one year millions but there was a lot, so Germany bought it and that's what the praise done. Now you know how that works, you, they brain wash us one way to day and then all of a sudden overnight there is a turn and one begins to think. Then the great brainwasher ? <sup>Batrod</sup> that's ? translated that would be that comes from

57

"--the Political leader by the hand" That's translated the way it is, well you wouldn't use it that way, that's the political advisor we call him here. That's what it was. Well then he got sick, had a nervous breakdown, was taken away and then a young fellow came, I believe one year younger than we were , we were born 1901 all that served in that place the Military Hospital, that time I told you how we got out of the regular army. And he took over and for some reason which I never have found out he just absolutely was in love with us German boys and everything that was German. All the big houses, the big windows the very clean homes and that, so he must have been around a little bit or his father told him, one of the two. He tried to explain that ~~we were~~ <sup>we were</sup> better friends, that it was necessary, Moscow and further up there, well you've heard of <sup>Willy's says, "Wim. was his... Willy"</sup> everything goes <sup>Yes, I says,</sup> but the people that produce all that stuff they're going hungry too. At home I says we have very little to eat at this time because they just cleaned us out. We weren't big farmers but we always had lots because we looked after

a big orchard, about 90-100 acres, all trees. His father was a real tree man, learned that professionally and Thiesen you know he watered it and it was so neglected and it was barren and it wasso good, got so good that we didn't know what to do with it all but they came and bought it all and the biggest part I would say <sup>about</sup> 60% was all fall and winter stuff. They bought it up, they came and got everything we didn't have to sell it, they packed it <sup>then</sup> and shipped it away to the city. So they, I told them that everybody unless he had something on the side like we with this orchard, even the great grain growers I said, they have very little or a lot of them will go to bed half hungry *at least* right now. And of course all kinds of excuses were said and he said "but we have to do this and we for one," You see a lot of 100% Communists were against what the Union was doing. They knew that we would all--I had second thoughts and so I guess I had lots more and especially those that wanted to become party members which I <sup>at</sup> no time had considered in the next 100 years if I <sup>had</sup> ~~were~~ lived that long. Well and then as soon as *(that's what you really want to know)* as that came in anybody can tell you, more of those people that were at home then and were farming <sup>you know,</sup> everything went up, the small stores, business, shops, I would say the big factories I would say, something like the government had that wasn't nationalized it was just taken you know, taken over. I don't think they were, not the <sup>munition</sup> factories, they wouldn't take them over but all this <sup>first</sup> what was concerned <sup>with</sup> daily food. That all come up you know. And our work would <sup>(?) I don't know</sup> be unionized while I was in the army yet. And the ones that followed, <sup>well,</sup> everybody knows what happened then, he didn't go too strong right away but every year a little bit more. Everyone that was against him, I don't know if it's new to you or not that the political parties at that time <sup>was</sup> just <sup>not</sup> the ruling Communist party. They tried to get upper hand and get everybody to it but there was still the ~~Mensheviks~~ <sup>Men shoviks</sup> <sup>(?)</sup> They were still strong. That's sort of mild Socialists and a few others but Stalin of course cleaned them out one by one and he didn't start right away with the poorest people. He started with those that worked the hardest for him. That's why I say the pinkies around here, they think that if Communism <sup>should</sup> take over here they get the big job, they get the bullet the first. Everything gets cleaned away that knows something, everything gets cleaned away that could in some form be against you or organize against you, these go first. I got the whole list here, I want to throw that away <sup>so</sup> I threw a lot away, I marked a lot down so I could argue with people around here the first years when they wanted to tell me how good it would become there. But all those, just a few " <sup>you know.</sup> " All these first Bolsheviks that worked much harder than Stalin--Stalin was a murderer that's all he was, He used to throw bombs at the coaches that were transferring money

105

114

125

from one bank to the other, but he gave that to the political cause and that's what made him the name. And he was sent away too, that's where he got his name started, comes from <sup>Stal's</sup> Stal and that means steel. But I don't think there was much steel in him. Now what you want about the ? / 32  
 I believe I'm coming into that what I already told you That was 1923--24 and how long that really went on I ~~really~~ don't know. I come home-June 11 we left ? / 37  
 that's called ? today and 17th of June I was home. I was 5 days with my parents and they had everything sold and they left. ~~And~~ I was taken off the passport because I wasn't home in time (??) <sup>(unintelligible)</sup> home, I was very lucky there. I came out already with the second one. ↑ That was in 1924, Yah.  
 That was between July--June 17th--the dates are some place but that doesn't matter. In July I left with the second. With the second group I left from Austria. But it really was the third group leaving for North America you see from the one group left already in 1923.

PAE + AU:  
 That was  
 in 1924?

Paethan: Can you tell me about your trip out of Russia? What was that like?

Mine was very smooth but some wasn't. Mine was very smooth, the one that shouldn't have had it smooth, I was a man just out of the army. And we had little booklets, you could call them little small Bibles of the armour of Communism, well Communism and army combined. And that's where it tells you the rules and regulations. While other people treated them as garbage I really studied that thing, I knew it almost by heart. And that tells you everything, that tells you how officers are supposed to treat you, how you can ~~treat him~~ <sup>not treat him but</sup> carry on in his presence you know, salute. <sup>At that time</sup> the Red Army was much better than the old Tsar, I told you that already. We saluted officers only once, first time when we meet them be ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> noon, morning early or noon or when you salute them, ~~one~~. That saluting like they had in the old army ~~that~~ they never had, but now they tell me they are much stricter too but they were more lenient. All the officers had to call the man " " unless they had arrangements mutually. But this here young fellow I'm talking about we were of ? and became very good friends and that's where I learned a lot, that's the only way to find out. Well we come then home ~~oh yah~~ I told you oh yah, at the border. Now I had quite a bit of stuff that was ~~stuff~~ stuff you know. It was government stuff. You know through all those bad years everything got pretty scarce and so were the clothes. Our family always dressed fairly good yet but we never had near the clothes what we had before. We used to say "

173  
 174  
 182  
 18?

but that wasn't the thing, everything was bought and mother made everything. We just happened to have a mother that could make men's clothes and at least boy's clothes and everything you know. We didn't have to run to the tailor right away. When I got the job there I told you already I got the job supervisor of the venereal department, the biggest in the hospital, at least with the most people, well surgery came pretty close sometimes too, I started to wear their stock, you know every week you chase, every supervisor chases his people into the showers you know and that's a system that you come and you don't get there again. You come in there and get through the showers, first to the barber and then the 'grousna' if you're dirty, that's where you leave everything you have on--that's goes all into the ? , disinfecter, then you come to the showers. And there was a few tubs there too but there was no time for that when you had a big group they all showered and you had to see to it that they were all showered too. Some were water shy , especially from around there, they were like the hillbillies out here, He says, I take one bath a year whether I need it or not. There were some like that. From there they come into the cleaner, the ? that's where they dressed again. <sup>WIC</sup> I started to wear that stuff that they would change into , I had to get it , I had to take out the old, count it off and sign for every piece , every sock, every piece that was there, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds, that was the biggest trouble there--the biggest trick to see that they don't steal you blind for what you signed for. Then they started to wear that, their socks, everything and whatever we got so much stuff, some was every 3 months, some was every 6 months, we got something, you know At least all my underwear, all my socks were brand new but they had all the hospital stamp on, like that, big too , all the underwear. So I of course I risked it I took it along. I took my books <sup>I told you about</sup> when I <sup>won</sup> a first prize on the last exam on what I picked up on medical lectures, first aid men and first prize was a lot of books. I wanted more not what I really knew, about that, what I said I would do when I come home. They were very much interested, malaria was very much wide spread ~~at~~ that time, and they wanted to know if they could train some of us that really go to it after -- so this and that--that things, especially still wars would be straight and all that. And on that I wrote really a big one. I stood like this and they gave me a big sheet and I went and bought another one and that I guess gave me the first prize, And later on I thought it over and you know, like you say, that was just one big bunch of lies. That's what should be done but you're not going to do it. You're going to try to get out of there as soon as you can, after your parents. But that's what should be done. And then they get on <sup>there</sup> / what they call the "

200 ↓

204

207

237

that's the wall sheet, We call it bulletin board here, And that's where everybody reads it and all of a sudden my stock went up. And I says (unintelligible) I didn't tell them I was going to leave right away because I didn't know, But I thought I wouldn't get nothing done anyway. You know all that I've got down there costs money and energy. Way out in the Ukraine they might see things a little different than we saw it here. So them books I left there. I was sorry, years and years, up till today that one certain book I didn't bring along. That's one booklet like you have here too and you can't call, get the doctor just when you need him right bad but you are supposed to do until the doctor gets there. In Russia we had much more of these places because we had not near the doctors that they have here. Big villages, thousands and thousands of people they maybe have one or two; a doctor maybe and a nurse and a " " , What we call " So I thought when I come there it might --but then I say(?) if they take it, requisition it then I'll just tell them the truth; that's the way it was and I tried to have a few things that otherwise I wouldn't have. I says, "Nothing is stolen." Yes, and they could check the cards if they wanted. All the upper doctors knew what I was doing. I told the nurses and they told it further on. And I see others doing it and I too, I say I'm not stealing nothing. Except what you give me that stays brand new and I wear the hospital stuff. So I mentioned that and from were coming with me. I don't know if you heard already that certain ? family, a very good Christian family had a Communist in the family. George(?) was in higher school there and Johnny was his older brother; just a little fellow, a very nice looking fellow. He was a party member. How he got roped into it I couldn't tell you. Thiemens(?) came out there and I was with them in the same car. He gave the parents the --? He says, "You go for a walk and you leave your stuff here, everything unlocked." --He made me, when I went to the army he made me ? we didn't have. ? was used there, I had a very good one but he made me one of these flat ones just like a suitcase but it was timberwood, a very nice finish and a very good lock on it. ????? and that's where a lot of my stuff was in. And he says, "You keep everything unlocked." And I just tell him how it is. So I went away for a walk and when our car was when they looked to find something they just took a bunch of letters and a few ?? . AND he says, "We like to see the young man, Tell him to get this." When I come home everything was there, they didn't ??? And then I thought, now it will come; they still want to see me. I went there and I showed him my papers that I had

249

release. That I was taken off the " ??  
as they call it there, And he says, "These folders you  
may have, But the letters we keep," If a few people  
want to write letters to America they should use stamps.  
These were all not stamped. There was a letter to ??  
a letter on some ? a letter on ?

About 4 or 5 or 6 letters I had, no stamps. They wrote it  
we go there and you find out where the people is (are) and  
you will ? were right in this district yet ??  
out west and as far as I know they still live there.  
They're not farming. Most went from here . We would have  
went out west too if we <sup>would have</sup> had one more boy. But his father  
says with one boy and six <sup>five</sup> girls , and he says , what can we  
do there? Maybe that's a mistake we made. Maybe we should  
have went anyway. It was alright here.

PAETKAU: How did you feel when you finally got out of Russia?

WIEBE: Well, I, Yah. Beyond the last station. Beyond ? 307  
I think that's the last Russia. ? what they  
call in Russia was ? , And a lot  
that's where we had all the disinfectant and the  
"lousen" Well the most ? was ? is just like these people  
that defect here now. They feel that they just made it to  
freedom, OF course we weren't quite that well politically  
trained but we knew that we left something that never would  
give us any <sup>inward</sup> freedom at all. Because I knew better maybe  
than lots what would come yet. It didn't all come like I  
told you but it was supposed to come and ? don't know  
what comes yet. And we felt just we should have all--  
and it's been done. And big groups, thank God for it, what  
happened. Our group I believe wasn't very hard pressed at  
that severe station (I better finish that) I slipped through  
through a friend, a party member. And when I went to get  
that they took the letters . And they all had paid which  
meant ? But I believe where our people , my  
parents and my sisters were on and there they had threatened  
~~take~~ all kinds of stuff , to take this away and to hold  
them and them back and then they give them once and if this  
wasn't enough I think they paid twice if I'm not mistaken.  
But I wasn't in the group, this is all heresay. It must  
be from my parents or somebody. Parents would be the only ones,  
the girls were all young they wouldn't bother too much.  
Mrs. Boltan or ? she might know. Then of course and  
that's what I'm looking for , There's the name of the ships  
and everything on there, dates. I think July 24 we left  
Russia.

334

PAEKTAU: How was your trip across?

WIEBE:

And then of course there is ~~came~~ a bad time for many people. And when I say the trip went very good, here I'm speaking for one person only ~~mine~~, myself. I didn't have a speck of seasickness. Nothing. Not on the North Sea either, on the small ship. That's where they should have the big ones. North Sea is a massive piece of water. One night we never made I don't think 10 miles or 10 knots every, was it every half minute <sup>or</sup> they always sounded the horn you know. They, it just couldn't be done. People got so seasick. I was alone. My family was gone and I was put in with two bachelors, A Mrs. ? from one of the villages, and a Mr. Janzen. He was a photographer. HE made a little photograph for lots of us that went under the passports. And he got so very sick. And then I would bring him what kept me going you know. I wouldn't eat much at the table. I wouldn't eat those sausages for breakfast, nothing. And I wouldn't even ~~we~~ paid out there too ~~we~~ always had butter on the table, Apparently they didn't all or not as well because I remember one day just when everything was set and we wanted, we were a young big group of young people there all from the village where my Mrs. come from. I had been one or two in the army and we were all with the ? where I was in there. And we had ? there too and we had always butter on the table. AND one day some ? come and " " They wrapped it up from our table and took it before we knew what was happening. So they had the butter but it didn't matter -- ? And I thought if you would have paid a little bit maybe you would have butter on too but then I stopped. I knew right away. But one day I became what a Russian calls a " in ? deutsch, but just very slightly. I went to the radio and I swallowed. I says once you start vomitting that's-and I was, all day I was outside, up there. When I looked after my two friends? I went up there. They let me go even on stormy days. I came in one day all wet, not a buttonhole dry, just in that period when it was <sup>so</sup> rough. And I was on the right side. It got me frontwise you know and threw me into the ropes you know. The other way, on the other side that would have thrown me to the sharks if there was any. So that's, that was rough, yah. And he would come and I'd bring him oranges and I'd bring him peppermint candies and all kinds of stuff; pine-apples and peel them and cut them in slices. That was good food and very little of that there. Black coffee and stuff like that.

She doesn't want to come to Canada. I say, "You'll get well and you'll be just as feeling as good." And then on the way <sup>from</sup> Southampton, We went to Southampton, some went ? through them and some went even ? I'm not sure now. I know our parents were in Amsterdam. Or was it another place?



401

Anyway on the way here I was ? Yah, And Labon got pretty good but he was still getting seasick, even on the big one, That was after ? That was in 1924 and in 1926 Empress of France sank. And way down, I would move it too. Farmer comes one morning, out of Vinelna, d and asks me, "what ship you come over?" I says, "The last one was of France." He says, "It sank yesterday. A big storm." I says, "She was an old boat and now there is a big write up about there--they praised the captain, that thanks to him most of the people were saved. Just who picked them up and that I wouldn't know. Did he know beforehand that something could happen and made his position very clear which is very important. I don't know but anyway that's what ? told me. Then we came here to Quebec. The other one wasn't too bad. I think it's "Margin" was that little boat called from Libau there, not too far away from Riga there on the --that's where we left. It's called different now. It's gone back to the Latvian name I believe. That's where we left and up to Southampton. I didn't feel bad. There was like I told you a little bit one day. Having a lot of fresh air and eating very carefully I --and then when we went on the other one then of course that's where we started to eat real well. I told you about the butter. I had to stop there for awhile too and get one some, a lighter diet but never as bad as there because this was a good trip you know. Then we had bigger numbers. As far as I remember there was no ? at all. Somebody tells you different then I've forgotten. Landed by the 8 in Quebec--beautiful city to see from the harbour along the ? and left sometimes, long after dark sometimes in the night we left for London and Galt CPR. These trolleys what went between Kitchener and Galt at that time up to ? and they brought us up to Waterloo. From here there is nothing to report Mr. Paetkau. That farmer to one Mennonite was very good as long as I worked for him about half of what others got. First time I didn't know that but then we started to look one other up you know. We'd find out from one so and so is there, so and so is there. And not too far away from me was a Essauk, son of a leader Esauk from ? They're very well known people at least the--I mean my generation and one up you know. And they had boys and one was working there for an Englishman, farmer. I've forgotten his name. I was getting here \$20,00 a month and keep and he was getting \$30,00 a month then. AND the next spring he lets me know without asking my boss came and told me, I forgot what he last name is, was, He left here then a year or two later. He luckily went up to--he was a very well schooled person and I don't think he made that his career working on the farm here in Ontario. So I take it that he took some school and went out West and maybe became a teacher or something. And he says, "Mine pays me now \$40,00" \$40,00 a month and he came to me one morning and he says that's what's going to be now. Springtime the work starts pretty soon and you're

New  
Road  
Saps  
Frontier

434

worth it. And he says, "You better get it too." So I went after my MR. Weber and now I got \$20.00 a month and nothing for four months in the winter. That would be like December, January, February, no not March. That must have started already November but I'm pretty sure it was well we'll not to say well three months. But I think it was four months.

"Nix zu du." Nothing to do. Dutch I had to learn it because they didn't understand high German too good. And I learned it very good I could talk it almost as good as they could. And I went after him and there was a lot of heavy union there to present me and there was a lot going on. And I'm not a very from that bargaining end side of the union I'm not too much union minded, not what they're doing today. It's absolutely got out of hand. Either had no rights at all as far as the factories went one time and they have too much today. Like Mr. Toby an Englishman from London says, "A working man can stand prosperity." I guess he was right in the end. After long haggling I wouldn't want to come down from \$35.00. If you don't I said, pay me the \$40.00 I won't work for no less than \$35.00. I know what your people all get I said it's a little different than last year. Last year I didn't know anything and you just told me "THIS IS going to be it and that's it." And my wages when did I figure this one, after the raise maybe already. I know that's the second time I went. The next spring, yah he says my wages are up to 80¢ a day. I say I figure 7 days a week because I all that stock in the barn, I say I would go half a day anyway. And I say when you farm me out to some of the other ones, when there's no work all cut out for you here, you charge \$2.50 a day for me. I said "They're paying it. Your neighbours, Kayser-- they're all paying it. That neighbour's a good man. "No, no," he says, "just a few times." We settled that now. HE SAYS, "It's \$2.00 a day." "Oh, I said, "that's still a lot more than I get." And I believe we had a settle. I didn't want to leave and we settled for \$30.00 a month. That was then and the next winter I guess for a few months nothing. And then I really was after him. Later on I found out she was the driving force there too. She always told him not to-- and I thought Mrs. Weber was always absolutely on my side. She<sup>was</sup> a very find lady otherwise. Later on I found out that she was after him that I-I-he didn't have to pay me as much as they--they had all their farms and paid me lots of money and they owed the biggest part of their farm. Well that had nothing to do with this. It was a large farm and a lot of work. And I worked a lot and in wheat time when we were full and silo filling. And that I worked a lot out too. So we agreed that I'm worth \$30.00 and next spring I went for \$40.00. And I didn't come down. My mind was made up. So after three weeks

I started ~~xxxxxx~~ in good time and we came down to the first. Or at least to the date where my month started, I think that we made it the first. Nothing doing and then I--another week up to another month and then I gave my notice, You know Mr. Weber I'm giving you notice until the month is out I'll be leaving." "What?" He talked ~~xx~~ in Pennsylvania deutsch and then "David, kon ich diche bliva machen?"--"Can I convince you to stay?" And then a week or two went by and he started to go; every night he was out. He thought he could pick them up by the bushel and apparently everybody was placed and he couldn't get anybody. Anyway I could figure that out easy myself by the treatment ?? they couldn't come ? because I was a very strong man at that time. They can vote on one hand and carry away and put him down someplace. But they got nasty. Hello, hello(?) even at the table. So one day he comes and says, "WE MADE OUT we'd give you the \$40.00 a month." "It's too late Mr. Weber ." I say, "I figured that out when you went from \$20.00 to \$30.00 and I had to get up an hour earlier and you sent me hoeing corn out in the fields where everybody that works for somebody else they're free after supper and first I had to chop up the firewood, I said I don't mind that to keep that box full for Mrs. Weber but even the light wood for summer cooking--always remember the wood." But this I say, One night I came home and you ask me why I come home so early and I say, "Well if you want me home later you better give me a lantern so I can putit-- I can't see to hoe corn ." "Stock(?)" "Hmm" And I says, "I remember all these things so you --if you give me \$40.00 a month you'll expect me to work 24 hrs. around the clock." I said, "I'm a strong young man and that's one thing even I couldn't do." "It's quits now." That's how it went. The next one was a Lutheran --was nasty at times too--little Otterbine . And my third boss was a Catholic , the best of them all. A wonderful man. So that's the way it went. I'm not saying nothing here. A lot of our people had good bosses amongst the Mennonites , most of them were amongst them and stayed amongst them but I took the jobs as they came along. Otterbine paid better, my sister was there , much closer to where my parents were , in fact only a ten minute walk --then I went there. There was trouble with Mr. Weber getting separated. It wasn't all finished even when I left , He kept some money back . There he broke--well you hauled--four cattle--there you broke something else and stuff I had long forgotten. I thought that's in the way of working, some stuff is old and it goes. And he had that all marked down and he really charged me it. I've forgotten now what it was , And I go after him and I go after him in a good way but promised him that it wouldn't stay that way . I say you people don't believe in going to court but I say I have no such quip--but he says "You have nothing to show for it." I said, "I have a few that know about it," I have money coming here more than you paid me." There was another \$30.00 or \$28.00 that was coming and at that time that was big money , especially for us. Some of my money went home anyway; my dad and mom to pay for the trip. Help pay theirs and altogether, We didn't have much Reiseschuld very long. With all that small wages, my sisters all worked in the houses for \$3-4.00 a week, maybe at times even less. If I'm not mistaken we had everything cleared up--we owed every cent we never

paid nothing. We only paid for the trip out of Russia. We came to Canada with a few dollars; not very much. I had \$50.00 and dad had a few. We were very stingy on the way over. I bought for myself just a little food and I says I bought some cakes and stuff everyday a little bit for "Tontditsar". I had a hand--half hand--had to fast on the ship I didn't even know it first. I saved that? --we had a few dollars when we arrived here. Some of us had nothing. And we paid that. We talked it over and he says "Come on to the bank, I'll pay you." I met them on a Saturday at the market square. I was working then for Alfred Rinehart. And in the meantime my parents had bought that little farm--Shantz Station, 2½ miles the other side of Breslau and that's where I got the last job. Well the last job really was higher the way by month or year or anything, that was strictly day--day work. He paid me 6 days, \$12.00 a week --\$2.00 a day. He paid me \$2.00 a day and I slept home, came in the morning--had a bike, wasn't far away from my parents and come back again after supper and was free on Sunday. Every Sunday free except one or two when they wanted to go some place then I went there and took care of the stock. And then I asked him one day, "Alf, why do you keep me like this by the day?" "Like we started out to get acquainted, why you keep me?" I says, "We talked it over with Mrs. Rinehart and we owe farmers--owing a lot on the farm too, figuring a little different than Mr. Weber did. He says, "We came--we made out that you need it--you need the money, you're a good man and you fit into our place just like you--we were made. I do my field work, I like to do all my work around the home, get machinery ready for certain jobs, look after the harnesses and fix everything for the Mrs. and help her a little bit, and help her with the milking and all that and you like to be just there in the fields," he says. "And I said, 'that's what I like.'" He says, "So, that was only on a 117 acre farm, that's not near the work we had out there. He never hired me any out except when we exchanged; silo filling and threshing. We helped there so many and so many helped us. Then came the fall and he says, "David, I have hardly any bush and you know how it is." He says, "I can pay you very little over the winter. I don't think you should stay here." He followed this up. He was "auf Reine". He says, "You should go up town and get a job there over the winter." So this was December coming on; I had Christmas at home yet and January I went to Kitchener and got myself a place to stay, to board and started looking for work. Even....I had to look quite a bit. But my first job was Uniroyal. I wasn't there since '27. '27 now. I wish I would have stayed then when they got real slack I went to Kauffmans, I would have then had 10 more year seniority and better pension. I'm not going to complain, we have enough to live on. And I took his advice and I got the job at Uniroyal, at that time Dominion Tire. And the spring came, I go to my boss, Mr. Sashine--"Could I quite for the summer?" He says, "Why would you want to quit?" I says, "I made out with my farmer that I work here for the winter and come over and work for the summer there again." He says, "And what did he pay you?" And I told him, "\$2.00 a day." He says, "You're better off here." "Yah," I says, "I make more here a day, but it costs me a lot more too. I've got to pay room and board and a few other things. We buy our own mitts with our hard work that time and now the factory supplied them. He says, "No, we couldn't do that." He says, "We take you young fellows and we break you in and it's not only that you have to work here but you have to get along with the gang work. This is all gang work. And he says, "Everything is running

smooth." And he says, "You leave for that farm place, you're quitting. And we get another one in your stead and he says there's no use you coming around in the fall," Weekend on my bike--and this wasn't paved yet, the Guelph highway. That was a very smooth natural way. That road and a bike, I believe easier than it does on pavement. And I had a good bike by that time. I had a brand new one. To save money a good friend of my father, storeman there at Shantz Station got it for me in a frame and a box from CCM. So I put it together myself the first time and without tires. So I saved myself quite a bit. I put it together and bought the tires out there. I got a discount there at Dominion Tire --they were making bicycle tires there at that time. They quit then--somebody else makes them with their own name. So that's where I stayed then until they got slack and went to Kauffmans and made boots. Not much to say; depression came, a lot out of work. Worked a few seasons, never a full year--7-8 months, 6 months and woodstuck rubber but never moved from Kitchener. I stayed here because Jerry Grundy, the man who hired the people always advised against it. I even had a place to live at one time. I got sick of this going up and down but I always got home nice enough because we were a lot of people here from Kitchener working there. And they were very smart. They got us all and then they didn't have to bring new ones in.

PAETKAU: Where did you go to church the first years?

DAVID: The first year? You mean the first year in Canada?

PAETKAU: The first while yes.

DAVID: Strausburg Mennonite.

PAETKAU: With the people that you lived with?

DAVID: Yah, yah, Absolutely. Where else would I go? Once in awhile I went to First Mennonite when our people had something big there. That's I believe where most of the people that lived in town--mind you there were only a few. I still remember some that started it. Mr. Feidler from the MB church and Alex Klassen from David St., from that church those were the first few. Of course more and more started to go and leave the farm. Families too had been (?) and homes you know. The older houses were cheap. And that's where I went to church most of the time. Mr. Wismer was the minister and the elder was I don't know--that was somebody else. That church at that time you don't have to be a pastor you could be an "aeltester", You know that could be anybody from the older people. I believe their duties were to look after people in trouble and people this and that you know. At that time the "aeltester" wasn't preaching. That's where I went the most but we went then sometimes they took me out to, like I said, First Mennonite. That's where the most of it was but I was then once in awhile at another place too. Like Lancaster and you know the Missionary Church now I believe it's called. That's was a Mennonite church at that time too. A lot of old people got married there. That's where there went quite a few. Out there. And then I came to Kitchener I--well I might as well tell you as it is. That's

what you want to know. You want at least as close as I can stick to facts. Most of the time I went to the MB hall on King St, right pretty well across from Woolworth's now. I believe a little more this way. It's a club there now. I could take you right there. It's just a few doors up from Bergstein's Ladies Wear. Because there's a tailor there, one that come in after the war and we wanted to have a dress fixed for the Mrs. and she says "You go seek noone else. Go to him. He's just as good with ladies clothes as the mens clothes." So we go to him. He was reasonable. And there's a club where that church was. I seen the--I forgot now what the name was--I seen the sign there. That's where I went the most. Then ours got the North Waterloo, another had been (Unintelligible) or I don't know what it was. That's where I started to go there. That's where we started to go pretty steady. By that time books and everything was in order. My dad brought them to order with Aeltester Janzen, and that's where we went that time. But even at that time every once in awhile I'd go over here. It was near by. I was boarding at Hilda place just a little ways from King St. and there I (?) up. You know where Hilda Place is? No? It's a short little thing. It's a blind street. No traffic there. Not even now I bet you there is not much traffic, just delivery trucks and them and the people that live there. And then we went there to the hall. That's all in the books you have seen that all. Herbert Enns made a good write up on it.

PAETKAU: What were the relations like between the General Conference and the MBs those first years?

DAVID: No comment on that. Because likely what I tell you would be wrong. If I had to answer that question I would say, Have to tell you exactly/<sup>how</sup>not only like I and people like me looked upon it but from higher up. I don't think that from there on there was much--no, I would say--what you want to know? How they -- our relationship was very good . We were a one group of Mennonites here without money and without anything in a strange country. That moulds you know; that welds.