

**Betsy Margaret [Mitchell] Vergin**

**Narrator**

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**Greenfield Historical Society**

**Interviewer**

**July 8, 2013**

**At the home of Betsy and Lloyd Vergin**

**Rockford, Minnesota**

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RM: This is Rebecca Mavencamp interviewing Betsy Vergin. If you could please spell your name?

BV: B-E-T-S-Y V-E-R-G-I-N.

RM: And your given name?

BV: Was Elizabeth Mitchell.

RM: Could you spell that too, please?

BV: E-L-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L.

RM: Do you have a middle name?

BV: Margaret. M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T.

RM: Wonderful. And today is July 6<sup>th</sup>.

BV: Ah, 8th.

RM: 8th! July 8th 2013. I think I've got the right year [laughter]. This project is for the Greenfield Historical Society and the tape will be put into an archive for future use and will be transcribed into written form for researchers so your story lives on. Thank you for participating in this project. In your profile it said that you were born in Wright County?

BV: Yes

RM: Which part?

BV: Buffalo Hospital, Buffalo. The old Buffalo Hospital.

RM: On the hill?

BV: No, no. Downtown Main Street. It was above a drug store.

RM: And what year was that?

BV: 1931.

RM: What were your parent's names?

BV: Sydney and Laura Mitchell.

RM: How did you spell his name?

BV: S-Y-D-N-E-Y. Mitchell. And Laura. L-A-U-R-A.

RM: Thank you. And they came from Europe, yes?

BV: They were born in the United States. My dad's parents I think probably could've been from Europe.

RM: Did you grow up in Buffalo?

BV: No, I've had the same address for all my years except nine years, and I'm eighty-one now.

RM: And what is that address?

BV: Rockford. Our address has always been Rockford. My husband and I, we both went to Rockford school and my first eight years was at Loretto.

RM: And what's your husband's name?

BV: Lloyd. L-L-O-Y-D. We farmed nine years at Hamel, otherwise our address has always been Rockford.

RM: So what's your connection to the dance halls and the resorts of Lake Sarah?

BV: Well, they built it that the year I was one year old and the people that built it came out on the railroad. They probably walked from Rockford out to Lake Sarah, and I think they worked for about a dollar a day. My mother probably made a dinner, as much as I know. So my Dad put in the crops for the year and then they start building the dance hall over the winter.

RM: And the dance hall you're referring to ...?

BV: Was Lake Sarah Pavilion. That's right on the water.

RM: Which side of the lake?

BV: On the North Side.

RM: I think I have a map [displays page] Is that in the right location?

BV: Yes.

RM: So near Highway 55, between County Road 11 and Highway 55 on the north side?

BV: Well [County Road] 11 is over here, this is just 55. [taps map] When this was built, there was no Highway 55 that went on the way it is now. It went between our house and the lake.

RM: The highway did?

BV: Well, what highway there was, yes. You know, it was a gravel road and then it went just south of the railroad. Right next to the railroad.

RM: The road ran near the railroad?

BV: Well, yes. And then it went right through Fredericks resort and Hillcrest and those old roads.

RM: So that was the main road out of Rockford?

BV: Until they built Highway 55.

RM: How old were you when they built the highway?

BV: Well, I remember when I was about nine, getting stuck in the mud between Lake Sarah and Loretto, riding my bike to school at Loretto.

RM: So your bike got stuck in the road?

BV: Got stuck up to my knees in mud and I had to go to a neighbors to get some stockings, because I had the old brown, cotton stockings. Had to get clean stockings so I could go to school.

RM: [laughter] Is that usually how you went to school? On your bike?

BV: Well in the summer, yes. Then at that time, from Lake Sarah, it was almost five miles, because the road went over hills and in different sections.

RM: That's how you had to go to school?

BV: Yes, because I went to Loretto school.

RM: When did you go to Rockford school?

BV: Just for high school.

RM: Did you still have to ride your bike?

BV: Oh no, the bus was going then. I think there was only two busses at that time that picked up kids all the way to Hamel out in the country here. And the original Rockford school, when we went, all four high school grades were in one room, so there was only like about 10 to 15 kids per grade.

RM: Did most of the kids that you went to school with live on the other resorts?

BV: No, no, the busses went all the way up to Hamel.

RM: Were there many other kids that lived on the resorts on the lake?

BV: Not very many, just Mielkes and Bokusky. Otherwise, the other side of the lake I didn't know very much, like Elm Beach and Shady Beach, I didn't know any kids from over there.

RM: So you were friends with the Mielkes and the Bokusky's?

BV: Well, no, not really. They were just on the lake, you know.

RM: What did you do for fun if you didn't have playmates?

BV: I don't know. I had a brother and we played, you know. I had a few cousins that came out and then I went to Loretto school and I visited and went home and stayed overnight with a lot of kids, so I knew a lot of kids. All the Loretto people. For the first eight years.

RM: So you did a lot of work, I would think, on the resort?

BV: No, I didn't, really. I had a lot of fun, I mean I was kind of spoiled, I guess. But I used to dig worms and then I'd sell them for ten cents a can. And we had flat bottom boats and then I'd have to scoop out the boats, you know, because you always had to get the water out of the boats. And we rented boats out when I was real young.

RM: So who would you sell the worms to?

BV: The people that rented the boats.

RM: So the boats, being flat bottomed boats, got filled up with water when it rained?

BV: Yes, that's when you had to clean the boats out, scoop them out.

RM: What else did you have to do for the people coming out to stay with you?

BV: Oh, I guess I don't remember, you know I was pretty young. And then we had the dance hall, but that of course was built when I was born. When I got older, I was a popcorn girl and I had to sweep out up the floors.

RM: Tell me more about that.

BV: Well, I don't know. I would sweep under the booths and then my uncle would sweep the main floor with the cleaning powder and stuff like that.

RM: So you got to do the low work.

BV: [laughter] Yes, yes...and then I had popcorn that I sold for ten cents a bag.

RM: Just like the worms.

BV: [laughter] Yes, yes...

RM: Did you have to make the popcorn yourself then?

BV: Yes, we just had an old-fashioned popcorn machine at first, where you turn then handle just like you would in your house, then later on we got a machine that was more automatic.

RM: So did you do it on the stove then at first?

BV: Well, two burner, yes.

RM: It was a kettle with a knob on the top?

BV: Yes that you turn.

RM: Where would you buy the popcorn from?

BV: Oh, my mother would buy it at a wholesaler or something. And then my mother, she and Dad would raise the beef and everything, and then she would fry hamburgers. I think on a three-burner thing. They sold a lot of hamburgers.

RM: How much land did you own, then?

BV: I guess it was eighty [acres] and then he bought another twenty. That was across Highway 55. And then I think there was about fifteen acres on the south side of Lake Sarah where the buildings were.

RM: So he had land spread around.

BV: Well, no, it was kind of in a square, you know, across the road.

RM: How many head of cattle did you raise?

BV: I don't really know. I didn't keep track of such things. I didn't milk cows, I didn't do anything like that. My Dad had milking cows, yes, and chickens, a lot of chickens.

RM: Did you use the eggs at the resort?

BV: Well, they used to sell the eggs, and the chickens. Sometimes we would butcher up to one hundred chickens, and then my grandpa in Minneapolis, he would take orders for chickens and they would take the chickens out and sell them. So we had kind of a line up of killing the chickens. My mother would gut them and my Dad would chop the heads off, and it ended up that I would do the picking the pin feathers.

RM: You got the fun job!

BV: Yes. [laughter]

RM: So what time of the year would you do that?

BV: Oh, I don't really know. It was never cold. I don't remember, you know. I suppose in the fall.

RM: So you had a chicken coop near the dance hall then?

BV: My mother would get about three hundred little baby chicks in the spring, raise them, and then in those days you, would let your chickens run, you know, and then you'd start butchering off the young ones. And then they had a chicken house with quite a few chickens.

RM: So some you kept for laying, and some you used for meat?

BV: Yes, I think so.

RM: Did you ever use the chicken to feed then people at the resort?

BV: No, we didn't have anything like that. They just rented boats. We probably had about ten boats.

RM: And they were all flat bottom?

BV: Yes. I don't know how much they rented them for though.

RM: Is that what most people did when they visited?

BV: Yes, I guess when they first had the place, they had about three cabins down by the lake, but Fredericks, they probably had about eight cabins. They had a great, big house. In fact, Lloyd and I lived there about three months when we were first married and they had no running water. They had a pump that we had to go out and pump the water, you know, and then you had outdoor toilets.

RM: What year was this?

BV: 1949. And then there was this old guy that lived in the shack. His name was Jack Beardsley, and that's what you see on that picture of Lake Sarah Dance Hall.

RM: Let me find that picture, here. Is it the one that had your sister in it?

BV: The one that had my sister in it, yes. The Hillcrest resort was Ivan and Lillian Dorn. They had probably six or eight cabins and their house was up on a hill across Highway 55.

RM: So they didn't live on the resort?  
[phone rings and Betsy goes to answer it]

RM: So the Hillcrest...they lived up and over the hill?

BV: Yes, there's a road, I don't know if you know, but there's a road that goes out like this and comes back out to Highway 55 and there's a few houses up in here.

RM: So it loops from Highway 55 and across?

BV: Yes. Fredericks lived up here. Old lady Dorn is what we called her. Lillian. Dorn. She was really round as a ball, you know, she was pretty heavy.

RM: Did you go up and talk to her for the afternoon ever?

BV: No, not really. I never went up much this way. But Meilke, you know, I hardly knew them except when I went to high school with them.

RM: How many miles do you think it was from one end of the resorts to the other?

BV: Oh, probably a half a mile, from Lake Sarah up to here.

RM: That's not far at all.

BV: No. I used to swim almost every day. There were cabins going east of Lake Sarah Dance Hall, up where Al Moen lives? One time, I swam across the lake from around where Al Moen lives across the lake. But I was with two other girls, one was rowing the flat bottom boat and the two of us were swimming behind the boat, so we were pretty safe.

RM: How old do you think you were when you did that?

BV: Oh, I suppose probably thirteen or fourteen.

RM: Old enough to get into trouble.

BV: [laughs] Yes, yes, yes. But I remember that. We always fished a lot. My mother, she would fish in my Uncle Ben between Fredericks resort and our house and the dance hall. There was a point coming out and my mother always fished there.

RM: What kind of fish did she find?

BV: Oh, mostly just sunfish, yes, we didn't fish for anything else.

RM: So you ate those for your family suppers?

BV: Yes. When my folks got married, my Uncle Ben and my uncle Sal lived with the folks. They were his brothers. Uncle Ben lived with my folks his whole life  
[request from Lloyd to rearrange the cars parked in the driveway]

RM: So, you were swimming and eating sunfish?

BV: My uncle Ben and Uncle Sal, they both fished a lot, and my Uncle Ben lived his whole life with my folks, and my Dad died in about 1981 and then my mother married Uncle Ben. Until he died.

RM: So that would have been your Dad's brother?

BV: Yes. And my uncle Sal, when the war came, he had to go to the city because we had too many men on the farm, otherwise he would have had to go into service.

RM: Was this World War II?

BV: Yes. We had quite a few living there always and my Uncle Ben, he owned the dance hall, it was his money that built the building. My dad owned the land underneath the building, so they couldn't hardly sell it that way. That's kind of why they tore it down. And then the competition, you know.

RM: From the other resorts?

BV: Well, from Medina Ballroom. We didn't have much heat in our dance hall, they had no insulation, so it was just a furnace with about a three foot hole in the floor that had heat.

RM: So the winter was a little bit crispy?

BV: They only had dances from Easter until about October, then it got too cold.

RM: Whereas Medina could have them year-round?

BV: Yes, that was much more deluxe, you know. And then the only air that was like in that dance hall was when these great big three foot doors would open up to the lake. They had probably, I suppose, about eight of those windows that would pull up, and then the breeze would come in, and the streamers across the top of the dance hall...crinkle paper

...all these streamers...and then the wind would blow and those streamers! You could see it all in different colors. I remember once that we had to make new crinkle paper, so we had to stand there and crinkle all this paper to make all these decorations and then put them on wires that went across the hall.

RM: Colored paper?

BV: Yes, yes, different colors.

RM: So did you just buy the paper?

BV: Yes, a lot of crepe paper. Yes, but it was kind of nice looking. We had Maple wood on the floors and so it was a nice dance floor.

RM: Were they varnished?

BV: I don't know. He waxed them, I guess. I don't think he varnished them. I think they waxed them. My uncle would throw wax on the floor when he got it all brushed clean and then they would dance on it. Cornmeal.

RM: Cornmeal on top of the waxed floor?

BV: Well, I think it was cornmeal and wax or something. I don't quite remember, but it was nice dancing.

RM: What was the point of the cornmeal?  
[phone rings and Betsy leaves to answer it]

RM: The cornmeal that was on the floor, what was the purpose of that?

BV: Well, to kind of clean the floor. Cornmeal works pretty good to clean, to pick up the dust and the dirt.

RM: And then you would just sweep it off?

BV: Then you sweep it off, yes.

RM: Would the chickens eat it after that?

BV: [laughs] No, you just throw it away...yes, yes.

RM: I wouldn't have thought of that. What other tricks did you use at the resort for cleaning? That's a big space.

BV: Well, we...I wasn't into the resort part because that was when I was young. You know, I was a baby, so I don't remember anything much except selling worms, a few people coming for boats.

RM: So you were born at the Pavilion property?

BV: Yes, yes.

RM: Then when did you not live there anymore?

BV: When I got married.

RM: So your whole childhood was spent at the resort? On Lake Sarah?

BV: Yes, right.

RM: So the dance hall was only a portion of the resort?

BV: Well, the resort was done by the time the dancehall started.

RM: So the resort had the cabins and that business was finished when the dance hall was built and that business--

BV: Was done...yes.

RM: So what year would you say one business ended in the other business started?

BV: Oh, I guess I would not remember boats so after I was probably ten, nine...ten? That would have been about 1940.

RM: So then it was your uncle you said--

BV: That built the dance hall, yes.

RM: So when you were doing the popcorn, it was for him at the dance hall?

BV: Well, that was for myself and my own business. When I got married in 1949 I had nine hundred dollars and I gave that to my husband to buy a milk route. That's how much I had saved. And then my sister's did the popcorn business.

RM: They continued it once you got married?

BV: Yes, they were seven years younger and five years younger so it kind of rotated to them and we were the popcorn girls.

RM: How many years did you do it?

BV: I don't remember. My brother was older, so he popped popcorn also.

RM: So you inherited the business from him?

BV: Yes. I probably was about eleven or twelve.

RM: Did you spend any of the money or did you save it all?

BV: No, I don't think I spent the money. My mother took all the money and saved it for me. I used to have an allowance, so I always had money.

RM: Do you remember how much your allowance was?

BV: I think I used to get five dollars or something, I don't remember...maybe a week...I don't remember.

RM: What would you spend it on?

BV: Clothes [chuckles] Years ago, I would take the bus from Lake Sarah and [unclear] busses if you would stand out in front of the farm on Highway 55, they'd stop and pick you up. I would go down to Minneapolis, right down on Hennepin, and go down and shop at Dayton's and Donaldson's and then I would even go to a movie downtown. All alone, or with my cousin, maybe, if I'd meet her down there, and then we would take the bus home and I'd probably home by three, four, five o'clock.

RM: This was when you were in high school?

BV: Yes, when I was just very young, maybe fifteen years old. Fourteen or fifteen.

RM: Where did the bus come from?

BV: I suppose Buffalo, or up the pike a little further. They had a bus line that went right down town Minneapolis. Down about where the Target Center is. But you wouldn't be able to sit in a show house now, alone at that age.

RM: No, probably not a good idea.

BV: My dad had an apple orchard that was real nice, probably had fifteen trees. Plum and apple trees.

RM: What kind of apples?

BV: That was right up by the dance hall. Oh, just a variety, I don't remember what kind.

RM: Did you pick those when you weren't supposed to?

BV: No, I mean...they picked apples, you know. In those days you picked apples and put them in a barrel in the cellar and then you would wrap your apples. Of course, I never liked that too well, they get kind of winey tasting after awhile.

RM: What did you wrap them in?

BV: Just newspaper. Yes. That's what people did.

RM: But they got sour tasting?

BV: Well, up there toward spring they get kind of old tasting, kind of sour, because you get rotten ones in there too.

RM: So the newspaper was around each individual apple?

BV: Yes...you'd wrap all the apples.

RM: that wasn't anything you sold with your popcorn?

BV: [laughs] No. And then my Dad, I remember him, when you'd butcher your own cows, you know, you string the cow up in the hay barn and shoot it, gut it out and butcher it.

RM: That meat was sold at the dance hall, too?

BV: Well, for hamburger. So what else would you like to know?

RM: The cows that were butchered were sold at the dance hall?

BV: I think just for their own use. So they made a lot of hamburger out of the cow. My folks had three gardens and they'd have potatoes and sweet corn in one garden, and then they'd have lettuce and string beans, and all that type of thing. Beets up by the house and then they'd have more squash and raspberries in another garden. So then they'd have to can all that also.

RM: How did World War II affect the business?

BV: I don't remember too much about it, I was kind of young. I remember they had a lot of fights at the dance hall. People would argue about the War sometimes, or people would just get into big fights. We always used to have a cop at the dance hall. One was a

Leffler, and he was a real big guy--about 450 pounds or more. Then we had Conzet, Glen Conzet, and different ones that were cops and they'd have to try to break up fights.

RM: Did it work?

BV: [laughs] Well, kind of, you know, the Pettit's usually get in a lot of fights.

RM: There's always one family, huh?

BV: Yes.

RM: So were they trained Police?

BV: No, I don't think they were trained at all...they were just the cop.

RM: They were just the biggest one around.

BV: Yes. I don't even know if they had a gun.

RM: Did they carry a baton or anything like that?

BV: I don't think so, I don't know what they did. They were just the cop...just broke up the fight. I think what they did was just slug them themselves. Pull them apart, you know.

RM: Did the fights happen more than just during the War?

BV: Oh, no, they always had fights. It was kind of fun.

RM: Fun to watch the fights?

BV: Yes, yes. Then a whole crowd would all go out. You know, they'd go outside and the whole crowd would start, you know, jiggle, jiggle, jiggle, you know, like a bunch of bugs.

RM: Back and forth, following them?

BV: Yes.

RM: So were they fighting over anything specific?

BV: Well, I don't really know what they fought over...I suppose too much beer.

RM: Did you sell a lot of beer there?

BV: Oh yes, a lot of beer. And smoking...the place would just be all thick with blue smoke because everybody smoked.

RM: Cigarettes or cigars?

BV: Cigarettes. None of that other stuff [laughs].

RM: Were there particular brands that people liked?

BV: No, I don't know that...they just smoked.

RM: Did you dance, then, too?

BV: Oh yes, yes. I usually danced with whoever asked me.

RM: Was there a special one?

BV: They used to like Whoopee John...he was the most popular. Six Fat Dutchmen were real good.

RM: What kind of music was that?

BV: Polka, shodish...just everything, you know.

RM: Any waltzes?

BV: Yes, yes.

RM: Where did people learn to dance?

BV: Where did they learn to dance? I guess you just learned to dance, you know, my Dad used to play in barn dances many years ago. He used to play the violin and banjo. You know what barn dances are like?

RM: Yes, how about you explain it though.

BV: I didn't go to the barn dances, that was before the dance hall. But years ago, my Dad would play in the barn dances and my brother was probably a year old or something. My Dad would take him along and put him behind the piano and my mother would get out and dance, and they would just have a good time.

RM: So you learned to dance from just being there.

BV: Yes

RM: What else do you remember about going dancing like that? You said this was before the dance hall was built, so was this a barn on your property, then?

BV: No, I don't remember anything about barn dances, just that I know my Dad played at barn dances.

RM: So where was your favorite place to dance?

BV: Just our own dance hall, that's the only place I ever went.

RM: You didn't go to the other resorts?

BV: Well, yes, I did go to Shady Beach later in my life, but I was probably married. They had dances at Shady Beach. They had eats down there...beer and so forth. And then, Elm Beach resort, they had a little beer counter there. They rented boats. The east end of the lake I don't know much about, where the Bokusky's were, and Wally's resort. I never went past Shady Beach because we didn't have a motor on the boat, only oars. So you only rode out just so far.

RM: Because you had to come back again.

BV: Yes, you just couldn't row out that far. My Dad said one year, I don't know how, he would bullshit, but he said one year it was so dry that you could walk across Lake Sarah. I was thinking about that, and I think that if they did that, they probably walked from Fredericks...between Fredericks and Hillcrest across towards Elm Beach. There was lower ground up in there. They probably walked up to their neck or something. In my youth, I thought when they said that they were walking on stones, but I imagine they must have been walking chest deep or something, that you could walk across in the right place. That's what I used to hear one year. It would be interesting if you ever heard that again from anybody.

RM: Did it ever flood?

BV: No, water usually came in from a way up on the Rockford side you know, way up in here [points to map]. Coming off of the Crow River, maybe is a little stream. You know, from Rebecca Park through here.

RM: So if the river ever got too high, you got more water in the Lake?

BV: Well, probably, yes, I don't remember too much about it going up and down that much. I know we had bogs one year that were floating you know what a bog is?

RM: That broke off of a piece?

BV: Yes. That came over by our place, I don't know what happened to them. See then between Fredrick's and our place there was a real low land in here that nobody usually ever fished except for bass.

RM: What type of people came out to the resort?

BV: City people.

RM: Do you know which part of the city?

BV: I would suppose the west side, you know, from Robinsdale or the same area I would imagine.

RM: Did they come for just the weekend or a week?

BV: Well, at the other resorts they used to come for a week. I know my uncle that lived on Bloomington Avenue used to go out to Shady Beach. They would stay a week or two and rent a cabin there.

RM: People didn't stay at your place for a week or two?

BV: Well, that was before I knew about it much. I was just a little girl. I can hardly remember even seeing the cabins. I remember jumping off of a bed, I mean a dresser, to a bed, that's about all I remember [laughs]. I have a picture of a cabin.

RM: So the people staying at the other resorts would come to the dance hall for the evening?

BV: Well, I really remember that it was all the people around Rockford and Loretto, all Greenfield, you know, like Waverly, I suppose, and all these towns...Delano ...would come to the dance.

RM: So it was a lot more local people?

BV: Yes.

RM: Where was the next dance hall?

BV: Ours was the only one at that time. I've heard there was one down towards Fredericks years ago but I never saw it...it's before my time. People would dance at Shady Beach, just like any bar, you know, it wasn't really a dance hall, they just fed people.

RM: Did people have weddings at Lake Sarah then?

BV: Oh, yes...lots and lots and lots. And they had the Anniversary dances. They used to have a Anniversary dance sometimes when they were only married for ten years [laughs] and twenty five years they would have a dance. And those dances were free. I think they had to pay for the band. My folks would make money off of the drinks and the food. But the only food they had is our popcorn and the hamburgers...and candy bars...that's all they sold.

RM: So they didn't charge for the actual building?

BV: Not for wedding dances or Anniversary dances.

RM: Were they open to the public or private?

BV: Always open to the public, but usually just the people that knew the wedding party would come.

RM: Were there fights at those?

BV: Oh yes, yes.

RM: Really?

BV: Yes, oh yes. You know, when I got married, you had so many women who would probably get together, when the daughter got married, or a son, so the women got together to serve the meal in the house. Then when someone else's kid got married, they'd go have it at that house. Usually you never had it at a church or any hall. Until, I suppose later years. Like mine was at their house.

RM: And most of your friends had weddings at their houses?

BV: Yes.

RM: When did weddings start to happen at Lake Sarah?

BV: Then the dance would be at Lake Sarah, at the dance hall. The wedding itself would be at the home.

RM: So then after everyone had eaten, they would go over to the dance hall?

BV: Yes, at night, they'd say eight o'clock or something like that.

RM: They wouldn't eat at the dance hall like they do today?

BV: No, no, you usually got married in the morning, or two o'clock if you were Lutheran something like that, and then they would have a meal. But the Catholics, they usually got married at about ten o'clock in the morning or 10:30, I don't remember. Then they'd have a dinner at the house, and they'd probably have supper at the house, then people would go up to the dance.

RM: So it was a popular place for the dances in the evening.

BV: Yes.

RM: One a week?

BV: Usually, yes. One or two. They had them on Wednesday nights to sometimes. Sunday was for people like Whoopee John and Six Fat Dutchmen and then the wedding dances were Saturday usually. Anniversaries were probably Wednesday night, if they had an Anniversary dance. I have a bulletin downstairs if you'd like to see it, of how they used to advertise.

BV: You stop the thingamajig [laughter].

BV: What dances you just saw and the posters like you just saw, they'd put them up at the beer joints. My uncle would have to have a beer at every place, and got kind of looped by the time he got home. He'd go way out to Winsted and Silver Lake...all the towns around you know, so it got to be a whole day deal.

RM: That's a lot of different places to visit.

BV: Yes...so he'd have to do that every week.

RM: What day did he usually do that?

BV: I don't remember.

RM: Where would you get them printed, do you know?

BV: The posters like Whoopee John and The Six Fat Dutchmen, they'd make them up themselves, and then you would put in your date when they were going to be at your dance hall.

RM: Were they a local group?

BV: Whoopee John? Oh, no, he was from Minneapolis.

RM: So he had other places as well in Minneapolis that he'd visit and then come out here?

BV: Well, he played around Minnesota, probably New Ulm and all that.

RM: He's your favorite?

BV: His real name was John Wilfahrt.

RM: That's horrible. [both laugh]

RM : He was your favorite?

BV: Well, he was the People's favorite.

RM: So you wrote on your sheet that people still talk to you about having their wedding dances out there?

BV: Yes, they still do. A lot of times when you see people. Of course, there aren't a lot of people anymore that are around.

RM: What are their favorite memories?

BV: Of what? What do you mean?

RM: When they had their dances out there.

BV: I don't know. They just say, "We had our dance at your dance hall." I don't remember what year it was tore down, it says on the papers by 1966 or something like that. That's a long time.

RM: How did the end of the War affect business, when the guys came home?

BV: Oh, that I don't know.

RM: You were married at that point, right? After the war?

BV: No, it ended before that time. In my Dad's story there, it tells when the war ended. They were out working in the field, whatever it was, and they heard the bells ringing...and the...anyway, they knew the War was done [Betsy becomes emotional].

RM: I'm sorry I upset you

[Interview is temporarily paused]

RM: What about going to church? The people who were staying at the resorts...did they use local churches?

BV: They probably didn't go.

RM: They just took the weekend off?

BV: They just fished [laughs]. I doubt if they went.

RM: So if you had all of these resorts, with all of these boats, with all of these people fishing, there must have been quite a crowd on the lake?

BV: Well, I guess there was. We didn't have speed boats, that's for sure. I think everybody was rowing their boat.

RM: When did you get running water into the dance hall?

BV: I don't know. The men had to go outside into the toilet. All they did was stand behind a board, some upright boards. The bathrooms in the dance hall they probably didn't have until probably almost 1947 or 1948...maybe 1945 at the earliest. Then they put in men and women's bathrooms and they just...I don't know that it went anyplace. It just went down to the lake [laughs].

RM: Before they put in laws for that?

BV: Yes, yes, I think so.

RM: So was there a swimming beach?

BV: No, there's hardly any place to swim on Lake Sarah. When I used to swim, it was out probably twelve feet deep that we would just go off the dock. I went to Jude's cabin. Pearly Jude. He had two daughters that I used to swim with. That was down toward Al Moen's.

RM: So you would just jump in the middle of the lake and swim?

BV: Yes, yes, and then we would pull out a lot of weeds. Where my folks had the dance hall, you couldn't swim there because it would be too many people threw glass and stuff in the water and it was just not a good swimming shore. I think Shady Beach had a big drop off, but I think people did swim in there some. And then where the narrows are, down towards Al Moen, there was a place there that you could swim, but I never went there. I only swam at Judes. It was just not that type of a lake.

RM: More of a fishing lake?

BV: Yes, yes, mostly fishing.

RM: You said people threw a lot of glass around?

BV: Well, from the dance hall. You could never walk in there. You never knew if some glass was in the shore. My Dad used to have the cattle down where the people used to park the cars? For the dance? Then during the week he would have the cows in that pasture and then my uncle would have to go around before the dance with the trailer and a shovel and pick up the cow flaps. He had to wait till they were kind of dry hopefully, otherwise some of the women probably got their heels stuck in a cow flap.

RM: Whoops!

BV: Yes [both laugh] So then the cows kept the grass clipped kind of short from eating it.

RM: Where did the cows go when the cars were there?

BV: Then they would put them in a different pasture, like the apple orchard or something.

RM: Did you help move the cows around?

BV: Some, not too much. I didn't do too much when I was a kid. I mean, I was kind of spoilt. They had my Dad and my brother that was older than me, and my two uncles, and my mother, so when I came along, I was a little Shirley Temple [laughs].

RM: So what else did they let you do?

BV: I used to bake when I got older. I suppose I cut beans and things like that, but I didn't do much.

RM: What else did you get away with then?

BV: [laughs] Not too much [more laughter] Like I said, I was kind of spoilt I guess.

RM: Tell me more about that.

BV: Not much to tell. I got married when I was seventeen and a half, so I wasn't young too long to be out. I went out quite a bit.

RM: Did you meet Lloyd at the resort?

BV: No, I met him at high school. He's two years older than I am.

RM: How long have you been married now?

BV: Sixty four years.

RM: That's a long time.

BV: Yes, it is a long time. Got a lot of kids.

RM: How many?

BV: Well, we have ten kids and thirty grandchildren and a whole bunch of great ones. I haven't counted up lately [laughs]. Got a couple more coming, so it's hard to keep track of the names. I send them all a birthday card with money. I have my calendar marked for the whole year, so it's kind of full.

RM: There's nothing else on your calendar besides birthdays!  
[both laugh]

BV: Not too much, no.

RM: So by the time the dance hall closed down, you had already been married fifteen or twenty years?

BV: Yes, I suppose...I got married in '49.

RM: So some of your kids spent time at the dance hall, too, then?

BV: No.

RM: No?

BV: No. I don't think so.

RM: You didn't go back?

BV: No I don't think so. No, I think they maybe closed it down a couple years before it was torn down. I don't remember. We were busy farming.

RM: Where was your farm?

BV: Hamel. For nine yrs. Down by the ramp?

RM: Were your kids as spoiled?

BV: No...no...pretty strict.

RM: So you never took them back around to the resorts, have a little vacation?

BV: Oh, well, we went to my mother's quite a bit, yes. They were there quite a bit.

RM: So just the house and not the dance hall?

BV: Yes, at the house, yes.

RM: So they went swimming at the same lake, though?

BV: No, they never swam, there, no...no. We moved to Rockford in 1959, so they went to Buffalo to swim. Or Independence. I mean...Rebecca, out here.

RM: It would be tempting to go to Grandma's house on a lake and go swimming.

BV: [laughs]

RM: What else do you remember most about growing up?

BV: I don't know. I'm getting kind of tired.

RM: Do we need to call it a day?

BV: Almost, yes.

RM: Fair enough. Well, if you'd like to do that, if I think of any other questions, may I come back?

BV: Well, I don't think you'll think of much [chuckles].