

Diane Betler

Where: At her home, Helvetia, WV

\*\*\*

Date: February 6, 2016

Location: Helvetia, West Virginia

Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Mairéad Gaffney

Length: 37:49

Project: Helvetia

Diane Betler was born in Pendleton County, West Virginia and came to Helvetia as a child to live with her adopted mother Margaret Koerner, an immigrant from Germany. Ms. Koerner was a skilled home cook from her Ms. Betler learned many traditional recipes. She married Kevin Betler, nephew of Eleanor Betler, and they live in the Koerner home in Helvetia's Metzner Hollow where Ms. Betler was raised. She served as the principal of Pickens Elementary/High School, the public school serving children from Pickens and Helvetia. Ms. Betler makes the yeast-raised doughnuts for Helvetia's Fasnacht celebration every year using Margaret Koerner's recipe.

This interview is part of a series of interviews conducted with foodways practitioners in Helvetia, West Virginia, as part of the Helvetia Foodways Oral History Project in partnership with the Southern Foodways Alliance. Learn more: <https://www.southernfoodways.org/oral-history/helvetia-west-virginia/>

[Transcribers note: The interviewer, Emily Hilliard, interjects comments throughout the interview. When this happens during the interviewee's statement, I've notated it by inserting the comment in a bracket within the interviewee's statement and highlighting it, rather than start a new section.]

00:10

**Emily Hilliard:**

Um...alright, so, this is for West Virginia Folklife and the Southern Foodways Alliance is going to have copies of it too. So, it's basically, I've been interviewing, I just interviewed Eleanor about...food traditions in her family, and traditions, so that's what I'll be asking you about.

00:31

**Diane Betler:**

Alright.

00:32

**EH:**

So...you tell me, uh, just introduce yourself and...tell me where we are right now...when you were born...if you don't mind. [laughs]

00:45

**DB:**

I am Diane Betler. I have lived in Helvetia for...fifty-three years. I...came here from, uh, Pendleton County, my family is from Pendleton County. [Others speaking in the background.] But, I...my grandmother was good friends with the lady who lived in this house, and so, my brother and I came to live with her. I was four and he was two. And...she was a lady that came from Germany. And she was known to be a very good cook in town. So. She came and lived back Metzner Hollow in Helvetia, and that's where she lived for seventy-two

01:30

years. And, she always had a house full of...company and always did a lot of cooking and...just inviting everybody in and always trying new recipes and she did a lot of traditional German foods, [uh-huh] but she always liked to try new recipes as well. So.

01:47

**EH:**

So what were, what were some of the things that she liked to make?

01:50

**DB:**

Um...of course, when she lived here on the farm they had their own beef and pork and chickens,

02:00

and, you know, and growing their own vegetables and had the orchards and, you know, make a lot of...foods from the farm. [Yeah.] And did a lot of canning and a lot of...when electricity came they got a big freezer and they had a lot of frozen berries. And, and vegetables. Then, of course and then, she liked it more like green beans and those kinds of things frozen, because they were more *fresh*...

02:30

[Oh, yeah, yeah!]...instead of canned. Um...she did a lot of baking. A lot of fruit pies, and a lot of, just things off the farm, [YEAH] apples, and berries, and a lot of things that, traditionally, you may not have elsewhere, like a lot of, um, like, elderberry cobblers [uh-huh] and they would go blackberry picking, and, up in the woods and pick blackberries, and make a lot of... They *canned* jars and jars of blackberries and used them throughout the winter for [Wow] pies and cobblers and...

02:56

**EH:**

And, uh, is there elderberry on the farm?

03:00

**DB:**

Not so much anymore. [OK.] I don't know what happened to them, but there used to be a LOT of them [WOW!], because they would even make barrels of elderberry wine.

03:06

**EH:**

Oh, I love elderberry wine! [Diane laughs] I was just...

03:10

**DB:**

They're a little bit tart! [Oh, yeah!] You know, it takes a lot of sugar when you bake with them. [Mm-hmm.] I remember as I kid she'd make, sometimes for supper, she, she would say, "What do you guys want for supper?" And we'd say, "Make some elderberry..." dumplings, we called them. And it was just like chicken dumplings [Wow!] only it was elderberries. And you'd put milk and sugar on them and it was just so good.

03:28

**EH:**

Wow, so...I'm trying to, like, I'm trying to understand, so the flour, like with Elderberry in it?

[Talk over each other]:

03:36

**DB:**

Well, you would make...

03:36

**EH:**

Like, was there elderberry in the flour?

03:37

**DB:**

...you would make, you'd put the elderberries [OK] in with the juice [OK] and [Unintelligible] that, and then you'd drop in this sweet dumpling like [whoa!]. It'd be like chicken and

dumplings. You know how you like [yeah-yeah, yeah], only these dumplings would be more sugar heavy, with sugar in them. So they'd be sweet. [Oh, sounds so good!] Yeah, and sometimes we'd have blackberries, sometimes we'd have, uh, elder. [elderberry, yeah.] But it

04:00

really was very good, it was just like a special treat. [Cool!] You know?

04:02

**EH:**

Um...did she make, uh...krauts? Like, pickled stuff?

04:05

**DB:**

She made lots of kraut [somebody talking in the background] in a big crock [uh-huh]. We have a crock down in the basement, it's, I don't know, probably like a twenty-some gallon [wow]. And, she had a, an old shredder, you know, [Uh-huh], with the knife on it, with the big wooden thing [Oh, yeah!], just slide the knife over it. [Yeah.] And she would, uh, shred the cabbage and put it in there. [Uh-huh] And put the brine, salt brine, and then she would put a plate, as big as the hole, and put a rock on top of it. And weight it down with the rock on the plate. [Wow, yeah.] And she made, uh, pickled beans...the same way. [Uh-huh] Dill pickled beans. [Oh yeah.] called 'em dilly beans. [Yeah] And she would make, uh...

04:45

**EH:**

So no vinegar in those, it would just be a salt brine?

04:48

**DB:**

Right.

04:49

**EH:**

OK.

04:50

**DB:**

Yeah. Yeah. Trying to think what else she made in big crocks. She made dill pickles...too. In

05:00

big crocks. [OK] And then she would take them out and put them in jars. You know, so wouldn't always have them [right!] in crocks, you know, it's the same thing with the sauerkraut. [Yeah.] You know, she'd can it after it was ready. [Yeah.] And you always had a can of the cert-, you know, can't, you made the crock...at a certain time of the moon, so that it wouldn't get slimy, she'd say [uh-huh] [Diane laughs]. You know, she always watched the calendar signs.

05:16

**EH:**

So when...what's the time when you're supposed to make kraut?

05:20

**DB:**

"Any time it's not fishes," she would always say. So she'd look at the almanac, and you'd look [huh] at the little zodiac signs [OK] and you know how every day it'll have like a zodiac sign

05:30

[Yeah] for that day. [Yeah] And she said any time you do any kind of canning in a crock, dilly beans, or pickles, or kraut, you never make them under the sign of a fish because it had scales, and that meant it would get [oh!] slimy.

05:43

**EH:**

So, Pieces, probably.

05:44

**DB:**

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah.

05:47

**EH:**

Cool. Uh, yeah I've heard of different, like, canning by the signs, or fermenting by the signs. And it seems like people do it different ways, it's like, full moon, y-you know.

05:56

**DB:**

Right.

05:57

**EH:**

Y-, you don't do it. This sign of the moon or whatever.

06:00

**DB:**

Mm-hmm. And the, and planting is the same way. You had to plant things a certain time of year. [Uh-huh.] Anything you wanted to down, you had to plant when the moon was going down. [OK.] Like, you know, root crops. [Yeah.]

06:11

**EH:**

What about, like, things you want to come up, you, do you plant when it's...waxing?

06:17

**DB:**

I would imagine so. It would just be the opposite. And there are certain kinds of things you couldn't put together. Because they were unfriendly in the garden. You could never plant onions beside beans. [OK.] Because they didn't make good neighbors, she'd say. [laughs] But I guess it's

just because they use the same nutrients from the ground. [Oh, yeah!] You know, so. [Yeah.] You'd have to just kind of knew what needed more, [uh-huh] different nutrients, so.

06:37

**EH:**

So, because I know a lot of...well, there's a lot of folks who are Swiss, but Swiss-German here, so did her recipes differ from what other Swiss folks in town were making or...?

06:51

**DB:**

I...don't...know that as much. I know that she, when she made things it was a lot of, like, more  
07:00

German type things. But I don't know how that compared with the Swiss. [Uh-huh.] You know, I think a lot of just was things that they knew how to make from growing up, so that's just what they continued to make. [Yeah.] Because when she lived in Germany, she was a housekeeper sometimes and sometimes she was a cook and sometimes she was a nanny, and, [mm-hmm] you know, she...so, doing all those things I think she just learned a lot of how they did it over there. [Mm-hmm.] But I know she would make...things that we just loved, that we  
07:30

hardly, didn't get very often. Just because *some* things that she'd make, the traditional [background voices], it takes time to make, and like one of the things that she made that I loved were the potato dumplings, but it...you had to cook the potatoes, then you had to let them cool, then you had to grate, you know, grate them up [mm-hmm], you know, and then you had to mix them with the flour and the bread crumbs and all the things and then you had to boil them. So, it wasn't [yeah] something you could just make for supper in, you know, in forty-five minutes, like. [Right] You know, it took, you had to think ahead, and [yeah]. You know. So those were a lot of the traditional things took a little bit  
08:00

more time. I think. You know. And, you know, they were doing it on a cook-stove, [yeah] and had a fire going all day, you know [yeah.]. She made it, did a lot of baking. A lot of breads [uh-huh], and rolls and you know...

08:11

**EH:**

What kind of breads did she make?

08:14

**DB:**

Just yeast bread. [Yeah]. You know, just raised yeast bread, white bread. And she also made... Later on, as I was older, she made whole wheat bread, and you would think it would be the other way around. You know, that she'd have made the whole wheat bread [yeah]. But, I don't know,  
08:30

she had a, you know, she got whole wheat flour later [uh-huh], as opposed to...

08:34

**EH:**

Uh-huh, that's, that's what Eleanor said too, she was like, "I just learned that it's healthier,"

so...

08:39

**DB:**

Mm-hmm, and maybe that's what it was [yeah], you know? [Yeah.] Um...you know a lot of it were just...country, country cooking [yep], you know.

08:49

**EH:**

So did she bring any written-down recipes, or were they all in her head?

08:53

**DB:**

They were in her head. [Yeah]. She always cooked by, you know, just by feel, by taste...you

09:00

know. But she was open to always trying new things [yeah, yeah] too.

09:06

**EH:**

So what were some of the, like, special occasion, like what would you have for, say, Christmas dinner, or...any special occasion like that?

09:16

**DB:**

One of the...best dinners that she made, was like a baked steak dinner. You know, like, so, they had they own beef, you know. [Yeah.] It was, it would just, melted in your mouth, but she  
09:30

would always have, like, gravies, and potatoes and beans, and, you know, you never had dinner unless you had, like, two or thr-, at *least* two or three, other vegetables, other than your starchy, you know [mm-hmm], y-, you know, and...if we didn't have potatoes, a lot of times she made noodles. Homemade noodles. [Mmm.] Oh, they were just thick and doughy and just really good. And a lot of gravy with that. [Oh yeah.] And then, we had sauerkraut a lot. But [uh-huh]  
10:00

we never had sour sauerkraut, it was always sweet sauerkraut, [OK] she always put brown sugar. A lot of times she put apples in it.

10:02

**EH:**

Uh-huh. So that would be after it's fermented? Then she would add it?

10:04

**DB:**

Uh-huh. Yeah. [OK] Yeah. So it was always, just country dinners and always homemade bread [uh-huh] or cornbread, or biscuits. She made biscuits, homemade biscuits, that were like four inches tall. That were just [wow!] wonderful. Just wonderful.



10:18

**EH:**

How'd she do that!? [laughs]

10:19

**DB:**

She just had a feel for it, and the one thing she said about biscuit dough and pie dough, you...don't mess with it. You mix it, you knead it, you put it, don't, don't keep poking [that's true!] at it, because it makes it tough. [Yeah.] So she always said, she said, "if you want it fluffy, you just mix it enough, knead enough that it's well-mixed, and then you leave it alone."

10:37

**EH:**

So did she use...for her pies and biscuits, was it butter? Lard?

10:42

**DB:**

She always used butter [yeah] and she made her homemade butter [oh yeah] and then when we were younger, she always had homemade butter. [Mm-hmm.] Of course, then, as she got older and didn't have the farm anymore she didn't have [yeah] cattle and so. Then she had some friend who made butter, so she would try to get the homemade butter. [Mm-hmm.] So...and she didn't, 11:00

she wasn't a big lard user. [Yeah, yeah.] She was more [butter] butter.

11:04

**EH:**

And she probably had a few milk cows?

11:06

**DB:**

Mm-hmm. Yeah when we first came here she had cows and sheep [yeah] and...

11:14

**EH:**

Um...so I know, it, it seemed like everyone here kind of made the same Helvetia cheese. Did she make that or did you guys have that?

11:23

**DB:**

11:30

She...did make cheese. But it was one of those things too. After we came here, her husband had gotten ill. And he was bed-ridden for like nine years [wow], so cheese is one of those things that's takes a lot of time every day. [Uh-huh.] You *have* to work with it every day, and she said, "I just didn't take time to do it anymore." [Yeah.] She made cottage cheese, because that's more, [huh] a little easier to make, you know, you just have your milk and cook it and [mm-hmm] drain it, and let...you know. [Yeah.] So she did make cottage cheese [OK] a lot. [Uh-huh] But not cheese, just because it's so time consuming. [Yeah.] And [yeah] with two little kids [uh-huh] and

a sick husband [Diane laughs].

12:00

**EH:**

Yeah, that's a lot! She wa-, Eleanor walked me through the process. It's...a lot of work.

12:03

**DB:**

Mm-hmm, it is. And it's every day.

12:06

**EH:**

Yeah. For, like, three weeks until it's done.

12:07

**DB:**

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And then it's dependent on your cows, and what they eat and the weather, and, you know, cheese is very touchy, I think. [Yeah.] You know, you either get it really good, or you get it really bad, and it's kind of out of your control [oh, yeah], the humidity in your basement and what the weather's like and how cold and [yeah] in summer time it's awful, because it just gets too humid and [yeah], so.

12:28

**EH:**

12:30

Um. So, what were the, uh...community, sort of celebrations that had food, or centered around food?

12:39

**DB:**

Oh, I think, growing up the biggest *food* thing, that I liked as a kid, was the Chicken Supper. You know, that was weekend that everybody came, and everybody helped and they made, fried the chicken, and [uh-huh] had a huge chicken dinner. And another thing was Thanksgiving Dinner. That was always something that the community always did together [oh,

13:00

really, huh]. Of course, the Chicken, the Chicken Supper was like a...annual fundraiser, you know, for the Community Building. [Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.] But the Thanksgiving Dinner was just...everybody brought something and they all [oh, wow!] ate together.

13:12

**EH:**

So where did you eat?

13:13

**DB:**

Down at the Helvetia Community Hall.

13:15

**EH:**

OK, that's the red hall?

13:17

**DB:**

No, the big y- [the yellow hall!], the yellow hall. [OK.] Yeah. Um... And we always, this house has always, been a house of people, like there's always been friends and family and [mm-hmm],

13:30  
you know...

13:31

**EH:**

Like today.

13:31

**DB:**

Like today. [They both laugh.] Like today! But it, yeah, it's always been that. And the, you know, the Helvetia Fair is always fun, it wasn't, it wasn't so much of, a community *eating*, you know, there's was always...things to eat, and people were always, you know, you could go to anybody's house and that's the first thing in, "what can I, what can I getcha?" [Yeah.] OK, well you...have to eat, you have to eat all the time. But, uh, you know, there was always, all the

14:00  
activities were always fun and a lot of people, but [uh-huh] it seemed like a lot of times if you went to the community event, you always had people, family and friends, at your own house, so [yeah] would just gather back at your house, you know. [Right] Go to the event, and then [uh-huh] you'll...

14:15

**EH:**

And what were the...what was at the Thanksgiving dinners? What kind of dishes would people bring?

14:21

**DB:**

[Sighs] Of course there was always a turkey, and the dressing, and the mashed potatoes and the

14:30  
gravy, and there was, uh...um...like, I remember one time, and I don't even remember who made it, but they were like loose carrots, you know, most kids don't like carrots. [Mm-hmm.] Those carrots were just so good. [Mm!] Because they were, like, buttery and sweet, and I remember that.

14:46

**EH:**

Like glazed carrots.

14:47

**DB:**

Mm-hmm. [Yeah!] Just, I think it was just, like, a lot of traditional, [uh-huh] you know, type foods. You know. [Yeah.] Home-cooked green beans and, and fruit pies, you know? Fruit pies, there were always all kinds fruity stuff [yeah, uh-huh], because everyone orchards, and their own, you know, berries [uh-huh] and things.

15:05

**EH:**

Um...so what are the things that you make now, and how has your cooking sort of changed, or...you know, carried on some of the things that you learned from her?

15:17

**DB:**

Um... I think it just depends, you know, you do your daily dinners, you know, at the end of the day and that...I think they're just so much quicker [yeah] then they used to be, you know. We have, you know, we keep, like, we try, we try to eat healthy a lot, I think, [mm-hmm] you know, for one thing. [Mm-hmm] Um, so we ea-, my husband and I, you know, we eat a lot of chicken, you know, chicken breasts and things, so it's, you know, you just get those frozen, [oh.] you know, and they're a lot faster to make [mm-hmm], you know. And baked potatoes as opposed to cooked butter potatoes [mm-hmm] or mashed potatoes [Diane laughs] [mm-hmm, yeah]. You know, and, and...um...vegetables, we try to eat more fruits and vegetables and salads, a lot of salads. And I think that's kinda...a big difference...with how we eat now as opposed to when I was growing up. In the springtime we had salads, it was lettuce and onions and, you know, spinach, the greens from the garden. [Mm-hmm.] But I don't really remember a lot of salads other than that, unless it was a special dinner, with special company, where you bought the salad stuff at the store. [Yeah.] Typically, the farmers didn't buy, you know, they're not gonna go buy lettuce. [Right.] At the store. [Yeah.] Or, you know, [yeah] or fresh tomatoes, because you had a whole basement full of canned tomatoes. [Yeah.] So you had your salads in the springtime [uh-huh], and other than that, but now, you know, almost every dinner you try to have salads or something [yeah], you know. And that's [that's true!], that is one thing that's different that I notice [yeah] growing up. You know. We, and it was...if we had a special dinner with special company, you know, like some aunts and uncles came from Flor-, you know, a lot of times [yeah] people would come through once a year, just to see the family, [yeah] and that's when you had your, you know, your special dinners, with their salads and things like that [uh-huh] you typically didn't have in...you know, September. [Uh-huh.] We wouldn't have had a salad [right] unless it was a special dinner. [Diane laughs] [Yeah, I mean] You know?

17:14

**EH:**

Yeah. So, do you still can, or?

17:16

**DB:**

Not nearly as much. [Mm-hmm] Because...we don't have a garden as much, because...we can't keep the deer out of it. [They both laugh.] You know, you look out there in

17:30

the yard sometime and there's fifteen, twenty deer. [yep.] So, it's a hassle to...get your gardens [yeah] as it used to be. And...

17:38

**EH:**

Is that because there are more deer?

17:40

**DB:**

They're waaaaay more deer. [Yeah.] It used to be something that you just, you know, would see one now and then and everybody go, "Oh, my gosh look at the deer!" [Emily laughs] And now it's like, "Oh, golly, the whole yard's full of deer!" [Yeah.] But, uh, so that's a hassle. And, I think, people are just more mobile now and they go. And you have to take care of your garden, you

18:00

can't [yeah], you know, go to the beach for a week and [right] you know, go somewhere else for a week, and you know, you have to do things when they're ready in the garden. [Yeah.] And, I'm not as willing to do that. [Diane laughs] [Yeah, yeah, totally.] Because when you want to go, then you want to go. [Yeah.] You know, you want to go do things, and... So that's two reasons why. I mean, I, you know, grow a few things in pots and we have a little garden, but [yeah] not as much. But I do, if I, if there's something that I want, for instance, I, ho-, these hot peppers that I make that everybody loves. Everybody's like, 'Oh you gotta make your peppers, you gotta make your

18:30

peppers!' So I always try to can peppers [OK] every year, and I go to the farmer's market. [Mm-hmm.] Buy a bushel of peppers [uh-huh], and, you know, the same thing with canned tomatoes, or canned green beans, or whatever [mm-hmm], I just go to the farmer's market and buy a big [yeah] basket, or a couple baskets of something [uh-huh], you know.

18:45

**EH:**

And where is the farmer's, the closest one?

18:47

**DB:**

We get, there's [sighs] a nice stand in, um, Buckhannon. [OK, yep.] And there's a, there's a nice farmer's market in Bridgeport. And, uh, I, where Eric lives, they live in Westover [uh-

19:00

huh]. There's a couple of farmer markets up there, so. [Nice.] You just get things that [yeah]... And it's, it's really nice, you know, it's really nice produce [yeah]. It's fresh and, so it's just like what you would have, only you don't have to raise it. [Diane laughs] [Yeah, that's true, yeah] But there is one thing that I miss, and it's potatoes. I love...I have a potato passion, where just go, and

you have them in your basement in the big bin, you know, [yeah] a couple bushels of them? [Yeah.] And, so I end up buying potatoes a lot in the store. Once, I always like to have, you

19:30

know when I was kid, my golly, we'd have, you know, ten bushels, fifteen, twenty bushels of potatoes in the basement [wow] all year long. And then whatever's left over, you take them out and plant them in the garden, you know, [oh, yeah, yeah]. So [yeah!], that's different too.

19:43

**EH:**

Yeah. My, my uncle is a farmer in Indiana and when I was home for Thanksgiving, he gave me a five-pound bag of potato, or a ten-pound bag and, it's was just the best gift, cuz, I had these, like, fresh potatoes. I'm still, you know, drawing from them. Just, like, anytime I can just go, like,

20:00

"oh, I'll just make a baked potato."

20:01

**DB:**

I know, it's just so nice having that kind of thing. And I think that's one thing...that's changed a lot too, because...somebody always had their basement...full of things. And now it's like, OK, you make your list and go to Wal-mart. [I know!] [Diane laughs] You know? [Yeah, yeah.] The necessary evil, Wal-mart.

20:17

**EH:**

Yeah, yeah. Especially, you know, living out here.

20:22

**DB:**

Mm-hmm, yeah. You do. And you go and get the whole truck full of groceries. [Yep.] And

20:30

then you come home and start your list over again, because you think, "oh, I forgot that!" [Diane laughs]

20:31

**EH:**

Always! Um, so, yeah, could you tell me what you're making today and why you were making that?

20:10

**DB:**

Well, I made Fasnacht doughnuts. Um, it just has become tradition that, everybody seems to like doughnuts at Fasnacht time, so I just make a big batch of doughnuts and take them down. And

21:00

everybody seems to enjoy them. Um, my family and everybody likes them. And I only make them a couple of times a year, and I did promise my husband, and I said, "well, I'm going to try

to make them more often, since everybody likes them." And I did make them, just last month, for his birthday. So...that's twice within, like, a month that I've made them. That's pretty [wow!], pretty good! [Diane laughs] And, I think if I, probably if I liked them better I would make them more. [Both laugh] Which is really selfish, isn't it? [Yep, yeah.] But, um, that's

21:30

what I've made. Doughnuts. Yeast-raised doughnuts.

21:32

**EH:**

And, can you just walk me through the process of, I watched you do it, and I was recording some of it, but could you walk me through the process of it?

21:41

**DB:**

Well, I always start by [sighs] dissolving the yeast, with sugar, and warm milk and water. And get that really mixed up well, and, get that so it'll foam and start working. [Uh-huh] And then I

22:00

mix together my butter and sugar and vanilla and almond and lemon and eggs. And mix all that up really well. [Uh-huh] And then I... mix that with flour, [mm-hmm] and put my yeast in my flour, and then I put everything else in the flour and just keep adding flour and liquid until it feels right, like a soft dough. [Mm-hmm.] And now, it's in the oven, with a pan of hot water, raising. Usually, if I make them and I'm not needing them in any special time, I'll just let them, just set them out and let them raise. [Yeah.] But, since it's, uh, I wanted to get them over with, I

22:30

put them in the oven [Emily laughs] with a pan of hot water. [Both laugh] And hopefully, they'll raise some. But, when...Margaret was living, she would make them, like, a couple times a month. Or [wow], and it was always...like an expectation, kind of? [Mm-hmm.] If someone in the community died, you know how they all, if someone dies, [yeah] everybody always brings food, and they have a dinner for the family, [mm-hmm] and it was always, you know, Margaret would say, "Well, I have to make doughnuts, because they'll want doughnuts." [Diane laughs]

23:00

[Oh, yeah.] You know, and, when she used to make them, when we were a kid, she used to make them like real doughnuts [uh-huh], you know, they'd have a hole in the middle. [OK.] And we lost the hole maker one time, we, I guess it got thrown out in the garbage somehow, or got thrown out in the trash at the end of the day, and we have never been able to find a doughnut hole maker, so now they're just, make little, um...dough doughnuts without holes. [Both laugh.] They actually cook better, with the hole in them, though. [Really?] Yeah.

23:25

**EH:**

I, if I, if I see one, I'll send it to you.

23:27

**DB:**

23:30

That would be wonderful! [They laugh] I thought I could go online and find one, I just haven't done that yet.

23:33

**EH:**

I see them sometimes. Um, so do you cut them with the, with a biscuit cutter? Or a glass?

23:38

**DB:**

A glass. [OK] And I always think, OK, now I have a whole bunch of dough, so I can use a bigger glass, or if I don't have very much dough, and I want more doughnuts, I'll use a smaller glass.

23:47

**EH:**

Mm-hmm. Um...then you fry them in oil, you said.

23:51

**DB:**

Mm-hmm. Yeah, deep fry them in oil.

23:54

**EH:**

And how long do they fry for? Like a minute on each side?

23:58

**DB:**

24:00

Oh, probably not even that long. I don't know, you know, I just never...

24:01

**EH:**

You just do it by look.

24:03

**DB:**

Yeah. Uh-huh, it takes me a couple of turns to get the heat adjusted on the oven. Or on the stove top, just right. And I've not made them on that stove yet [Oh, OK] because the stove on that went out right at Christmas...get-together. So we had to get a new stove top,

24:15

Other person in the room (man) [Interviewers note: He introduced himself as Gabe and is a friend of Diane's family]::

[interrupts her] I, I knew this looked different.

24:17

**DB:**

Yeah. Went out two days before Christmas get-together, so. And then I sent Kevin to town and



said go get me a stove, just make sure it has two ovens, that's the only thing I ask, make sure it has two ovens. [laughs]

24:25

**EH:**

Oh. [The three talk over each other a bit.]

24:29

**Gabe:**

So convenient.

24:30

**EH:**

I didn't know that.

24:30

**DB:**

Yeah. Yeah.

24:31

**Gabe:**

Yeah, you can do pies or something in the top one.

24:34

**DB:**

The top ones are a convection oven.

24:35

**EH:**

That's really nice.

24:36

**DB:**

Yeah.

24:37

**EH:**

So...Do you have a, um, thermometer, or you just do it to, when you know the oil is ready?

24:44

**DB:**

I just take a little piece and drop it in there and see if it bubbles.

24:47

**EH:**

Mm-hmm. Nice. And then those are served...during the square dance?

24:53

**DB:**

Yeah, we just take them down and...they just set them out and everybody helps themselves  
25:00

and...[cool] yeah, that's the, that's always nice, because people say, "what, how much does it cost?" And it's like, oh no, this is for you to enjoy. [Yeah] You know? And everybody in town makes their special thing, like I know you said you were up at Eleanor's [uh-huh] and she does her rosettes and [yep] certain people make, like, special dips, you know? [OK] And vegetable, and it just...it's just nice.

25:20

**EH:**

It is, really nice. And then, when Margaret made them, did she make them for Fasnacht?

25:28

**DB:**

25:30

No. [OK] And the reason why is because, when she, when she was older and no longer made doughnuts, Fasnacht was happening, but it wasn't a big event [yeah]. It was just...like a, a small community. I remember being in high school and going to Fasnacht and it was just like a few people around and some people dressed and some people didn't. It was kind of like a...a just an extra square dance in town [OK], and some people would wear costumes, but it was a square  
26:00

dance [yeah]. And it wasn't, like, there was no refreshments, it was just, you know, Fasnacht Dance. [OK] And then, it, well, um...Eleanor Mailloux [mm-hmm] had talked to someone and, and they were talking about making masks and they wanted to have it like a sp-, you know, make it a little bit more for tr-, bring tradition back. [yeah]. And then, it started and she had talked to people and then everybody became more interested and she came to school and helped the students make papier maché masks [uh-huh], and then it just really got going again. And so  
26:30

26:30

that's when they started having the refreshments [I see] at Fasnacht. For all the visitors in town.

26:36

**EH:**

Well, I, it makes sense, from, to have, like, the fatty foods, at least from what I've read 'cause, I guess everyone was getting rid of their fat before Lent, but...

26:44

**DB:**

Right. Exactly. Exactly.

26:47

**EH:**

Carbo load.

26:48

**DB:**

That's right! [they both laugh] Get rid of it! Get it out of there!

26:51

**EH:**

27:00

Um...well, uh, did you, uh...I don't know, is there anything else...I guess one thing, um...I asked Eleanor, that you kind of already said, um, but are there any recipes that you miss, or, that y-, that people used to make in town, or Margaret used to make that, uh, people don't make any more, that...

27:17

**DB:**

Yeeess. I miss, and I'm going to try to make it, I m-, I miss the potato dumplings, they were

27:30

absolutely wonderful. I miss...pickled...well, it wasn't really pickled, it was red cabbage. [Uh-huh] And you cooked, it's just like making cooked cabbage, but then you added vinegar, sug-, [uh-huh], like, it's like a sweet and sour sauce. [Yeah.] And put that, and put apples in with it, I miss that.

27:41

**EH:**

I know what you mean. I love that.

27:44

**DB:**

And...I miss her baked steak. (really loud people in the background) It wasn't, it wasn't a bit...there was no fat. You know, [yeah] there was no grease, it was just...soft and [mm]...

28:00

**EH:**

Do you know what cut she used?

28:01

**DB:**

I don't! I don't. But I, she had a...it was, you know, you knew when she was going, when you were going to have baked steak, because you'd hear, you know, you'd hear, she had this meat pounder and [Emily laughs] she would just be down there and have the board out, just pounding and pounding, so you knew, you know, so [wow!] I don't know, even if it made a difference about what cut. You [OK, yeah] know, because a lot of times, when they had the beef [uh-huh], just whenever...[yeah] just go get a package of 'steak,' you know. [Yeah, yeah.] But... you know,  
28:30

it was just like all, and it was, it was just like, so soft. So I miss that. [Yeah.] And I, I miss, even like, there's a huge difference in brine-made sauerkraut [oh yeah!] and the sauerkraut that you get out of the can now [yeah]. You know, it's those kind of, those kind of things are just different [yeah], you know.

28:47

**EH:**

And the brine is...you know, better for you, because it's the, the natural yeast and fermented stuff..

28:55

**DB:**

Right. Right. So those are the kind of things you miss.

28:58

**Gabe:**

I want to make sauerkraut.

29:00

**DB:**

We should. We should.

29:02

**EH:**

Apparently she has the crocks.

29:03

**DB:**

Yep, I have the crocks. And it, and it's not difficult.

29:06

**Gabe:**

Yeah.

29:07

**DB:**

You use...

29:08

**Gabe:**

(talking over her) I mean don't you just, like, salt, or just, like, cabbage and salt?

29:11

**DB:**

Salt? Yeah.

29:13

**Gabe:**

And then just let it sit really.

29:14

**DB:**

And weight it down, yeah.

29:20

**DB:**

...take it off, you know, and add a little bit more [yeah] water. Just make sure it's always

29:30

covered. You have to make sure it's always covered. [yeah] But, yeah. Those are the kind of things you miss. [Yeah.] You know? That you just...and it, and...it's seems like the older folks who did it, they just had the touch. The just knew [dog barks, then a lot of people talking at once], they just knew.

29:45

**EH:**

Yeah...I know that's the thing. My grandma's still around, but, and I will make her recipes, but...it's just like, she just does it in this way that I don't actually know how to do, it's just her way.

30:00

**DB:**

Mm-hmm. It's just a feel, the look. [Yeah.] [really loud bang] And, um, certain, jellies [bang] and jams [yeah], you know, the things that they made like that. [Uh-huh] I know my grandmother used to make ground cherry preserves.[Oh!] Oh my gosh! It was so good! And it, and we'd go out and she'd say well go pick ground cherries, and they just grew wild in the space in the yard [wow!]. And so we'd go out and pick them, and we'd eat them and they tasted

30:30

horrible, I mean, I just [Emily laughs] don't even know what they tasted like. And she'd make this most wonderful preserves out of them.

30:33

**EH:**

Cuz they're really tart.

30:35

**DB:**

*Really* tart.

30:36

**EH:**

And then kind of mealy?

30:37

**DB:**

Yes! Yes!

30:38

**EH:**

Yeah, but for the jam...

30:40

**DB:**

Yeah, it would just, the preserves were wonderful.

30:42

**EH:**

Are there still ground cherries around?

30:45

**DB:**

That was down in Pendleton County, and yes [OK], there are some growing down there, just [uh-huh] in the corner of the one yard, they still have a few. [Huh.] But it's just things like that that you don't even, just every now and then [yeah] something will cross your mind, it's like, 'Ahh!

31:00

[yeah] I wish I had that!' [Right.] And she used to make, Margaret used to make, like a s-, a Christmas, it wasn't a fruit cake, but it was...like a sweet bread, but it was full of nuts, all different kinds of nuts [huh]. And raisins and dates and figs and she called it her Christmas stollen. And it was just so good. [Mm-hmm] So those are the kinds of things you wish you had, [yeah] you know, just think back and think, "Oh, I'd like to have that!"

31:19

**EH:**

Yeah. Right. Do you eat at the, the Hutte much?

31:23

**DB:**

31:30

Oh, I love the Hutte. I *love* the Hutte! [They both laugh] But you know what's funny? When I go down, almost every time [uh-huh] and we, we had talked about the salads? [Uh-huh.] I get a chicken salad. [They both laugh]

31:38

**EH:**

And they use the Morgan Henalie chicken for that?

31:41

**DB:**

Uh-huh. Ah, it's so good!

31:44

**EH:**

I, I've only had the sampler plate, on, you know, during Fasnacht, but sometime I need to try all the other things.

31:52

**DB:**

Mm-hmm, oh! I really like...the sauerbraten. [Mmm.] It's delicious. And Margaret used to  
32:00

make a sauerbraten too, I mean, she didn't, she made it differently. You know, they have a, a, a big, they slice it very thin, [uh-huh] but she would marinate, like, this big roast. You know? It was just [mm-hmm] like having a pot roast except for, she called it 'sauerbraten.' And it was, you know, with like this...vinegary...gravy on it. [Yeah.] It was so good. It was so good. Because it, she marinated it, like...she'd put it in the vinegar brine with all, and she'd put

32:30

bay leaves and onions and all kind of stuff and just...mix it all up and stick that roast down in there. [Wow!] Like, in the evening. [Uh-huh.] And leave it there all night. And then...maybe the next day, like at around noon, she'd stick it in the oven to have it [OK] ready for supper that night. [So it marinates] So it was like and eight and a half [wow, that's gotta be good], you know, that's got to be good. So, yeah, those are the kinds of things you miss.

32:52

**EH:**

And what is the, what do you think the role of the Hutte is in the community now for food traditions, or?

33:02

**DB:**

I think one thing about the Hutte, it has such, um, um...the, the m-, the meaning of the traditional Swiss food, you know, this, I can have the sauerbraten, bratwurst, and the...you know, the secret apple sauce and the secret salad dressing [uh-huh], you know, and people know that that's the only place that they can get that. [Yeah.] It's the *only* place they can get

33:30

that. [Yep.] And...once you come, you have to come back. [Yeah.] [They both laugh] You have to come [it's true!] back. [It's true!] And I think that, you know, some folks come and then they get to know people in town, and, you know, we've had people come who, aren't related to anybody here [yeah], and they just hear about it and they come, and then they become friends. And they come back, [uh-huh] and it's nice that way. And then they come back for all the events, you know, the fair, [yeah], the Fasnacht, the...um, now we have the Music Fest in town [oh, yeah!], you know. So it's just nice.

34:00

**EH:**

It's happened to me.

34:01

**DB:**

[They laugh.] Oh, I'm so glad, Emily! I'm so glad!

34:03

**EH:**

Um, well, I know you have to check your...

34:07

**DB:**

Check my doughnuts, [yeah] see if it's doing anything.

34:09

**EH:**

Well, is there anything else you want to add?

34:12

**DB:**

I can't think of anything. I don't know. I just...it just. I just think...I'm just so glad that I live in Helvetia. [Yeah]. And I'm so glad that, I st-, that, you know, I'm living in the house that I grew

34:30

up in, and friends and family want to be here, and [that's really nice], you know, it's just, it's just wonderful. And, you know, you just meet people and, and-and, and you...want them to come and be part of your home [yeah] and enjoy your food. And then you have people, you know, like, they come and they, like, Robin comes, and [uh-huh] she always, you know, when people come...you, that's the first thing that you, like I said, you want to feed them, [yeah] but then they also bring all, they want to bring something that they make that's special [yeah], you

know? [Yeah] So, and [that's nice] it, and, you know, and then you end up with the mixture of

35:00

things, 'cause, like some of the things that Robin makes is, she from the Clarksburg area, [uh-huh] so she makes, like, some more [uh-huh, uh-huh], like Italian dishes. [Yeah.] You know, so you have that, you have German things, and Sheila comes and she makes stuff that her mom made [uh-huh] for years and years and years, Christmas, you know, her applesauce cake, and things like [yum] that, it wouldn't be Christmas without, if she didn't bring her applesauce cake. [Yeah, yeah.] You know, and it-it, it just everybody brings their things and we have this mixture of [that's really nice], traditional food, and...

35:27

**EH:**

It's like, sometimes food can feel like time travel.

35:31

**DB:**

It does!

35:32

**EH:**

Take you back to a moment.



35:33

**DB:**

Yes, yes. Yes. That's exactly right.

35:35

**EH:**

Yeah. Cool. [Diane laughs.] Well, thanks so much!

35:37

**DB:**

Well, Emily, you are so welcome! You are so welcome!

35:40

**EH:**

I'm gonna, I'm gonna record while you check your...

35:42

**DB:**

OK.

35:43

**EH:**

...dough.

35:44

**DB:**

Well, let's see what it's doing.

35:46

**EH:**

Yeah. (sighs)

35:47

**DB:**

Oo, it is getting there...

**EH:**

Oh I see it!

**DB:**

Moist

**EH:**

So will you put plastic back on and then let it go back in the oven?

**DB:**

Yeah, I don't want it to get a crust on it.

**EH:**

Yeah. [background noises, people talking]

**DB:**

And I'm so glad that the young people like it. [Mmhm, yeah] Because I think there was a while that you know, the kids grew up here and... couldn't wait to get out. [yeah] And now it's like, "oh, we like to come back!"

**EH:**

Yeah. Well [they talk over each other] Well I think the first few years you think, "I gotta get outta here," and then you realize, "oh that place I'm from is actually kind of great."

**DB:**

Gabe always likes to come back, don't you Gabe?

**Gabe:**

Uh-huh.

**EH:**

Where do you live?

**G:**

I like in Morgantown now, but I'm from Elkins.

**EH:**

Okay.

**G:**

Mom and dad still live in Elkins.

**DB:**

Music Fest and Fasnacht, wouldn't miss it huh?

**G:**

Wouldn't miss it! I just have too much fun!

**DB:**

I know! That's what it's all about! Friend and food and fun!

**EH:**

It's true.

**Gabe:**

And then I end up paying the price on Sunday. [they laugh]

**DB:**

Then you gotta go to work on Monday!

**TAPE ENDS 37:49**