

Vernon Burky

Where: Hutte Swiss Restaurant

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

Transcription: Shelley M. Chance

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Vernon John Burky was born to a Swiss family in Helvetia, West Virginia in 1925. He grew up speaking Swiss on his family farm, where his parents raised animals and managed a sawmill, and his grandparents operated a cheese house. They made “Helvetia cheese,” a type of Swiss cheese, similar to Emental, that was made throughout the Helvetia community and a staple in the diet of residents. As a child, Burky raised chickens and tapped maple trees on his family farm. As an adult, he was an active winemaker, a common pursuit in the Helvetia community. During his working years, Burky worked as a truck driver for a saw mill and a coal company. He learned to play fiddle as a child and started playing in the Helvetia Star Band, the local dance band for generations and the namesake of one of the village’s two dance halls. He still plays in the group, which performs regularly for Helvetia square dances and events.

“Yeah; just kept that smokehouse full of smoke all day and night. They’d put a big hunk of wood on it; it wouldn’t burn but it--they had fire under it and it would sit there and smoke that little room half as big as this. They just smoked up tight. They had the sausage on rods; nothing could come in or get up on there. There it would sit; it was just dried up real solid and my uncle was--I stayed with my uncle when I was in high school. And he said, ‘hey Vernon; come over here.’ *(Laughs)* He had rheumatism and he couldn’t move around. He was in bed all winter. ‘Go up there to the smokehouse and get me a link of that sausage.’ *(Laughs)* And I’d go up and clip one of them off and bring it down. He’d get a hold of one piece and put the rest under the pillow and he’d start eating that. He wasn’t supposed to have red meat because of rheumatism.”

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/>

[Begin Helvetia-Vernon Burky Interview]

00:00:00

Emily Hilliard: --have you guys introduce yourselves. So I'm here at the Hutte Restaurant in Helvetia, West Virginia. And I'll have everybody go around the table and introduce themselves. Say where you're from, when you were born--if you don't mind. And you know what you do or what you did--

00:00:23

Vernon Burky: What year? What year? I was born in 1925 here at Helvetia. My name is Vernon John Burky.

00:00:40

Thrayron Morgan: I was born in 1961. I've lived here in Helvetia all my life; I--what was the other questions? (*Laughs*)

00:00:48

EH: Your name?

00:00:49

TM: Oh I'm sorry; Thrayron Morgan--

00:00:51

EH: And what you do.

00:00:52

TM: I'm--I'm a housewife here in Helvetia and lived here all my life. I think I've already said that though.

00:00:58

EH: Oh I just met Leanna--is that her name, at the library, Leanna, and she said do you know the Morgans? Leanna White--

00:01:07

Sandy Burky: Well there's a huge Morgan family.

00:01:09

TM: Hmm; yeah.

00:01:09

EH: Okay; she said they were here adopted parents.

00:01:13

TM: Oh... that could be. Yeah there's lots of Morgans. I married a Morgan. I was a Bentley and came from the Betler side of the Swiss here in Helvetia.

00:01:21

EH: Okay; got it.

00:01:21

SB: Sandy Burky; I've never given up my name in all my marriages (*Laughs*). I was born in 1958 in Clarksburg. My dad is from Helvetia and my mom is from Adolf and the majority of my years were raised in Mill Creek, Helvetia, and Adolf.

00:01:42

EH: Vernon could you tell me a little bit about your family, your parents, and grandparents?

00:01:49

VB: My grandfather was from Switzerland. His dad and family came to Ohio and he and the brothers, two or three brothers and a sister moved to Turkey Bone and then he got married to a lady by the name of Dubach and they were related to the Detwilers and my dad married J.J. Betler's oldest daughter.

00:02:27

And the Betlers were John and Otto and Hugo, Arnold; they were--Arnold was a half-brother wasn't he?--yeah anyway there was a big bunch of Betlers. (*Laughs*)

00:02:48

TM: Remember all of them.

00:02:49

EH: I've talked to a few of them already.

00:02:53

VB: Yeah; well and my grandmother was from over there at Helvetia--in the Helvetia area and her name was Dubach, also Swiss. And she married Detwiler and they were my grandmother's people.

00:03:17

EH: Now what did your parents do?

00:03:19

VB: They were farmers and also my dad worked at--in--in helping set up sawmills and stuff like that. He was a carpenter. And part of the time he worked whenever somebody needed him, carpenter work.

00:03:38

EH: Was there a sawmill here?

00:03:40

VB: Well there was a lot of sawmills; every--every hollow and hill had a sawmill under it (*Laughs*), practically.

00:03:54

EH: What sort of animals and--animals did you raise and--?

00:04:00

VB: Oh we raised mostly milk cows and they made--they made Helvetia cheese too. My great--my granddad... I think they had a little kind of like a factory or they brought the cheese to his--his house and it's--the--the cheese house is still there. Up on our farm. And the cheese they made were as big as a 50-gallon drum head, so they got lids. They had lids to--or like a lid that put the cheese down on it and let 'em ferment or whatever they do to--to finish 'em. And then they'd flop them over and every day different sides and salt 'em and so on and so forth.

00:04:56

SB: That's the twenty eight-day cheese?

00:04:58

VB: Yeah; the--the regular Swiss cheese is what they done. And they--they had big--big blocks, er slabs of wood together so it made a round--a round wheel like twenty-five inches in diameter. They weighed 100 pounds, the cheese. *(Laughs)* So they had a community cheese house there.

00:05:26

EH: Okay; so they sold to other people?

00:05:28

VB: Yeah; yeah they--I guess they sold it away and used what they needed. And I guess the farmers and people that come in was cutting timber and whatever was going on.

00:05:42

EH: So you say twenty-eight day cheese; is that different from other Helvetia cheese?

00:05:47

SB: I think that's the signature of Helvetia cheese.

EH: Okay.

00:05:50

VB: Yeah; that's--

00:05:50

SB: Everybody always identified it through the years as everybody used that twenty eight day recipe.

00:05:56

EH: Okay.

00:05:57

VB: Yeah; it was--

00:05:58

TM: Different cheeses have--have to age different times and that particular one--

00:06:02

SB: That particular, Helvetia cheese only took twenty-eight days.

00:06:04

EH: Okay.

00:06:05

VB: Yeah.

00:06:07

SB: They may have done some harder cheese or longer cheese.

00:06:11

VB: And they had--what they had to do is... they would make it in a block or in this wheel and then they'd pick it up and put a new wheel where you're gonna press it off. They had to put it under a press to get all the milk out of it. And then they'd--each day they'd turn the--the first one over. And salt it on the

top side. Then they'd do this next and another one and another one until they had--I think twenty-one days 'til it's big enough or old enough to try.

00:06:47

SB: Test; yeah.

00:06:48

EH: And everyone seemed to use the same recipe is that right?

00:06:50

VB: Yeah! And now they--they make just little ones like they make them like four, five, six pounds or something like that.

00:06:59

SB: About the size of this.

00:07:00

VB: Different size.

00:07:01

TM: Maybe a little bit shorter than this.

00:07:03

VB: It's like baking another cake, a different cake. *(Laughs)*

00:07:07

SB: Well he's talking about those round things are molds and they--they're big ones, you know and now even Nancy I think does some little ones and you just put them in the little you know square box.

00:07:16

EH: Oh yeah; okay.

00:07:17

VB: Yeah; they're in a little square box.

00:07:19

SB: So the round thing he was talking about is a mold.

00:07:20

EH: Yeah; okay.

00:07:20

VB: Yeah.

00:07:22

EH: And I've seen the--the people who make it--or the version that's made in Ohio which is similar, right? [Interviewer's note: the cheese that's served at the Hutte is now brought in from Amish country in Ohio]

00:07:28

VB: Yeah; yes.

00:07:29

SB: Uh-hm.

00:07:30

VB: The brothers--the brothers still live--part of them still lived in Ohio. So they never did all of them 'til they come down here.

00:07:42

TM: The recipe for Helvetia cheese is similar to the Emmentaler cheese that comes from Switzerland.

VB: Yeah.

00:07:46

EH: Oh yeah.

00:07:48

TM: A little bit of difference because of the different--different type of milk because the cows eat different things here than they eat in Switzerland, but that was the recipe that they were aiming for was the Emmentaler.

00:08:00

EH: Okay; aside from the cows, cheese, and sawmill, did you--did they have other--?

00:08:06

VB: Yeah; we had enough poultry for eggs and a few to sell and we had hogs, enough to butcher every fall and make--and then we'd in the summertime we'd run out of meat maybe and we'd have to kill a sheep. We had mutton. *(Laughs)* Did you ever have mutton?

00:08:31

SB: I missed that.

00:08:32

VB: You missed that? We--we did--

00:08:35

SB: We had Campbells. *(Laughs)*

TM: Exactly! *(Laughs)*

00:08:37

VB: Yeah especially when they all got together and do--when--when they'd start thrashing the grain they would all get together and help each other with the thrashing machine and then they'd have to--they would maybe take fifty gallons--or fifty bushel of seed from the--from the oats and the wheat and that makes a--kind of a party and they all went around to each other's homes and done that--thrashed.

00:09:08

EH: So that--was that the same thrasher that was at the Community Fair?

00:09:12

VB: Yes; yeah that's--

00:09:13

EH: And they would bring that around to different houses, okay.

00:09:15

VB: Yeah; they would pull--it had wheels on it. Well it matters on the wagon; they'd pull it around with a team of horses in them days. And then they had a--grandpa had a--a single--a single--I can't... I can't say it.

00:09:39

SB: Say it in Swiss.

00:09:40

VB: Single piston motor and it is big, great big; it went bump, bump, real--and then it had to big wheels on it and it would have to be mounted on a wagon. And it burned kerosene, so they brought that around and that--that is the power for the thrashing machine. You don't remember that--?

00:10:00

TM: Now this was Grandpa John?

00:10:01

VB: Yeah.

00:10:02

TM: No; I don't remember. See I was only six whenever he died, so--

00:10:04

VB: Yeah; I know.

00:10:05

TM: --I--I'm--I just remember that. They didn't let me go to the barn very often. *(Laughs)*

00:10:10

VB: We found--we bought--we bought a piece of the--grandpa's land for--for our cabin, my cabin on this side of the road, so where the--where the telephone come up along the--the road we found cross-arms and old stuff that fell down on the ground they didn't want. They just left it there and that's been fifty years ago or maybe more.

00:10:37

SB: Or more.

00:10:39

VB: And we found those cross-arms. That's from telephone lines and pieces of old time Model T Fords or we had a door--we had almost a good door. Yeah; you got--

00:10:54

TM: I have the door! It's sitting in my bay window. And I have a picture sitting beside it of the Model T Ford when he got it and like everybody is standing there--

00:11:07

VB: Nineteen twenty-seven or twenty-five, yeah.

00:11:08

TM: Yeah; twenty-something yeah 'cause Eleanor Betler looked that up for me.

00:11:13

VB: Oh did; yeah.

00:11:13

TM: And then I got the picture of that--that car when the day that he got it, he brought it from the railroad in Buckhannon and brought it up on the railroad and it was a big deal because not very many people around here had--had cars. So you know all the boys and grandpa was standing around the car I guess oohing and ahing and now I've got the door which was--found was salvaged out of the ground that's all rusty--was all rusty and--and Virginia painted--

00:11:43

VB: Yeah; it was kind of on a little pile where they threw stuff out--out of their way and left it sit there.

(Laughs)

00:11:51

SB: Yeah; he bought the land from Grandpa Betler that was Grandpa Betler's sawmill.

00:11:56

EH: Okay.

00:11:57

VB: Yeah; the sawmill--

00:11:58

SB: The sawmill where he bought it.

00:11:59

VB: On my campground. *(Laughs)*

00:12:03

EH: Got it.

00:12:03

VB: And it was so close to the highway, the rocks are still there--the foundation.

00:12:08

SB: I remember the sawmill being there.

00:12:10

VB: Yeah; yeah.

00:12:11

SB: And they were using the sawmill.

00:12:13

VB: And I remember--

00:12:14

SB: And then the cabin you stayed in. Oh sorry; go ahead.

00:12:16

VB: When WPA came along they were widening the road and--and everybody was talking about that and grandpa said, "they ain't going to move my foundation. I'm--that's not their land. This is mine."

(Laughs) And the rocks are still there. *(Laughs)* And I didn't move them. I'm going to leave them right there, too.

00:12:37

EH: Did some buildings have to move?

00:12:38

VB: Right out from behind his garage. Huh?

00:12:41

EH: Did some buildings have to move when they--?

00:12:42

VB: Oh yeah when they got you know if they didn't have--if they were on a right-of-way they would just tell you, you got to move this part of the building off.

00:12:52

SB: But now the road is very close to his side and to the other side both. I mean we're talking just a few feet from the road.

00:12:58

VB: Yeah; the garage is right on the berm, too, ain't it.

00:13:02

TM: Yeah; it's right there.

00:13:04

EH: Did--did you guys make sausage?

00:13:10

VB: Oh yeah; yeah we done that the first--the first day we butchered. That's long--

00:13:17

SB: That's a great fun project. I love making sausage.

00:13:20

VB: And Thanksgiving way... time, any time it gets good and cold of a night you know you could hang the meat up in a--in an old room somewhere and let it cool. And they didn't have Frigidaire in them days.

(Laughs)

00:13:39

EH: Yeah.

00:13:40

VB: I remember when they got the first refrigerator over at my house and well they had--they finally got the electric in and boy, we thought that--that is great. *(Laughs)* That little Frigidaire was keeping everything cold for us.

00:13:55

EH: What--do you know what year electric came in here?

00:14:00

VB: I think it was around '38, pretty close there, maybe '40, somewhere in there.

00:14:07

EH: Not too late.

00:14:10

VB: Yeah.

00:14:10

EH: And you said--do you still make sausage?

00:14:13

SB: I like making sausage. But you have to have like, you know the whole process, but--I've been part of the assembly line. I always look at it as an assembly line. And what the Detwilers did was in most recent years, they still used the Burky smokehouse over at--at Elsie's.

00:14:30

TM: At Elsie's.

00:14:29

VB: At Elsie's.

00:14:32

SB: Yeah and they'd put a little--it's just a dirt floor and they put a little bit of--of apple tree bark and twigs and keep it smoking and they hang the sausage in there, so Nancy and--and--and Leroy still--I mean they did ten years ago. They still smoked their sausage, tried to get back to those old buildings that used to smoke the sausage. So that smokehouse is still there.

00:14:55

EH: Huh.

00:14:56

SB: But the Burkys had the smokehouse and they had the cheese house and so a lot of people went to those places to--to bring their milk so they could do the biggest amount.

00:15:07

EH: Okay.

00:15:07

SB: Everybody would pool everything together from what I could gather.

00:15:12

EH: Yeah that--because Eleanor was telling me about the brenta boxes how they would transport the milk and--

00:15:17

VB: Yeah; ten gallons. You'd go ten gallons on your back.

00:15:22

EH: And then they would just share whatever cheese was made from it.

00:15:26

VB: Yeah; and I used--when I was in high school I was still at home and... I asked my dad if we could make some maple syrup. "Yeah; if you want to tap the trees go ahead. How are you going to get over here?" It's about a quarter of a mile to the other side of the farm and *(Laughs)* I said "well we'll put it in that big thing there and we can carry it!"

00:15:54

So I go out there and I tapped a lot of trees and I--the first ground there four of them full--full of water running over you know, more than ten--ten gallon is all I could carry at one time. And they were all just bleeding real hard, you know. And we made maple syrup and I sold it for two dollars a gallon I think.

00:16:21

SB: Two dollars a gallon. *(Laughs)*

00:16:21

EH: So ten gallons of sap, how much syrup does that make?

00:16:24

VB: It takes--it takes fifty gallon of water for a gallon of syrup.

00:16:30

EH: Wow.

00:16:30

SB: So he didn't get a gallon out of that. *(Laughs)*

00:16:32

VB: Fifty to one.

00:16:32

EH: So you had to make a lot of trips.

00:16:34

VB: Yeah; five, five trips makes a gallon! *(Laughs)*

EH: Two dollars!

00:16:39

SB: Two dollars.

00:16:43

VB: I was glad to get a little bit of money in my pocket you know and going to school you know every day. Yeah.

00:16:50

EH: What are some other Swiss foods that your family would make?

00:16:56

VB: Oh my. My grandmother used to make a lot of things but I forget now what they call it. *(Laughs)*

Oh potatoes; it's called they slice them--slice them up and fry them. Rosti--yeah--

00:17:20

SB: Which they still--they serve that here.

00:17:22

EH: No; I've never had that. I might have to get them tonight.

00:17:24

VB: Yeah; you just--

00:17:25

EH: Although they might get mad at me 'cause--

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VB: You just slice them--

00:17:27

EH: --a lot of labor, right?

00:17:28

VB: --peel the potatoes and then you slice them up nice and put them in a hot skillet with a little bit of lard in it or butter and let 'em fry 'til they're done. They're good! They used to let them get kind of crisp and they're nice and flaky. *(Laughs)*

00:17:47

TM: I do those a lot. My kids love them. *(Laughs)* I put a lot of stuff in with mine.

00:17:53

VB: Yeah; you can put anything.

00:17:53

TM: Onions and ham; I have to put ham for Russell and onions for the kids and... Yeah you can put--we went to--when we went to Switzerland there was a little restaurant that we kept going back to because it was so good and it--that's all they had. And they had different versions of Rosti and it was--oh my gosh it was so good.

00:18:14

EH: How about kraut?

00:18:17

VB: Yeah; we made kraut in a ten--maybe a twenty-gallon crock, big crock and we'd slice that all up and tamp it down in there and let it ferment. (*Laughs*) I don't know what they put with it. Do you remember what they made--how they made sauer--sauerkraut?

00:18:37

TM: Like--like here?

00:18:39

VB: Yeah!

00:18:40

TM: Yeah.

00:18:42

SB: Sugar and the--

00:18:43

VB: Did they put sugar in it or they put--

00:18:44

TM: Brown sugar and caraway seeds.

00:18:47

VB: --salt?

00:18:46

TM: In our generation it was brown sugar and caraway but you probably did molasses and cane sugar and--

00:18:53

VB: No; they didn't put too much--I think maybe just maybe salt. And then it--

00:18:59

TM: To ferment it probably--

00:19:01

VB: They would--it would just almost ferment by its own sugar you know. They might have put sugar in it.

00:19:09

EH: Maybe afterwards.

00:19:10

VB: Yeah.

00:19:10

EH: When they're getting ready to serve it, put the sugar in?

00:19:14

VB: Well... no; it was always sauerkraut. This was always--

00:19:19

EH: Salty.

00:19:19

VB: --salty yeah. Actually sour; it was--it had that--that flavor...whatever it is.

00:19:27

SB: And if they had caraway seeds maybe they would add caraway.

00:19:30

TM: Back then they--

00:19:33

VB: Yeah. They might have put some of them other--other things with it.

00:19:39

SB: Because we couldn't grow caraway here I don't think.

00:19:43

VB: I forgot what they raised all the time. They'd put it in sausage--what was that?

00:19:50

TM: Sage probably.

00:19:52

SB: Sage.

00:19:52

VB: Well I don't know... marjoram!

00:19:55

TM: Oh marjoram, yeah.

00:19:58

EH: Uh-huh.

00:19:59

VB: How did they say that? May (*Laughs*) I forget how they say it, but my grand--grandmother always, she always called it something.

00:20:12

EH: In Swiss?

00:20:12

VB: In Swiss; yeah.

00:20:14

SB: Now dad didn't speak English until he was seven. And his--when his oldest sisters went to school then they came back and taught the younger ones how to speak to get out into the public.

00:20:23

VB: She--she cried. She said "I ain't gonna go over there and talk English. (*Laughs*) I want to stay at home!"

00:20:34

SB: That was Aunt Irene.

00:20:35

VB: Irene; yeah, she was--

00:20:36

SB: And she became the school teacher.

00:20:37

TM: School teacher. (*Laughs*)

00:20:38

VB: She was--

00:20:39

SB: And that's the reason all of us speak very nice English. (*Laughs*)

00:20:47

EH: So--go ahead.

00:20:48

VB: Yeah; she couldn't talk. She--she--well I don't think she could; I don't know. She was four years old.

00:20:55

TM: She never talked to you in English did she?

00:20:57

VB: She never talked to me Swiss I don't think!

00:20:59

TM: Swiss?

00:21:01

SB: Oh she never spoke to you in Swiss?

00:21:02

VB: No. I don't remember. But I know that she was--went to school and that's what they told on her. She cried and she said "I don't want to go to school and learn English. I want to stay home and be a little Swiss girl." (*Laughs*)

00:21:21

EH: Was there a moment when that attitude changed here?

00:21:26

VB: No; it just went on and she went to school and she liked it and she done good. She was--

00:21:32

SB: It went on but it got quiet during the time I was growing up because then dad was like you know typical Burky quiet. I don't know if it's a Burky or Betler thing but don't talk to too many people.

00:21:42

TM: Both.

00:21:43

SB: You know you're Swiss because that might look German and communism is lurking and we were all taught to really suppress it by the time we were--

00:21:51

VB: Oh yeah.

00:21:52

SB: --you know coming about I think.

00:21:56

VB: Yeah; you remember that's the wartime.

00:21:58

SB: Yeah.

00:21:59

VB: And right after the first World War they--

00:22:01

SB: But still all the recipes and the food and the tradition--not so much the song and the dance was here but not the song. You know we--we weren't taught you know a lot of the Swiss songs again until, you know, later.

00:22:17

VB: Yeah.

00:22:17

SB: When all that was the air cleared. Then we started to celebrate more of the song and the--

00:22:27

VB: Yeah; it got--it got so all the Swiss were talking English and they--they--we were (*Laughs*)--we weren't talking too good.

00:22:42

EH: So what did you do for work?

00:22:45

VB: Well, I was started out as a truck driver and I just loved to drive a truck. And I went and hunted for a job and the first thing I got was at Southern States down in Buckhannon and they wanted to make a--it into--they wanted me to be the--what they call--a superintendent of the--

00:23:15

SB: Supply--

00:23:15

VB: --store. And I--I done it for a while and all of the sudden, boy, I didn't like it. *(Laughs)* You had to mark everything down and you got the big wide paper and have to fill out everything each day! It went--it went down to--

00:23:34

SB: He wasn't a bean counter obviously. *(Laughs)*

00:23:37

VB: It went down to Virginia somewhere in Virginia and it went to somewhere else. So--

00:23:43

EH: So was it inventory?

00:23:45

VB: Huh?

00:23:45

EH: It was inventory?

00:23:46

VB: Yeah; well we had to--we had to show everything we sold out of that store, everything that come in, we'd get a trainload of laying mash, we'd unload it and we'd have to put it down in the--. And... anyway, one day I heard them say they were going to buy a truck! (*Laughs*)

00:24:10

SB: And you said here we go! I'm gonna get me a job!

00:24:12

VB: But it was in Clarksburg. So I said well I'd like to have a job! And all of the sudden they said "okay! you can have that job over Clarksburg." And then I had to go from one house to the other. Everybody was buying ten pounds of laying mash and and fifty pounds of cracked corn or--and he was living over here and the other guy was living over there and I had four ton of feed on my truck, every day. And I just pretty near melted. I got down to real fine little skinny bones!

00:24:56

TM: With all that stuff.

00:24:57

VB: Anyway then I--one of my buddies up here, Frank--Frank Smith saved me. He said, "do you want to go to work in the sawmill?" I said "what doing?" I said--he said--

00:25:11

SB: You said, “do they have a truck?” *(Laughs)*

00:25:13

VB: He said it’s pretty easy. He said we’ve got two trucks hauling the logs in and we’re right in the woods. All you have to do is run out to the woods and get--get the logs in, and you got her made! And *(Laughs)*--

00:25:27

EH: That doesn’t sound that easy.

00:25:28

VB: I said call me and I’ll get it! So I went up there at the top of Cheat. We had a cabin and everybody ate off of the same table, and everybody worked there and we started out, and we went ‘til November. And we went deer hunting. We had a week off, and then that big snow came here in--in West Virginia. And they didn’t--I never got back. *(Laughs)* I don’t know what happened! But they--everybody just separated and I think they just let it go. They never--never went back.

00:26:04

So I think that was in ’45 and then I went to work for driving a truck for a coal company and--

00:26:18

SB: Always admiring the Yukes.

00:26:22

VB: Oh yeah. I used to drive for Ike Lewis up at--we'd haul dirt from across--about from here over to the other building and dump it, pull over and dump it--great big trucks and they'd--one day I--I got--I hit a rock on the side of the road and that steering wheel flew around there and picked me up out of the seat and ruined my shoulder (*Laughs*). And I went to Ike and says "boy, I can't do a thing" and I couldn't raise my arm.

Dave: Oh, hi, how are you kids?

He said, "what's a matter?" I said, "oh that Yuke I hit--I hit a rock and it kicked me." And he pulled on it and checked me--

00:27:07

EH: Hi! How's it going? You can come in.

00:27:10

Dave: Oh okay; I didn't realize you're recording.

EH: It's okay. Yeah, pull up a chair.

00:27:13

VB: --he said the best thing you can do is keep on driving.

00:27:20

SB: To keep yourself limber.

00:27:21

VB: Keep yourself limber. So I did and I made that. *(Laughs)*

00:27:27

EH: How did you learn to play fiddle?

00:27:29

VB: Well my sister played the piano and my cousin played the piano and they both kind of egged me on and every time they'd get a new piece and I'd start playing the fiddle and then they said every time they'd get somebody you know--they had to hear a new one and we'd get together and learn it together. *(Laughs)* And we had lessons one summer. I mean we--we just went to--we thought we was getting something but it didn't amount to just a little while. *(Laughs)* And otherwise, I guess I just kinda picked up what our--I saw somebody else doing and I just kept on trying. *(Laughs)*

00:28:17

SB: Now you and Rudolf played really close.

00:28:21

VB: Yeah Rudolf Zumbah was--he was a good guy on the piano. He could--he could play anything with ya and but he didn't play no--

00:28:32

SB: Typical Swiss tunes.

00:28:33

VB: --he didn't play no tunes. He just played--he was a good backup! Norman's the one that played the lead; he played--he played the fiddle, too, Norman Zumbah. And I followed him some too. And my dad, he played; my granddad played. So, somebody had to follow them. *(Laughs)*

00:28:59

EH: They played fiddle?

00:29:00

VB: Yeah.

00:29:02

EH: What--

00:29:02

VB: And I still got one of his fiddles, my granddad.

00:29:04

EH: Wow; what sort of things did they play?

00:29:09

VB: What tunes?

00:29:11

EH: Yeah.

00:29:11

VB: Oh my.

00:29:12

EH: Or what sort of--what kind of style?

00:29:13

VB: Square dance, two-step, yeah, Waltz.

00:29:19

TM: Polka.

00:29:20

VB: Polkas yeah.

00:29:21

EH: And the Swiss is more of the Waltz and the polka aspect right?

00:29:26

VB: Yeah; they--they had a--I don't--I never got what they did in Switzerland. I don't--I don't know if they had a different step or not, but I think they did. Some of the square--Swiss dances are not the same as mine.

00:29:44

SB: Yeah; that's more Schottische.

00:29:45

EH: Schottische; yeah.

00:29:46

VB: Yeah; yeah.

00:29:49

SB: Because they come from 700 years-plus and we were just 200 years into--into that culture really.

00:29:58

VB: Yeah.

00:29:58

EH: And where did they learn two-step and square dance music from?

00:30:05

VB: Well they just kind of picked it up from somebody. Well we had a--we had a fiddle player over here at Silica, Chandler, he's related to Charlie and--and them, and man I'm telling you; he could play. I mean he was--he was really good. He came to the house one day and they all got together there and they played from nine o'clock 'til four. They just kept sawing 'em. *(Laughs)*

00:30:37

SB: So where do think like Ernest Burky, your dad, when Fasnacht would come and the Catholics would say it's Fat Tuesday, we want to celebrate, you kids stayed home and Ernest would go out and play music. What was he playing during that time?

00:30:53

VB: Well he played the same things I did.

00:30:54

SB: Same things.

00:30:56

VB: I learned what--what he played.

00:31:01

EH: Could you tell me a little bit about the dances when you were growing up?

00:31:08

VB: Yeah; it's--it was pretty (*Laughs*)--pretty good. (*makes boxing motion*)

00:31:12

EH: Wait; what's this boxing all about?

00:31:15

VB: What?

00:31:15

EH: He's making boxing motions.

00:31:17

VB: Yeah; (*Laughs*) yeah we used to have a lot of fights in--after the dance or sometimes during the dance and all of a sudden--. See the musicians get out of that because they were up on the stage; we just didn't go down. (*Laughs*)

00:31:34

EH: That's why I like to play. (*Laughs*)

00:31:37

VB: And we had a guy--did you ever meet Stewart Fahrner?

00:31:43

EH: Mmmm... I don't think so.

00:31:45

VB: He lives up there on the hill up here. Yeah; he's been passed away quite a while ago; Eleanor's brother, and he was kind of a floor keeper for everybody--for--he was tall and talked real sharp and slow.

00:32:05

TM: Yeah a deep demanding voice. (*Laughs*)

00:32:07

VB: Yeah; he was demanding. Anyway yeah he took care of a lot of--

00:32:14

SB: That was Eleanor's brother Stewart?

00:32:15

VB: This was Stewart; yeah.

00:32:17

EH: So were the fights--were they over girls or were they about family feuds?

00:32:21

VB: They were over any kind of thing they--some of them got a little bit too much music in 'em and--

EH: Too much music; is that what you call it? (*Laughs*)

00:32:29

VB: And then you know they get an argument--you did mine, well you got my girl, or I had--I don't know what they ever fought--fought about. (*Laughs*)

00:32:40

SB: He was just playing the fiddle.

EH: Right!

00:32:41

VB: I was just trying to make miles on the floor! (*Laughs*)

00:32:48

EH: And at that time was it the Helvetia Star Band? (*Vernon nods*) And you were playing in that?

00:32:53

VB: I was playing part--it was older than I am, but it--it--I played with them in the later years.

00:33:03

EH: When does that band date back to?

00:33:07

VB: About, my dad...

00:33:08

SB: The earliest pictures I can remember--

00:33:11

TM: Grandpa John was--

00:33:12

SB: Yeah; Grandpa John even.

00:33:15

TM: Uh-hm; there's several pictures with him in it.

00:33:16

VB: Yeah, he played in the...it was in the brass band, yeah. We got pictures of that. They played in graveyards on what you call it--we call it decoration days.

00:33:33

EH: Oh yeah. What about--so at that time were there more brass instruments in the band?

00:33:37

VB: Yeah; there was--there was more of them. There was. There was 15, 20 of 'em you know and then for the--but the string instruments there was only four or five.

00:33:51

EH: It's hard to compete with those loud brass instruments.

00:33:53

VB: Yeah.

00:33:59

EH: You have something to say?

00:33:59

Dave: No, no; that--I'm just laughing about competing with the brass. That--that topic has come up in here before, so--.

EH: Oh, okay. *(Laughs)*

00:34:08

VB: What? It come up before?

00:34:10

SB: Competing with the brass it came up before.

00:34:11

Dave: Yeah; some musicians play much louder than others particularly now that they have microphones.

00:34:18

VB: Oh yeah; they got—'til--we played without--without any mics or anything.

00:34:25

Dave: Cousin Freddie has a reputation.

00:34:27

VB: Fred—Fred, and his dad--you ought to heard his dad. He was piano. Actually--

00:34:35

SB: Loud and the piano would move! Bump, bump, bump; we were little kids going--

00:34:39

VB: There is a piano--

00:34:42

SB: At the Red Hall.

00:34:42

VB: At the Red Hall that we took out of the hall over here? And the ivory on it is pretty near all gone. I mean it's--

00:34:52

SB: And that's from Ralph. *(Laughs)*

00:34:56

VB: It is beat off. I mean they all played. Rudolf played that too.

00:35:00

Dave: Is that the piano that got thrown in the yard when they had the fight?

00:35:02

VB: It might have been. I don't remember that. *(Laughs)*

00:35:05

Dave: That's one of my favorite stories.

00:35:09

EH: Could you talk a little bit about how you learned to make wine?

00:35:16

VB: Oh yeah. The way *(Laughs)*--the way my granddad made it, he said it takes a pint of juice and a gallon of gas--

00:35:30

SB: Gallon of gas! *(Laughs)*

00:35:32

TM: That's pretty much it.

00:35:34

VB: --two pounds of sugar, two pounds of sugar and fill the jug up with water. It makes a gallon. But he always made like in the big crock and he'd put the juice--the berries down in there and then squeeze 'em off and get the right amount of pints to the gallon. It takes a pint of juice.

00:35:59

EH: Was it elderberries?

00:36:00

VB: Elderberry and grape; I think they make--some people make it all grape juice.

00:36:07

TM: Yeah.

00:36:07

VB: And it takes a long time to make it. The other--the elderberry you could do what I told you. You can do that in about two or three months and it's fit to--fit to get dizzy on. (*Laughs*)

00:36:29

SB: Now that's a good song, fit to get dizzy.

00:36:34

TM: You drink too many glasses you can't say that!

00:36:36

SB: No. (*Laughs*)

00:36:37

Dave: Yeah; say it three times--

00:36:40

TM: That's a tongue-twister.

00:36:41

VB: But you know after you--after you make it, the fellow would take it and bottle it and put it under pressure like that bottle there and put a good cork in it and leave it for months.

00:36:53

SB: Four years.

00:36:54

VB: No, a year; the rest of the year. Then it tastes really good. (*Laughs*) Grandpa, we'd stop there and he would give you about that much [*Gestures*] in a nice little glass and we'd talk for hours. (*Laughs*) And he wouldn't give us no more. (*Laughs*) But that's all you needed really.

00:37:20

EH: So it was pretty strong?

00:37:20

VB: Yeah.

00:37:22

TM: That was dipping into his dinner wine, you know.

00:37:25

VB: Yeah.

00:37:25

TM: Remember we used to go to the cupboard every day. I remember him going to the cupboard and getting that little glass of wine before he ate dinner.

00:37:33

VB: He went in and did a little thing before he'd go down the stairs.

00:37:38

TM: Yeah; yep.

00:37:39

VB: That's the cellar neck!

00:37:40

TM: Yeah; the cellar neck! (*Laughs*)

00:37:43

SB: And the cellar neck also had like shelves of cheese--

00:37:48

TM: Shelves of cheese; yeah.

00:37:49

VB: Yeah.

00:37:49

SB: We tried to recreate the cellar neck, you know.

00:37:52

TM: Yeah; we did. (*Laughs*)

00:37:52

SB: We did.

00:37:53

TM: We done a good job!

00:37:54

SB: We did a good job.

00:37:55

TM: We really did.

00:37:55

SB: It looked good for a little while.

00:37:58

EH: Is that where you were--

00:37:58

SB: You were aging the cheese at the cellar neck and you know the glasses are there that are ready to go downstairs. You could bring a little bit of wine up and the pies were cooling and you know that's what's--

00:38:06

TM: Actually didn't--at one point they all went to the cellar and had a table in the cellar that they sat around and drank the wine.

00:38:14

VB: I think they did one time; yeah.

00:38:15

TM: Maybe it was just the guys that did that. I don't think the women that did--

00:38:17

SB: Definitely never allowed down there.

00:38:20

TM: No, no; that's right. That was the man cave.

00:38:22

SB: The man cave! (*Laughs*)

00:38:23

VB: Yeah; yeah. My dad never had that. We had--we had a table down there but they had--they had cheese on it. They had all kinds of--you know when they made cheese there six pounds, they'd put them on there to age them and they'd switch them each day and put them away.

00:38:44

SB: And have like a little taste. What Thrayron had provided us the opportunity in this generation was access to Grandpa John's house which gave us access to the cellar which what we understood is that the cellar was the one that gave the cheese and the wine its patina or its flavor or-- You know the wine that-- the wine and the cheese that was--that was coming from this cellar tasted like this; the wine and the cheese that came from that cellar tasted like that. It's a Dubach cellar; it's a Betler cellar; it's a Burky cellar. You could taste the different variations according to the probably humidity in the cheese and the-- and the flavor of the cellar.

00:39:27

EH: Wow.

00:39:28

SB: And so Thrayron kept--restored this--this—well, preserved, not restored--Grandpa John's cellar and it was just there and so we were able to still put cheeses in there and put the wines in there and the same exact--

00:39:43

VB: It's still like when--

00:39:43

SB: It's still that way.

00:39:44

TM: Yeah.

00:39:46

VB: --when Uncle Roy was living. (*Laughs*)

00:39:45

TM: Yeah; yeah, I mean--

00:39:47

SB: And you're--Ernest Burky's cellar is still there in its same condition.

00:39:52

VB: Yeah; same--same way.

00:39:53

SB: Ralph Burky's cellar is still there in that same condition that you can--

00:39:56

VB: Without a cement floor.

00:39:59

TM: Yeah; the only thing we did with that floor was put some gravel in there and that's still the same, yeah.

00:40:03

VB: Keep from just stay away from the water if it run through. (*Laughs*)

00:40:09

TM: Right; yeah.

00:40:10

SB: But even for the kraut and most anything that you're fermenting you know in those--in that same kind of environment you could smell the difference like oh this is definitely so and so's you know? This is definitely from--from John Betler's cellar or--

00:40:28

EH: Can you--can you even put words to the difference, like what your Uncle John's would taste like in comparison to somebody else?

00:40:35

SB: To like the Burky cellar?

00:40:38

TM: I only experienced the Betler side. I'm really not--

00:40:44

Dave: Didn't want to deal with those Burkys--(*Laughs*).

TM: (*Laughs*)

00:40:50

SB: Alvin's cheese versus--versus the cheese then we made later would be what the difference is. Alvin's cheese was--was--was really good. (*Laughs*) It really was.

00:41:05

VB: Yeah; it was.

00:41:06

SB: The reason the Helvetia cheese sign sits out here is because of Alvin's cheese.

00:41:10

TM: That "Helvetia Cheese" is Grandpa's sign.

00:41:13

SB: Yes, your Grandpa's sign that when Alvin was making cheese, his cheese came here and was sold. That's the cheese that--

00:41:20

TM: Which is another cousin, which would have been the Betlers, too--that side, too and the Burkys.

00:41:25

EH: I think I need a family tree.

00:41:27

SB: I know.

00:41:27

TM: Yeah; you do--honestly.

00:41:28

SB: Get a family tree. Go to each cellar.

00:41:32

EH: Yeah; that would be cool!

00:41:33

SB: But like the Balli sisters, too; you know and their cheese had a--

00:41:36

TM: It was more of a milky--

00:41:37

SB: Yeah--

00:41:39

TM: --rather than--

00:41:39

SB: Yeah and there's--it's because of their cellar you know and the way that they had everything in their cellar. You know and we always said oh--

00:41:46

TM: Some is more nutty and nutty flavor and some is more of a milky flavor or--I don't know.

00:41:52

SB: Some was drier; some was more moister, you know some was--I mean that's what I remember of the different cheeses.

00:42:00

TM: Me too.

00:42:00

SB: Nancy's--Nancy's cheese you know, the Detweiler cellar, it's still the same cellar that they used all these years and she still makes--as far as I know she is still making cheese and aging it in that cellar. And Alvin, too; I don't know if he's--

00:42:14

VB: Yeah; Alvin, I don't think he makes it any--

00:42:16

SB: Well he does like a couple cheeses.

00:42:18

TM: Little here and there just for himself.

00:42:19

VB: Or maybe--yeah.

00:42:23

EH: Is there something that you ate, you know maybe in your childhood that you can't get now that just sticks with you, the memory of it?

00:42:36

VB: Yeah; (*Laughs*)--

00:42:41

TM: I'm afraid.

00:42:42

SB: I'm afraid.

00:42:45

VB: There was--you can't buy the--the sausage we made anymore, two or three different kind. We made--they made sausage, they called it liver sausage and it was a clear different taste from regular pork. But it was from their liver and had some of that in it. And I really don't know; well they--they--when they butchered they kept the heads of the--of the animals and took the skin off of 'em and cleaned 'em up and then boiled all the meat off of them and made this liver sausage, plus the liver and the heart. They put it all in the big kettle and boiled it and then made sausage out of it.

00:43:44

TM: There was a blood sausage, too.

00:43:45

VB: Yeah; blood--yeah. We never did do that.

00:43:48

TM: Oh you didn't?

00:43:48

VB: My family never. They just get the blood when they killed 'em they caught the blood, some of the blood and put it in the same kind of mixture I guess. But we never--well, we just never took--took time to catch the blood! We were always too busy to do anything else.

00:44:13

TM: What about mincemeat?

00:44:14

VB: Huh?

00:44:14

TM: Did they make mincemeat? I don't remember.

00:44:16

VB: Yeah; mincemeat, they made mincemeat out of beef I think.

00:44:22

TM: I remember Grandma making it but I don't know what the process was. I just remember--

00:44:25

VB: Yeah; beef. I think hogs were just the liver sausage and the frying sausage that was in intestines, you know. They took intestines from the animal and turned 'em and cleaned 'em and washed them and everything. And finally they ground the meat and put the sausage in the--in that and hung 'em up and-- and smoked 'em for two or three weeks. And that was frying sausage.

00:45:01

SB: Hmm; so that sausage hung in those smokehouses for two or three weeks?

00:45:06

VB: During the cold--the cold time of the year.

00:45:08

SB: Right.

00:45:09

VB: Yeah; it was always--well--

00:45:11

SB: There was a little tiny bit of smoke coming in but everything was cold and you kept that little smoke--? Like a smudge pot.

00:45:17

VB: Yeah; just kept that smokehouse full of smoke all--day and night. They'd put a big hunk of wood on it; it wouldn't burn but it--they had fire under it and it would sit there and smoke that little--that little room half as big as this. They just smoked up tight. They had the sausage on rods; nothing could come in or get up on there. There it would sit; you--it was just dried up real solid and my uncle was--I stayed with my uncle when I was in high school. And he said, 'hey Vernon; come over here.' (*Laughs*) He--he had rheumatism and he couldn't move around. He was in bed all winter. 'Go up there to the smokehouse and get me a link of that sausage.' (*Laughs*) And I--and I'd go up and clip one of them off and bring it down. He'd get a hold of one piece and put the rest under the pillow and he'd start eating that. (*Laughs*) He wasn't supposed to have--

00:46:25

TM: Meat.

00:46:27

VB: --red meat because of rheumatism.

00:46:31

SB: Now he also during the same time *you* were in charge of one part of the farm, and your cousin--

00:46:36

VB: My cousin--

00:46:37

SB: --which was a female was in charge of the other part and she took care of the chickens and eggs and egg production was--how much was egg production? That always amazed me.

00:46:46

VB: Well we had--she had--she had--we--my dad had about 300 chicks in the beginning of the year and he did too and they would ship thirty dozen eggs every week after they started laying. And that--because we were at the--at the highway so we could go get to the mailbox and he'd take the crates of eggs; we had thirty dozen eggs crated up and he'd take them to the express office and the railroad would take them up to

SB: Buckhannon.

VB: New York.

00:47:25

SB: Well Clarksburg, New York, straight up.

00:47:27

VB: Yeah; they'd go right on up to New York on the--on the B&O. Transfer and everything.

00:47:35

SB: And so how were thirty dozen of eggs transported in a crate? What kind of crate--what did that look like?

00:47:39

VB: We had--they were a box about this long and in layers (*Gestures*) like two dozen in each layer and fifteen dozen on each side.

00:47:48

TM: Wooden crates.

00:47:49

VB: Wood crates, just a--like an orange crate and they had separators on them and there was two dozen on each layer and then another soft piece of cardboard on--on that and stack another one on top of that-- five or six layers, or whatever it took to get thirty dozen in the crate. (*Background Conversation*) And she fed the chickens and--

00:48:13

SB: And her name was what?

00:48:14

VB: Hilda.

00:48:14

SB: Hilda; yeah.

00:48:17

EH: It must have been a lot of chickens.

00:48:17

VB: Yeah; around--

00:48:19

EH: How many?

00:48:19

VB: 300 yeah. They ordered--they would get like 300 biddies, little tiny biddies and they were sexed. They were all laying hens when they grew up.

00:48:33

EH: Back to the liver sausage; was that like a--like a slice, like a braunschweiger? You would slice it--

00:48:38

VB: Yeah; yeah, it was--wasn't--it was more fatty--fatty material--fatty meat.

00:48:48

EH: Yeah okay.

00:48:50

VB: Because you're--the pigs have great jowls and they would cut that all off and that's mostly fat and whatever--you know had something they couldn't use in sausage.

00:49:08

EH: Hmm.

00:49:09

VB: It was--it was odd. (*Laughs*) It was odd what they made from the--the character of what it was you know! (*Laughs*)

00:49:22

SB: Where did the eyes end up in other words?

00:49:24

VB: They--they didn't use eyes.

00:49:26

TM: No eyes?

00:49:28

VB: We had--

00:49:29

Dave: I feel better.

00:49:29

SB: Yeah; you feel better now.

00:49:30

Dave: Not much because there's still a lot of body parts--

00:49:34

VB: We didn't--

00:49:35

TM: And blood.

00:49:35

VB: We didn't use the tongue.

00:49:37

SB: You didn't? Did they pickle the tongue or something?

00:49:39

VB: Not out of the hog; uh-uh.

00:49:40

TM: That was the beef.

00:49:41

VB: Just the--just the--yeah the beef--the beef tongue we used, yeah. It--it was--that was a different sausage too. (*Laughs*) It was red; it was always dark red, like what's that--

00:49:56

SB: Pepperoni?

00:49:56

VB: Pepperoni, yeah; yeah like pepperoni.

00:50:00

SB: And still to this day when I try to bring all these different sausages I always look for sausages all over the world and I'll bring them to mom and dad and he'll cut through all of them and try to figure out what they are (*Laughs*).

00:50:14

TM: Because you know the ingredients is not telling you the real thing.

00:50:16

VB: Yeah; they must be getting it out camels. *(Laughs)*

00:50:24

SB: Out of camels. I'll get some cheese--

00:50:27

EH: Yeah; we should order soon. What--how have you see the community of Helvetia change?

00:50:38

VB: The change?

00:50:40

EH: Yeah; change or stayed the same?

00:50:43

VB: Well it's about the same. It--the old tradition is still there but it's a little bit amplified from age, you know. It's younger. *(Laughs)*

00:51:01

EH: Do you think young people are--?

00:51:02

VB: Oh they're doing great. I think they do; they're--these little fellows on that stage there in the-- they're really--I like--I love to watch them kids do that.

00:51:13

EH: So there's a--like a three or four year old fiddler here is that right?

00:51:20

VB: Well he's four. Yeah; he's got--we got him a little play fiddle. It's--it's not a real fiddle. He was up on the stage with us over at the Fiddlers Reunion [Interviewer's note: Fiddler's Reunion at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, WV].

00:51:32

SB: He's learning to--

00:51:34

VB: He's learning to get up there and--

00:51:36

SB: --to do the things--

00:51:37

VB: --you know--

00:51:39

SB: He's got a stage presence.

00:51:40

VB: I've got--I've got my granddad's violin that I'm going to give him if he learns to do something with it.

00:51:49

EH: Aw.

00:51:49

VB: So I promised him that a long time ago. *(Laughs)*

00:51:53

EH: And is he a rel--a relative?

00:51:56

VB: Yeah; he's my nephew.

00:51:58

EH: Okay.

00:52:00

VB: No.

00:52:00

SB: Great-grandson.

00:52:01

VB: Great-grandson; yeah. (*Laughs*)

00:52:03

EH: You probably have a lot, right?

00:52:05

VB: Huh?

00:52:06

EH: You probably have a lot.

00:52:07

SB: That's the first one.

00:52:09

VB: That's the first one yeah!

00:52:10

SB: Now we've got two. Now he's got two great-grandsons.

00:52:13

VB: Yeah; they're brothers.

00:52:14

SB: One named after him and one named after his brother--

00:52:16

VB: My brother. My brother was Norman. And him and I were--they were--we were close. He went to the Army and he was gone for two years and finally he came back and we--I could still see him after he come back. He was rowdy—boy, I'll tell you. (*Laughs*)

00:52:39

SB: He had landed on Normandy; yeah D-Day.

00:52:42

VB: Oh you--he told me, he told me a few stories. I never--I never asked him anything I knew he didn't want to tell me but--

00:52:50

SB: He didn't talk much.

00:52:51

VB: He said--every once in a while we'll do something and he said, that's just what it was, just the way it was when I got on that PTO boat. He said there was forty-five of us on that boat and I--I was the sergeant and we were going towards the land and there was no--no place to land. I mean just up on the sand. And he said I took my rifle and trying to get the bottom. He said as soon as I hit the bottom I got them the hell out of there. (*Laughs*) He said we went on the ground--on the ground.

00:53:26

Dave: Do you know what beach he was on?

00:53:29

VB: Oh now I don't know.

00:53:31

SB: Were there different beaches at Normandy?

00:53:34

VB: Yeah; well—Normandy...

00:53:35

Dave: Well that was a region--Omaha and--

00:53:40

VB: Omaha, yeah and--

00:53:42

Dave: --all the different ones up through there, but you know--if it was American it might have been Omaha or--

00:53:47

VB: I think it was yeah Omaha. That--

00:53:50

Dave: Some of them were terrible and some weren't too bad.

00:53:53

VB: Yeah; he said boys, the way he talked every--well they were always the infantry, all them, them boys were. He was the sergeant. And--

00:54:07

SB: Never wanted to go back to Europe ever.

00:54:09

VB: No; he wouldn't go back.

00:54:12

EH: Wow.

00:54:13

VB: He was two years older than I am.

00:54:16

SB: But we went back several times, dad, and myself, and mom and we did like the food. You know, that was our gig.

00:54:24

VB: Yeah; it's nice.

00:54:25

SB: We would go to like a--our deli, the delis and we would buy different cheeses and different meats and different breads and put 'em in our packs and put 'em in a car and then we'd drive and at some nice

Alp view we would sit and open up everything and experience all the--and that's when dad would like cut it open. "I don't know how they did this. Wonder how they did that!" *(Laughs)*

00:54:48

EH: Yeah; so going to Switzerland, did that make you understand some of your own family traditions?

00:54:53

SB: Oh for me it did.

00:54:55

VB: Yeah; you know--

00:54:56

SB: How old were you when you the first time to Switzerland?

00:54:59

VB: Hmm; I don't know--about--

00:55:01

SB: That was 1980.

00:55:04

VB: I was born in '25; how old was I? *(Laughs)*

00:55:07

Dave: Seventeen.

00:55:07

SB: Seventeen.

00:55:11

VB: No; I was older than that. (*Laughs*) Twenty-seven--forty-seven probably--

00:55:14

SB: No; you were 50.

00:55:17

VB: Yeah maybe, probably.

00:55:18

SB: I was 30.

00:55:20

VB: Yeah.

00:55:20

SB: Yeah; so you were in your late 50s I would say.

00:55:23

VB: I was just retired I suspect, yeah.

00:55:27

SB: Oh thank you.

Waitress: Here we go guys.

00:55:33

EH: We're probably getting ready--are they closing at 7:00 or 6:00?

00:55:36

SB: I think they close at 7:00 or else Monday is different. What time is it?

00:55:38

EH: It's 5:22.

00:55:39

VB: Well this is evening isn't it? (*Laughs*)

00:55:41

SB: Yeah.

00:55:42

EH: You're probably getting hungry. We can order.

00:55:46

SB: Yeah; she's going to--I told her just to bring us some cheeses so we can order.

00:55:50

VB: Yeah; that's good.

00:55:52

EH: Oh yeah; so going to Switzerland helped you realize things about yourself?

00:55:59

SB: Uh-hm; I think so. Don't you think you could connect the dots really easily?

00:56:04

TM: Yeah; when my husband and I went, we went during the Schracten Fest in--in Berne which was great because it was like all of Switzerland comes together and all their folklore comes together in one place and has--they have a big festival. And it was kind of a mega-festival compared to what we have here, but I could relate to all the different costumes and the different traditions and the things that they were doing there that we do here--

00:56:33

SB: Particularly because you studied costumes.

00:56:36

TM: Yeah but it was kind of funny because the people that we were traveling with kept saying you people in Helvetia, West Virginia are much more Swiss than we are because they don't really bring out their costumes and their--you know all the traditions and everything until something special is going on like a festival. Where here it's more of a--I guess everybody grew up with it, you know. I mean not on a daily basis but more often than they do, so it was kind of funny that--and you know a lot of people, their younger generation don't know what an alphorn is don't know you know anything about the--the

costumes and we try to teach our younger kids all about that and the folklore and they don't do that as much as we do here. So they kept saying oh you're more Swiss than we are. *(Laughs)*

00:57:28

EH: Well, I know that when my grandma has gone back to Belgium because she speaks Flemish, they all laugh at her because her Flemish is stuck in time. Is that true of your Swiss, too?

00:57:39

SB: Oh yeah.

00:57:43

VB: They used to call us Dutchmen.

00:57:45

SB: No; she's talking about when you went to Switzerland.

00:57:46

VB: Oh.

00:57:47

SB: How it was for you to listen to the language and be--. Tell them about the Southern State you went into like a feed store and you were looking for something for mom and you were by yourself and--

00:57:58

VB: Yeah; I tried to tell the lady what--what I wanted you know and I was huntin' you know and I was there about three or four minutes. And the guy was working in the back of the store. And I tried to tell her what I wanted and--

00:58:17

SB: You were probably looking for bells.

00:58:19

VB: She couldn't tell me. I don't know what it was. And the guy says, "if you--if you don't know what you want get the hell out of here!" *(Laughs)*

00:58:30

EH: Jeez.

00:58:32

VB: So I said oh well, I don't need it anyway.

00:58:36

SB: *(Laughs)* It's not about customer service there.

00:58:38

EH: Really; right. But you were speaking Swiss right?

00:58:42

VB: Yeah; he said it in Swiss. *(Laughs)*

00:58:45

EH: Oh.

00:58:46

SB: I have a beautiful video of you and this little old man that was the carver and I have the carvings. Remember he was carving and he'd pull out these drawers and he'd tell you what wood this cow was made of?

00:58:59

VB: Yeah.

00:58:59

SB: And that--and that video rings in my head. I will--I don't know if I'll ever be able to find it but the two of you were talking and mom was having an asthma attack because we're in a barn (*Laughs*) and I was recording and Jeff was helping mom. But... he said--you were telling him all the different types of wood that came from this area and you were telling him about maple, blah, blah, blah, and he--he got it. And all the sudden I heard--because I didn't hear--I didn't understand a word they were saying--and all of the sudden dad was saying poplar, like a poplar tree. All the sudden the man is like "poplar, what is this poplar?" (*Laughs*)

00:59:37

VB: They didn't have poplar.

00:59:39

SB: He didn't know what poplar was.

00:59:41

TM: Yeah; no poplar--mostly pine there.

00:59:43

VB: Yeah.

00:59:46

SB: So but he could really relate to him because he was a really old guy--

00:59:50

VB: Yeah.

00:59:51

SB: --but the newer generation like the Christas that I've had in my house in D.C. and people that were around the Embassy and the new Swiss, the young Swiss, maybe the--you know the more transient Swiss, they couldn't understand your--your old Swiss.

01:00:06

TM: Different dialect.

01:00:09

VB: Yeah; it was--

01:00:12

Dave: What's he drinking? He needs refreshed--

01:00:14

SB: Sam Adams.

01:00:17

VB: What?

01:00:17

SB: Nothing.

01:00:19

VB: You want some cheese? (*Laughs*)

01:00:23

EH: I'm eating!

01:00:25

VB: Oh okay.

01:00:29

SB: I've got to find that old video. I have that video.

01:00:30

VB: That's--that's pretty good cheese. That's almost Helvetia cheese.

01:00:35

EH: That's the stuff from Ohio right?

01:00:36

SB: Uh-hm.

01:00:37

VB: Is it?

01:00:39

SB: Uh-hm. What's it called?

01:00:44

TM: Do you remember me telling you about when Russell and I went to Switzerland and we brought back the alphorn?

01:00:50

SB: Mmm. And didn't you bring back the big bells?

01:00:53

TM: Oh yeah.

01:00:53

TM: Like she brought back like the--

01:00:55

TM: Whole country.

01:00:56

SB: Milk bowls, bells--I broke the milk bowls. (*Laughs*) I broke Denise's, my sister's.

01:01:06

TM: You didn't break the good one.

01:01:08

TM: That's like Russell's pride and joy is that big--big milk bowl. But no; the Swiss--the Swiss Folklore Group [Helvetia's Swiss Folklore Group] had this man in Switzerland make us a--an alphorn for the group. And so when we went, we--we decided that--that would be a good opportunity to bring it back with us instead of having it shipped. So we got there and we met the man who made it and he told my husband, he said, now when you go home normally you know a big item like that you would put it under the plane, you know you'd check it in and it would go under the plane. And he said no, no, no; you don't--you don't put the--the long--the long--yeah the long blonde does not go under the--under the plane. He said you take this long blonde on the plane with you and he looked at me and he said you take the short blonde and you put her under the plane. (*Laughs*) But do not put the--the long blonde under the plane. You put it up on--take it on the plane with you.

01:02:09

EH: That's funny.

01:02:09

VB: You want some more cheese?

01:02:12

EH: Um, well is there anything else that I should ask or that we should talk about or that I should have Vernon talk about?

01:02:26

SB: In the food area, I think it was always very interesting and what I tried to bring back when I came back is--is that everybody tried to work together in harvesting and canning and you know pool the milk together and make cheese and everybody got together and sheered, everybody got together and you know farmed; it was a collaborative effort. You know small farmers didn't have--wouldn't have been able to survive I think if it was not for the collaborative effort.

01:02:53

And--and I don't--you know we probably still would do that if somebody would call out and say "hey I need you to come help me sheer!" We probably would still do that.

01:03:05

TM: Right; it's just not a--

01:03:06

SB: But it's just the way it's happening so each farmer individually tries to survive on their own now. Yes; we're ready (*to waitress*).

01:03:13

VB: They're doing more--they're doing more of it than they did before.

01:03:16

SB: Yeah.

01:03:19

VB: Because--

01:03:19

EH: All right; I'm going to--go ahead.

01:03:20

VB: --they got--the first time they got the machinery they--they started. Grandpa got--got a--

01:03:29

SB: A thrasher.

01:03:31

VB: --a thrasher and somebody else got another piece out of--. They'd drag all that around to the whole community and do--do oats and wheat and everything.

01:03:40

SB: And to this day we still own a--a common ground that's called the Dipping Vat, right there on the Main Road that goes between your house and--

01:03:48

TM: But it's not used.

01:03:50

SB: It's not used but they used to run the sheep through there and they would dip everybody's sheep. And so they would fill that with whatever they needed--

01:03:56

TM: When it was surveyed off there's really no owner to that little tiny piece and it joins us and--

01:04:02

SB: Betler, Detwiler, and--

01:04:04

VB: [Inaudible]

01:04:05

SB: But it's still multiple owners and so they--

01:04:06

TM: Yeah.

01:04:07

SB: --everybody would run their sheep through there and dip their sheep once a year.

01:04:10

EH: What do you mean dip it? Like so you knew whose was whose?

01:04:13

SB: No; so they would have not--they wouldn't--they wouldn't be--they wouldn't get--

01:04:16

VB: Cure lice.

01:04:18

SB: --lice and stuff.

01:04:20

EH: Got it. Okay.

01:04:22

VB: It's a vat and it was deep--deep enough for a cow to go through and you know--sheep and cattle, yeah.

01:04:33

SB: And you could dip your livestock in there and everybody could share that space where all the chemicals or whatever it was that--

01:04:40

VB: All they'd use is lanolin.

01:04:42

TM: Lanolin or no; they had lanolin and that's what they already had in it.

01:04:47

VB: No.

01:04:48

SB: Tar?

01:04:48

TM: Probably; that's what they would dip us in. (*Laughs*)

01:04:52

VB: We--we always called it sheep dip.

01:04:56

SB: I don't know what the recipe for sheep dip is. (*Laughs*) Can you Google that?

01:04:59

TM: No; I don't.

01:05:00

EH: Okay; we can pause. We can pause to order.

01:05:03

SB: Okay.

01:05:06

Waitress: Okay; how do you guys want the bill done, everybody separate?

01:05:07

EH: I'm separate.

01:05:08

SB: I'm separate--dad and I are--.

01:05:09

[End Helvetia-Vernon Burky Interview]