



2007 Sesquicentennial Oral Interview

Eva Belle Kindred Gerstenberger

CH: This is Cindy Higgins and it is May 18th and I am talking to Eva Belle Gerstenberger. First of all, Eva Belle, what is the secret to your lemon meringue pie?

EG: How do you know I make good lemon meringue?

CH: Marlene Evinger says you make the best lemon meringue pie. So, what is your secret?

EG: I will give you the recipe. I use a package and then I add lemon juice to it and butter to it. And, it is good.

CH: And, when you cooked for the school did you make pies for them?

EG: I made cream puffs for them and homemade rolls. I made rolls every day. I worked up there for 10 years. And, I made four batches of homemade rolls every day.

CH: What was one of their favorites, the ones they always asked for that you made?

EG: They loved the cinnamon rolls. They loved them. Some of the kids, I had one family, the Alernbernd boy, and his mother said, "Eva Bell, he is a very finicky eater. " The secret is they like to come back for seconds. So, when he didn't like anything, I just didn't load 'em up. Because they love to come back for seconds for something they liked.

CH: They like those seconds.

EG: That kid was in the first grade and his mother told me he ate everything.

CH: When you grew up in the Weaver Bottoms, what did you take to school for lunch?

EG: Well, we had sandwiches and then we had to go out and pump this pump out and, boy, was it cold out there pumping this pump. And we had to bring water, and the water was freezing.

CH: And that was at the school house by the railroad tracks?

EG: Yeah. Number 86.



CH: When you grew up there, your dad was a farmer.

EG: Yes, mam.

CH: Did he grow potatoes?

EG: He grew potatoes and he was a wonderful man.

CH: Was that the farm of his dad?

EG: Yeah. I think his folks lived there and then they went back to another place around Lone Star. And they switched farms. Neither one of them weren't happy with their farms, so Daddy ended coming back to Weaver Bottoms. Isn't that odd?

CH: What about your other grandfather? Wasn't he a barber?

EG: Yeah. He was a barber in Eudora.

CH: George Catlin.

EG: George Catlin, yes.

CH: Why did he move to Eudora?

EG: They moved to Eudora because it was a small town and they didn't have a barber in Eudora.

CH: How long was he a barber here?

EG: He was a barber a good many year. I can't remember.

CH: Do you remember going down to his barber shop?

EG: Yes.

CH: What was like that?

EG: It was old fashioned. It was over there on the east side, the first one.

CH: On Main Street.

EG: Not on the west side like it is now. He had a rinky dinky place on the east side next to that Colman's hardware. It was a little place in there. I tell you on Saturday night, Annie White, she used to work at the drug store for her brother, Homer. On Saturday night, us kids would have a nickel. We didn't know whether we should go to White's and get a drink or go down to the corner and go to Combest's and go to the variety store. We had a nickel to spend on Saturday night. We had to choose where we wanted to go. The Salvation Army would come down there and play in front of the drug store. Smikes, we always called it, on the west side where the post office is.

CH: What was the difference between the Combest variety store and the Trefz variety store?

EG: Trefz, they had a lot of cute little things. I ought to show you one of the things.

CH: You had dishes.

EG: Yes. My mother gave them to me. Isn't that something?

CH: So, when you were there in Fall Leaf-

EG: Fall Leaf!

CH: Sorry, Weaver Bottoms. Can you remember some people that were in your class?

EG: There was a Neis, a Laws, there's Felix Miller, there's three different Neis families, and the Sptizlis come down from the hill, and Broers came there. There's quite a few. They went up the railroad track where all Homer Broers lived, the Sptizlis, and the Walls.

CH: And how often did you go to Eudora when you were growing up?

EG: We got to go every Saturday night. All of us took baths. In the winter, we had a tub by the little cook stove and all of us had our baths and our dad was the last one to jump in and take a bath; all of us saved bathwater.

CH: Did you go in a wagon? The train?

EG: We had a car. An old Essex.

CH: And everyone could get into the car.

EG: Everyone got in that old Essex.

CH: How often did you go to Lawrence when you were growing up?

EG: Pair of shoes and my folks hated it because I had a long, narrow foot. The only place we could buy shoes was Fischers. I thought I had that in my scrapbook where I bought my shoes.

CH: And, when did you get married?

EG: We got married on the 14th 1939.

CH: 1939. When you moved to Eudora from Weaver, did you get involved with any clubs or organizations?

EG: Oh, yeah. I used to be a Rebekah and then I went to all kinds of different organizations. I belonged to the 1900 and Now Club when I got older. A lot different kinds of clubs I belonged to.

CH: Didn't your mom belong to several clubs?

EG: Oh, mother. Mother belonged to lots of clubs. Mother loved to play bridge.

CH: She taught school.

EG: She taught school after my father's sudden death.

CH: Where did she teach school at?

EG: It's the funniest thing how this happened. David Wilson was a real good friend of my mothers. Mrs. Pulliam, she was the first grade teacher and she happened to be off for six weeks to have surgery. Dave Wilson called me and said, "Eva Belle, do you think your mother would accept this position?" All I can say is ask her. And that's what got her back. Dad and Mother were a happy, devoted couple. They danced a lot. And that sudden death was terrible. He died so sudden being electrocuted. They were a happy couple. Mother went back to Baker and she taught at Sunflower for years and she did some substitute teaching after she retired.

CH: Where did she get her education to be a teacher?

EG: Over at Baker. She had some, she went out to Emporia and when you went so long you had a three year state certificate to teach school. So my mother went back, took courses on Saturday.

CH: When you got married? And you have two daughters?

EG: Two daughters.

CH: What did you and your family do when your girls were young? What were some things people might have been doing? Like now families might go to soccer.

EG: Oh, yeah. Oh, we did a lot of things. Whatever they were in school, we went to all the things like that. LaWanda was a cheerleader and our youngest daughter was in the band. So, they all had activities to do.

CH: You've had a long affiliation with the Methodist Church.

EG: All my life.

CH: Could you talk about some of the changes you've seen in the Methodist Church from when you first started till now.

EG: In 1935, my mother was president of the UMW; they didn't call it UMW. Nevertheless, we had a great big celebration and we burnt the note in 1935, they paid off the church. My mother was president of the ladies society. And Reverend __ was our minister then. We had some of our things over at Salem Church when we had the celebration. It was a big celebration when they burnt that note. In 1921, that's when the church was built.

CH: So, you've seen a lot of ministers come and go.

EG: Some we've loved and some we didn't.

CH: What was it like when you started getting female ministers?

EG: That was a change. But we dearly loved Cheryl Sommer Ingersoll, she was a sweetheart. Everybody could love her.

CH: Since you all had the celebration when you paid off the church on Church Street, but your family donated the new Methodist Church, so how did that feel leaving the old church behind?

EG: It was kind of hard to give up that church because we had a lot of fond, wonderful memories. We really did. But I'm for progress. I don't believe in holding back. I believe in moving forward was thing for us to do.

CH: What were some things that made that church outdated, do you think?

EG: For young kids. I don't think we had enough stuff for the young kids much.

CH: So, you think it wasn't drawing a younger crowd.

EG: It wasn't drawing a younger crowd. We've got a minister now who is really, really. He wants to start a band in our last newsletter. He's a drummer. He loves music. So, I know we are going to have some of that.

CH: What was it like your kids were younger and where you lived and then all of a sudden Winchester Estates come in. How did that make a change in your life? What did you notice then?

EG: I don't know. It was a big change. That old dirt dusty road finally after all these years, we finally got it paved and now here we are moved in town.

CH: Was it more of a difference when they put Hunter's Ridge in or when they put Winchester Estates in?

EG: The one across from us [Winchester Estates]. That made it different.

CH: When you first moved to your house over there, who were some families?

EG: There were the Durrs, the Rosenaus. Let's see Cochraines, Bagbys, and then they had that one that Everley started over there.

CH: Everley's addition?

EG: The one that was first. Phil and Helen built homes over there. They had a beautiful home and they developed that.

CH: Just in terms of celebrations that the town has had. Everyone thinks of the CPA.

EG: CPA

CH: And now we have EudoraFest. Can you remember other celebrations that people might have gone to through the years?

EG: The CPA Picnic was the highlight. Everybody was looking forward. We didn't have a lot of money but we always picked potatoes so we could go. We picked potatoes because my dad out there he said you're going have a station. And I will pay you. So, we got our money. We got to spend a dollar a day for the picnic, and we got to have a new dress and we bought our school books out of money we earned.

CH: From potato picking

EG: That's what we did to get our money.

CH: Can you remember one of the first CPA picnics and what was there?

EG: We were down there west. Our church always had a stand, the Methodist Church, any way to make a nickel. And over there, Ruth____, on the corner, a lady by the name of Mary Merz and she had a beauty shop in the back of that house. We carried water back and forth and we didn't even have water.

CH: No water down there.

EG: There was no water down there. We carried every drop of water we used and when they got the new place up there, were we thrilled. That was a big improvement.

CH: When the Methodists cook, one of the big things that sells well is the apple—

EG: Apple dumpling. I started that. I started apple dumplings.

CH: And you taught how many people how to make those?

EG: We went down to the church in the basement and we had a whole bunch. All kinds of young people come they ask for apple dumplings. And I go up there to the peach orchard and get their fresh Jonathans. I don't use anything but Jonathan apples.

CH: So, it's Jonathan apples is one of your secrets.

EG: In our cookbook.

CH: Why do you think people like those apple dumplings?

EG: Because they are delicious. They want to help Methodists make money.

CH: How many apple dumplings do you usually make?

EG: Heavens.

CH: Not you, everybody.

EG: I imagine between three and four hundred.

CH: And when did you start the apple dumpling at CPA tradition?

EG: After I retired from Kaw Valley. I can't remember when I did that. It's been a good many years back. We've done it many a year, I started it I had some girls in our church basement and I got all the supplies and everything, the kids did and have you ever eaten one?

EG: Yes, I have.

EG: Did you like it?

CH: Yes, okay. I am not an apple dumpling fan. But they are pretty.

EG: Why do people go after those things? I don't know.

CH: Why don't they go for the lemon meringue pie?

EG: Because it's good!

CH: What is one thing that is no longer in Eudora that you would like to see still in Eudora?

EG: Oh, there's been a lot and lot of changes. Lot of changes. Eudora has changed so much. I don't know. Our church has changed so much, different things at our church have really, really changed a lot.

CH: What would be a real improvement in Eudora at this time?

EG: We've got to get more young people involved in church.

CH: Through the years, there's the Methodist Church, what are some other churches that you can remember that have always been pretty strong that have had a good following.

EG: Salem Church. It was a small church. But their following was excellent. Like Elvie went there and Marion and all that group they were really strong. Then the Catholic Church was really strong in Eudora, I always thought. St. Paul was strong.

CH: Which church do you think has grown the most?

EG: Methodist.

CH: Methodist have grown the most.

EG: I think.

CH: You're a Methodist.

EG: It was quite a decision when Carroll was in service. He always said when we settle down we'd go to the St. Paul church. When he was in service, I stayed with my folks and we had been going to the church and our minister, we loved him. He didn't have the heart to take us away, his two daughters and I away from our church. I got him to be a Methodist.

CH: Another convert. When people talk about Eudora being a German town, what do you remember when you were growing up, did it seem German to you. Your family isn't German.

EG: It didn't.

CH: No.

EG: It never seemed German to me.

CH: Do you think that is because your family wasn't German?

EG: I don't know. It just didn't seem German. See, now Gerstenbergs on that side, if we went to St. Paul Church, it was really a lot more German than our church.

CH: I'm going to finish up here in a second. What was your auction like for a lot of excess things you had at your house?

EG: Ohhhhhhhhh. That just killed me. Even now, my Ethan Allen furniture. I had five sets of dishes.

CH: Did you have a big turn out?

EG: Yeah. We had a big turn out. So many things I am trying to find things now, I can't find. A lot of things broke my heart that I got rid of. I had a lot of beautiful things.

CH: And your house is up for sale now. Can you describe your house [at 1343 E. 2100 Road]?

EG: It is a wonderful home for a family.

CH: How many rooms does it have?

Eva Belle's Apple Dumplings

1 c. sugar
2 c. water
3 T. butter
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
6 apples (I use Jonathan apples)

Filling:
1/2 c. sugar
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
Butter

Boil together for 3 minutes, sugar, water, butter, and cinnamon for syrup mixture. Peel apples and place on a square of pastry. Fill each cavity with sugar and cinnamon that has been mixed together and put butter pat on each apple. Bring opposite points of pastry over the apples and overlap, moisten and seal. Lift carefully and place a little apart in a baking dish and pour hot syrup around dumplings. Bake 425° for 30 minutes, reduce heat to 350° until apples are done.

Pastry:
3 c. flour
1 T. vinegar
1 egg
1 tsp. salt
1 1/3 c. Crisco
5 T. cold water

Mix flour vinegar, egg, salt, Crisco and water together to form dough. Add more water for softer pastry. This makes dough for 6 apple dumplings.

EG: We have five bedrooms, two baths. We are getting too old to go upstairs so we tore off the old back porch and put in a kitchen. Our kitchen is beautiful. It really is. It was hard to give that home up. One time I had a party and I had 35 people there.

CH: It could hold a lot of people.

EG: I could really entertain. I love to entertain.

CH: Did you have a garden there?

EG: Oh, yeah.

CH: What did you grow in your garden?

EG: Everything, we had everything. Radishes, onion, rhubarb—all that stuff and asparagus.

CH: And now you are growing flowers and bushes.

EG: Now, I am just sitting.

CH: Thank you very much. This concludes our interview. Do you have anything you would like to say for Eudora's birthday?

EG: I hope it's very successful and I've already bought some bricks for each family.

CH: Bricks for the statue project.

EG: They wanted all the teachers. Mother being a teacher. Mrs. Slapar said you should have your mother in there. So, I got that taken care of.

CH: How many bricks did you buy?

EG: One for the Gerstenbergers — either three or four.

CH: Thank you very much, Eva Belle, this concludes our interview.