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# Orleans County Historical Association

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## NAMES

father: Michael Balcerzak  
mother: Hedwig Jablonski Balcerzak  
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    Frank, William, and Helen  
husband: Edward P. Cotriss  
    son: Edward M. Cotriss  
    daughter: Genevieve Cotriss

(1895-1993)



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mrs. Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss  
3461 North Gravel Road  
Medina, New York

Mrs. Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss was born July 30, 1895.

This interview was conducted by Helen McAllister, Medina  
at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cotriss.

Mr. Cotriss is present during the interview and makes  
an occasional comment.



Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Cotriss

## 60th Anniv. for The Cotrisses



**Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Cotriss**

Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Sechowiak (and Walter) and Cotriss Sr. were tendered a surprise party on Sunday, Nov. 14, in honor of their 60th wedding anniversary. Their brothers, sisters and family sponsored the supper occasion and provided a 3-tier wedding cake made by Regina Bielicki.

Planning and providing the party were Mrs. Edna Swiercznski, Mrs. Agnes Balcerzak, Frank Balcerzak (and Louise), William Balcerzak (and Eloise), Helen

Edward Cotriss and Sophie Balcerzak Cotriss were married in Medina on a day in November 1920 when heavy snow delayed their honeymoon plans.

They have lived their life here, known to many for their farming interests in the Town of Ridgeway. They currently reside at 3461 North Gravel Road.

### Sincere Thanks

We wish to thank our pastor, Monseigneur Eugene Marcinkiewicz, also all our relatives and friends who sent cards and flowers. A special thanks to all who made our 60th Wedding Anniversary party such a beautiful occasion.

Mr. & Mrs. Edward Cotriss Sr.



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Sophia Cottrill  
Signed

June 6, 1980  
Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister  
INTERVIEWER

June 6, 1980  
Date



For the Orleans County Historical Association, June 6, 1980, Helen McAllister of Medina, New York is interviewing Mrs. Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss of 3461 North Gravel Road, Medina, New York. Husband, Edward P. Cotriss is sitting in an adjoining room and makes an occasional comment.

Mc Mrs. Cotriss, would you start by telling us when you were born?

C July 30, 1895.

Mc Would you give us your father's name?

C Michael Balcerzak.

Mc Where was he born, and where did he live?

C In Posen, Poland.

Mc What was your mother's maiden name? And her homeland?

C Hedwig Jablonski. Her homeland was Poland.

Mc Would you tell me a little bit about your father?

C Well, he had a trade as a blacksmith, and a little farming on the side; not much. And he was a very good father! Can I say that?

Mc You sure can.

C We all thought the world of him. I always thought he was a bright man because he could speak and read and write three languages.

Mc What were the languages?

C Polish, of course. And he could read and write English, and he could read and write German, very well.

Mc You said that your father spent some time in Germany?

C I think he did because by learning the language -- that's what I go by. ... My sister, my oldest sister, I think she can read and write Polish -- which I can. My dad taught us this at home. So you can see he was, you know, fairly good intelligence to do that. He was a darling father. I loved him!

Mc You said that your father crossed the ocean a number of times. Would you tell us about that?

C He did, as a maintenance man. I heard him say "eight times" that he crossed the Atlantic, and whether that's

correct? But I guess it won't matter what it is for now. But he had crossed it many times on these ships. What line he worked for, I wouldn't know. But I know he crossed as a mechanic.

Mc Do you know why he decided to leave the other soil and come to America and finally stay?

C No I really don't because I think at times he did kind of regret it and wish he was back because he come from a -- one of his brothers was very wealthy. And would you believe it: that he died in a prison camp after Poland got taken over! But gosh, he used to have a beautiful carriage like Queen Elizabeth has there, and more fur coats and fur hats, and had a chauffeur driving him around! Dad often grieved for his family. He come from a family of three boys and two girls. A couple of his nephews came to America and they were here for, oh I don't know for how long. Then they went back to Poland.

Mc Your mother came to America at a different time than your father? They hadn't met before they came to Medina?

C I think they met right here in Medina. Do you know Andrew Marcinowski, on High Street? Well, his father and my dad, they were inseparable and I think the two of them came to Medina together. Dad got married first, and then Pa got a girl-friend for Andrew's father there; for his pal. They were friends right to the last. But I do think them two came to town together and picked up their girls and got married.

Mc I think you said that your father came to this area to work in a stone quarry?

C A blacksmith. He used to sharpen tools for the workers. I remember they used to -- well, you wouldn't remember. You're too young -- but they used to make these blocks for buildings. In fact there's a lot of it around Medina in different buildings, that was put out in these quarries.

- Mc So, your parents were married and then children came along. Would you tell us who their children are?
- C Well, there's Edna (Swierczewski); me (Sophia B. Cotriss); Anthony (wed Agnes Cotriss); Frank ( F. Dujenski, and L. Nowak); William ( A. Piantek, and E. Woodroe); and Helen ( W. Sechowiak). Six of us. Helen came way later in life. I was 17 years old when she was born. Quite a difference in our ages.
- Mc Where was your home in Medina?
- C On Horan Road, Medina. A little farm. A small place, on the hardest kind of land. But then we managed to live there. They could keep cow and chickens and that, and help the grocery bills. We never went to bed hungry.
- Mc Do you have any memories of your early home life, when you were at home as a young girl?
- C Yes. They're good memories. Mom had to discipline us because she was with us. And poor Mother -- would you believe it -- she used to go out plowing; follow a pair of horses with skirts on! Now of course they do have slacks. But, I have good memories of the home life because we were all -- oh, at different times of the year we'd all have to kneel together and pray. And they say, "A family that prays together can't go wrong too much". And I think my folks brought up as good a family as an average family as there is around. None of the boys got into trouble, or the girls either. So.
- Mc Were you and your brothers and sisters close?
- C Yes, we had to be. Now, there was no fighting allowed. Especially at the dinner table. You know, some people will bring up their troubles and then they'll get kind of aggressive, and one thing and another. That was not allowed at our home because our dad always said -- he was the one that used to kind of -- well, he never did

punish us though. ... I only got one kick from my father in all my life; but he never used to beat us up, or anything. Mom did, but she had to !! But Dad, he used to make us behave at the meal times because they said it was God's Blessings, that we should be thankful that we, you know, were able to have what we did have. And so really there was no bickering allowed. They used to bicker, the boys, and I won't say we were a perfect family.

My Dad had a blacksmith shop at home that he used to do a lot of work out there and he'd always have the boys with him, teaching them things; that's why all our boys -- now weren't none of us, only Helen is a high school graduate; but none of us were high school graduates. And look at my brother Frank! I think he's made a big contractor, you know, and that. He made a big come-back. In fact the boys are all mechanically inclined.

Mc When you say your "brother Frank," is he the big contractor in this area?



Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Cotriss Sr.

C Yeah. You know he builds so many projects here. Now the boys, of course, took over. Bob ~~and~~, you probably know Bob Balcerzak, and - -

~~WHAT ABOUT BOYS? BOB AND WHAT?~~

C Well Bob was the only boy in that family and, of course, then there was the three girls. You know Marcia and Barbara.

M<sub>c</sub> Marcia and Barbara and who else?

C Shirley.

M<sub>c</sub> Oh yes.

Well as long as we're talking about Marcia and Barbara and Shirley, for the record: what does Marcia do?

C Oh, she has that Lakewood Village. And then they have all those houses, . . . You know those rents and they have apartments and one thing and another.

M<sub>c</sub> Now her name is Marcia what?

C Tuohey. (Mrs. Carl W. Tuohey).

M<sub>c</sub> Marcia Balcerzak Tuohey. And what about Barbara?

C Barbara is Barbara Balcerzak Waters.

M<sub>c</sub> Married to Robert Waters. Does she have the Nursing Home?

C Oh, she has that Orchard Manor and she's in the other projects, too, in the contracting with Bob. The kids are all in on that. And, of course, Bob is - - I think he's the president of that outfit now. And then he has his boys working for him. He's got five boys. I'll tell you, there's a lot of Balcerzaks in town. My father always said that if was to run for public office his family alone could put him in.

M<sub>c</sub> That's beautiful. What does Shirley do? Where is she?

C She's a teacher and she lives in Buffalo. She has a couple of children. She's married to a real nice person.

M<sub>c</sub> What is his name?

C I don't know as I've ever really heard it. I should have but - - (Theodore Weston).

M<sub>c</sub> ~~would anyone probably~~ - - Oh, I wanted to ask you what time of day did you have dinner at your home?



You said dinner was a very important time.

C In the evening. And, everybody had to be prompt ! And, they just couldn't come in now and then; they had to be home on time, certain time, they had to be washed up and my dad set the example because he'd always come in about quarter before the meal was ready to be served and the kids had their orders and we had to be home. Usually it was 6 o'clock, the meal. And what meals Mom used to put on ! Ed can tell you, she was a wonderful cook ! You know it wasn't this fancy food but a great big hunk of beef; they used to butcher their own beef, and vegetables and what there was.

M. Did she teach her daughters how to do cooking and the other jobs ?

C Well, yes. She made us do some but I don't think I'll ever be the cook my mom was. Do you Pa ?

Mr C Oh, I don't know.

C I used to be considered a pretty good cook but then now - -

M. Well I've been in here several times and each time it smelled pretty good around here.

C Thank you.

M. Well Sophia, when you went to school where did you go to school ?

C Believe it or not, Bates Road. You know where that - - - way up on Bates Road, because our farm belonged to that district. We had to walk three miles.

M. And you walked. What about in the winter-time ?

C Walked. We used to run cross-lots like a bunch of deer. Well if the weather got awful, awful bad Dad would hook up the horses and come after us with the bob sleigh but usually it was walking.

M. How far did you go in school ?

C Eighth grade.

M. To the eighth grade.

C Yeah, that was it.

M. Yes, very good.

What did you do after school ? There was a little time before you and Mr. Cottriss were married. Did you

work outside ?

C Well my one and only job was Robert H. Newell Shirt Factory in the laundry department. I went there at 16. Oh, I did a little housework for Mildred White, but when I got 16 and old enough to go to the factory I went to Robert Newell and, believe it or not Miss Helen, we worked there 10 hours a day for \$1.00 a day! Imagine, work all week, and Saturdays and all - - - worked all week and at the end of the week we got \$6.00!

M: That would be with no insurance or hospitalization or time off?

C In those days they didn't have it because that's over 60 years ago.

M: How long were you there ?

C Nine years. When I was 18 I was **fore-lady** of that laundry department. I think I had about 10 employees under me. Imagine at 18; Mr. Newell, oh, he was a wonderful person - - -

He was so good to me. And when I was only about 20 they put me on a payroll and whether I was there or not I got paid. And, would you believe it, I was drawing \$35.00 a week when I was married, straight time, **as a fore-lady.**

M: Now what do you mean "straight time"?

C Well, whether I worked or not, I got paid. Not many men were drawing that kind of pay but I must have earned it. And when I was married, from Newells; what do you think they gave me for wedding present ? 32 pieces of sterling silver !

M: Oh, how beautiful !

C From Mr. Newell. I've got it, I'm going to give it to my daughter next time she comes home this summer. There's no other employee ever got a wedding present like that, Mr. Cox told me. 'Cause I took it in to have it engraved - - initial put on. But I got 32 pieces of sterling silver and that's valuable now.

M: Yes, I should think so.

- M<sub>c</sub> In this area you said that you have had several relatives when you came here. How about the Polish community, as a community; do Polish people unit pretty much?
- C Well they did at that time but I'll tell you where the Polish community really was. It was around Stork Street and Gulf Street, right up in there.
- M<sub>c</sub> Your home was on Stork Street for a while wasn't it? Or is that where you were born you said?
- C Yeah, I was born at Grandma's; but it was on Stork Street. I'll tell you just which house it is. There's one on the corner, that good looking place, and then the third house from the corner is where I was born. We lived on Gravel Road for some time, my folks did.
- M<sub>c</sub> This road?
- C On Gravel Road, right there - - - do you know where that new home was built just below the bridge, that little home?
- M<sub>c</sub> Yes.
- C Well there was an old house there and a little land with it and that's where we lived. And, oh my God, it was the coldest place in the world. That house was so run down and cold.
- M<sub>c</sub> What church do you belong to?
- C Sacred Heart.
- M<sub>c</sub> Did the church unit the Polish community?
- C Oh no, we was here before the church was built. In fact my father was the founder of that church.
- M<sub>c</sub> Oh really. When was this?
- C It's over 75 years ago. My dad, he kind of united - - we had services in a house on Commercial and then finally we got a permanent pastor and the Polish people got together. Well Commercial Street was pretty much Polish and it still is too, I forget about that. The Polish people got together - - - we used to belong to St. Mary's - - - but we had a pastor at St. Mary's, Church Father O'Brian.



He just had his own way. So then we  
 - - - the Polish people got together and built their  
 own church. And we've been very happy and we do have  
 a good pastor; Msgr. Marcinkiewicz is a wonderful  
 person. As I said, I'm having a busy week end: yesterday  
 I went out to lunch - - well the afternoon was gone - -  
 I like to be that way, and today this interview and then  
 tomorrow the Monsignor; First Friday, he always comes and  
 takes care of us Spiritually which we do appreciate.

M<sub>c</sub> Comes to your home ?

C Oh yes. Every First Friday.

C Wonderful person.

M<sub>c</sub> We are in your lovely home; it's a new home, I think.

C Well, it's a modest little home.

M<sub>c</sub> It's lovely.

Would you tell us how you met your husband, the man who  
 became your husband ?

C Well then - - He chummed around with my oldest  
 brother and then he got to coming down to the house.

I think that's how we - - because our place was  
 always "open house". Ed can verify that - - "open  
 house" - - especially on Sundays, the group would  
 gather there, young people you know, and they would  
 play cards instead of going to these saloons or one  
 thing or another they met at our - - - they'd come over  
 to the house. Mom would always serve something. In  
 fact she would put out a supper, wouldn't she Ed ?  
 And then they would sit around and play cards and I  
 think maybe - - because we - - - well we knew each  
 other for 5 years. But I was engaged to - - well  
 he was a nice man too and that - - but I guess it  
 was just not to be. He gave me a diamond ring,  
 but - -

M<sub>c</sub> Oh, you had been engaged before ?

C Well I really wasn't engaged, I wouldn't accept the  
 diamond ring; but he made me keep it. You believe it

or not, I was not a good looking girl - - well I'm not a good looking woman and I was not a good looking girl. But I had loads of boy friends. You know these foreigners and some of them local boys - - I never was wanting for a date.

Mc Did you like to dance ?

C Oh, I loved it ! Especially the polkas ! I'd still go out if I had a good knee. Oh I used to love dances!

Mc Where would you go for a dance ?

C Mostly they used to have them in the homes, private homes, Saturday nights. Because that's the only entertainment these people had and they had in these private homes - - only then we had our Parish Hall. We used to go upstairs and dance in that. And eventually they got the Sacred Heart Club together.

Mc That's very popular.

C It is now, yeah. At first it wasn't so big but it used to be real homey and nice.

Mr C I've belonged to it for over 60 years !

C Oh yes, all of that.

Mr C Before I was married I belonged to it.

C We will be married 60 years. (November 18, 1920).

Mc Would you tell me a little bit about your wedding ?

C Well, believe it or not, we was getting married two days. We was supposed - - in them days they didn't get married on Saturday like they do now, which is a good thing because most people are not working and it's a good thing. But we had our wedding planned for Wednesday and believe it or not the night before it starts snowing, and it snowed all night!

Mc This was in November ?

C 17th day of November. And we got up the next morning and in them days 'cause they didn't have the snow plowing equipment they do now - - - and 2 feet and a half of wet snow and we just couldn't get out to go to church. And would you believe it, we went to church the next day in a cutter, a horse drawn cutter. Then the girl that stood up for us, lived right across from the church, - - - so I changed clothes there 'cause I had the heavy



coat on and everything. And we were married. But it took us two days to get married. And here it was a lot of people went to church to see the wedding on the 17th and nobody showed up.

M<sub>c</sub> Oh dear. November 17th. What day were you actually married, was it November? (*Priest: Father Kroczek*)

C The 18th, the next day. (*Attendants: Walter Cottriss, Frances Sevandusky Bloom*)

M<sub>c</sub> Did you have a honeymoon or did the snow keep you right in Medina?

C It kept us right - - - in fact we didn't want to spend the money for a honeymoon. Well we really did have a honeymoon. We were married November 18th and the 10th of April we went to Evansville, Indiana because he had to go in for training there as a baseball pitcher. And we always called that - - well we planned on it that way - - - we always called that our honeymoon. And, say, I had a wonderful summer there.

M<sub>c</sub> Now what year was it you were married?

C In 1920. And in 1921 we went to Evansville, Indiana and as I said I had a wonderful summer there. We was there only a couple of months and Ed had to go for a 30 day road trip, and here I was in a strange city alone. So I went out and got a job in a laundry. \$1.00 a day.

M<sub>c</sub> In Evansville?

C Unhuh. I used to walk to work mornings. I just did it for the time he was gone because I wouldn't have known what to do with myself. We had a lovely apartment, a lower apartment, and then the lady was right there - - - remember Mrs. Skull, Ed?

Mr C Unhuh.

C But I wouldn't have known what to do with myself so I went and got a job in this laundry. \$1.00 a day after drawing \$35.00 a week; imagine! But I didn't care, I was working. But you know I didn't tell them people that I knew anything about ironing.

M<sub>c</sub> What did you do?

C Iron.



1917 3rd from right: Sophia B. Cotriss



1921 4th from left, top row: Ed Cotriss, Sr.

C And first I can remember that Floor-Lady, she was the nicest person, she was a big woman - - - and I can still remember her name. Her name was Elena Wonder. And she would give me a brassiere to iron and of course I would iron it and then she would give me - - finally when I was there prett-near to the last, she would give me uniforms and they'd come out all right. Because I didn't tell them that I had experience in the laundry because I thought, well, they would expect too much of me and I didn't intend to stay there. Well I think they thought I was kind of a bright kid because ironing these things and knowing how to do it. So they was going to give me more money and by Golly when Ed got back, of course, I wouldn't go back to the laundry so I went down in the office and told the owner that I wasn't coming back. He was so angry at me that I thought he was going to hit me ! He wanted to keep me because I was doing good work for him.

Ma Well when you're talking about your husband being in baseball. Was Mr. Cottriss active in baseball when you met him ?

C He played a year before we were married.

Ma This was in the Eastern League, is that right ?

Mr C No, I was in the 3-I League.

Ma The 3-I.

Mr C 3-I League.

C Oh, Eastern League was the last year you played at, Hartford. I'm sorry.

Ma What was the 3 I League ?

Mr C Iowa, Indiana and Illinois.

(NOTE : see Photo)

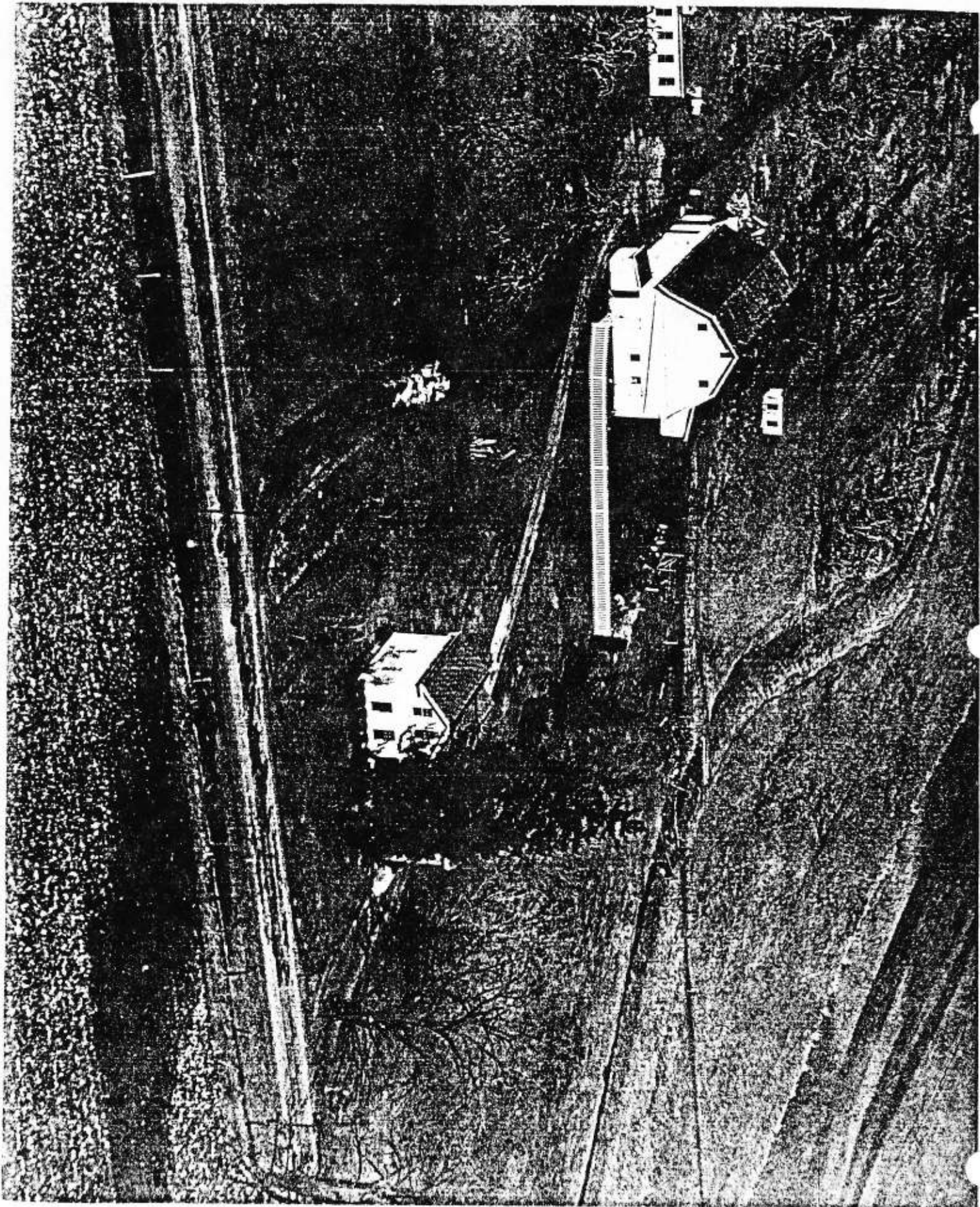


- Mc The 3-I League was first and then later it was the Eastern League, is that it ?
- C Yes, he played a year before we were married and then of course we were married and went down there - - - but oh the people were so nice down there, I liked them. Well I got to tell you this - - - you don't have to put it down - - but the night he went away for that road trip, I remember, it was the 4th of July and always they would leave by train at 10 o'clock and these people that we had met they had a car and there was the manager's wife and the manager's mother and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Shawl, their name was, wasn't it; and we didn't know just what we were going to do with ourselves so we took a ride to Henderson, Kentucky. And, By Golly, I got drunk there on two bottles of home brew! When I got home at 5 o'clock in the morning I didn't care whether Ed was around or not. Because you see that was the Blue Laws there in Evansville. There was no taverns or anything. But, as I said, I had a couple of bottles of home brew in Henderson, Kentucky and when I come home I was feeling so good I didn't care whether he was around. Oh, and then to top it all off they come over and woke me up that morning and wanted me to work that afternoon. I went.

## TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

- Mc Sophia, would you tell us where did you and Mr. Cotriss first live ? Where was your first home ?
- C On Maple Avenue.
- Mc In Medina ?
- C Yes. Outside of Medina, but then it's the Village of Medina - - - not right in the village, it's outside. We bought a home and we traded it in towards the farm.
- Mc You were on Maple Avenue for about how long do you think ?
- Mr. C Not very long.
- C No, I did all that hard work and about two months is all.
- Mc And then where did you go ?
- C The farm. We was there 44 years.
- Mc You weren't on Pleasant Street ?
- C No. We just had that one home on Maple Avenue and then we traded that in towards the farm.
- Mc Now when you say "the farm" - - - this is on West Scott Road outside of Medina, about two or three miles ?
- C About three miles.
- Mc And who had owned the home previously - - - who did you buy it from - - - or who had lived there just before you ?
- C On Maple Avenue ?
- Mc No, on the farm.
- C Clevelands.
- Mc Cleveland, yes. And he had been in the quarry, was it ?
- C No, the foundry, they had the East Avenue Foundry.
- Mc How large a farm was this, how much acreage ?
- C 44 acres. (see also page 22)

Cottriss Farm West Scott Road, Medina



Cottriss  
W.A.



Mc I think that there's a little story that you told Ann Richards and me the other day - - - when you went in it was in the summer time, is that right ?

C We moved there in August and, as I say, we were poor - - oh we were so poor, - - and we did have a car. But we moved on a hay wagon - - a hay rack they used to have those hay wagons - - - and what few possessions we had why we had it on that wagon; and I was riding on the wagon with Ed — and the boy was only nine months old.

Mc Now the boy is ?

C Our son.

Mc And you called him Baby Buddy ?

C Buddy. Because when I would say Ed or Edward why they wouldn't know which one I was calling so that's why. I'd never do that again; name a child the same name as the father. Well anyway, unloaded the stuff and Ed took the horses to the barn to unharness them. . And, my goll, a man come along with a flock of sheep - - - we'd say there was at least a hundred. And of course we didn't have time to put the screen door on the front door so the front door was open - - - you had to have air, it was hot that day, it was August.

Mr.C It was terrible hot.

C And these sheep see that door open and the porch was only about a foot high from the ground - - my golly - - if they didn't all come in. 'Bout a hundred in the flock ! And, you know, here I was holding the boy because he wasn't walking and I didn't know whether I should take care of him or help to drive the sheep out ! But, you know, they didn't mess the house up too much because they were hot and they were frightened and you'd expect they'd mess but they didn't leave too many droppings. So I always said that they were our first visitors !



Which they were.

Mc That's darling !

C You know it is quite unusual ! They were our very first, a flock of hundred sheep.

Mc You lived on the West Scott Road for a long time.

C 44 years. That is a long time.

Mc Sophia, what did you have on your farm ?  
When you first went there, were there fruit trees there - - all kinds of fruit ?

C Yes, apples, pears, and - -

Mr.C Cherries.

C Well now, the cherries, we planted them.  
The apples were there, but the cherries we planted.

Mc When you had apples, Ann Richards said once in a while she would help pick. She can remember helping to pick apples.

C She was a good help too. That was <sup>when</sup> Dick was in the Sea-Bees, in the service.

Mc Did you do your own work, for the most part or did you have a hired man or what ?

C We did most of the work; only it was seasonal, you know, when we was picking apples and that we had to have help, but otherwise we did - - - well on a small place like that - - - and for years Ed followed a team of horses - - - at least ten years, didn't you Ed ?

Mr.C Oh, longer than that.

C Ed did all the plowing himself, you know, fitting the land - - - but we made a living.

Mc Did you prepare your own spray for the fruit trees ? Did you spray your trees ?

C Yes, we had a spray rig and I used to drive on the spray rig.

Mc You worked right out in the field with your husband ?

C All the time. And, believe it or not, I never neglected my house.

Mc I can believe it. It's immaculate!

- C Not that I mean to be bragging but I always thought, well suppose something happens to either one of us and we had to be brought in, I wouldn't know whether I should straighten the house up or call for help, so I would always make my beds and do my dishes and leave things in order before I would go out. And then besides that I used to feed the help. In the fall you wouldn't believe how much cooking I used to have to do! I come in at about 11 o'clock and rush around and get a meal.
- Mc Now when you say the "help" in the fall; were most of your helpers from the immediate neighborhood?
- C They were local help, from the village and that.
- Mc Did you ever have "Ho-Bos" or migrants?
- C No but I'll tell you what; I had a lot of experience with colored people and it was good. You should remember that camp they had on the Marshall Road, there by the canal. Whenever we needed extra help we used to go over there and get these colored boys and I used to treat them like human beings - - - like human beings should be treated. And you know, those colored boys would do anything for me. You treat those people right and they'll treat you right because - - we cut some hay on the neighbors, on shares, and Ed had a baler and he was baling it and I had quite a combination - - - I was driving on the tractor, on the trailer, and I had an Indian, and I had two colored boys working with me - - and I was driving the tractor and the Indian he kicked his heels, he said: "Don't think I'm going to work here!" And he wasn't working for us, he was working for the neighbor that we cut the hay on shares. And he says: "Don't think I'm going to work here all night for you." And I says: "You're not working for me." And as a rule I'm not mouthy, you know, to argue with anybody, but I really was angry at him and I said: "If you don't like it you know

what you can do. You can just go your way." Which he did ! I fired him right then and there in the field and then I tought," Oh My Goodness, these black boys - - and this was on a Friday and every Friday night they would have a big doings there. People would come from Buffalo with their own orchestra and one thing and another and I said: "well how about you boys ?" I says: "we have to get this hay in." "Lady, we'll work as late as you need us !" And they did and then I took them home. But they'd come over to our place to help and sometimes they wouldn't have their lunches. Most of the time they didn't, so I would fix sandwiches for them. I would take out some milk because we had a dairy farm and we had plenty of milk and I would even bake strawberry shortcake and send them out big globs and, you know, those boys would do anything in the world for me. They appreciated it.

- Mc Yes, I should think so.
- C Well I'll tell you an example here. We have a couple coming in from Buffalo fishing; yesterday they were here and just because we let them in here and let their car stand here and one thing and another; why you know they are so polite and so appreciative. But, you've got to treat them like human beings.
- Mc All people are human. That's beautiful.
- On your farm you also had chickens ?
- C Oh yes.
- Mc How did you raise your chicks; were they day-old-chicks when they were brought in ?
- C Yes I used to buy them.
- Mc Where did you pick them up ?
- C Well they would come by Express, not freight but then they used to deliver them by mail too.
- Mc You mean they would be brought to your house ?
- C The mailman used to bring them in the backseat of the car.

Imagine 200 chickens ! They'd be in four boxes, big square boxes.

Mc Where would they come from ?

C Oh, where-ever I'd order them. I got them as far as Indiana. Where-ever I got chicks one year and liked them and thought they were a good breed why I'd go back.

Mc What kind did you have ?

C I had Leghorns mostly, for laying.

Mc How many would you have had ?

C I used to have - - - I used to buy about 200 or 250; 250 usually.

Mc How long would you keep them ?

C I would sell the broilers off or we'd eat a lot of the broilers, 'cause you couldn't keep roosters, you had to have an unfertile egg. And then the chickens, I only kept them one year. Then the truck would come along & pick them up.

Mc You said that you sold - - - was it eggs that you sold to Wegman's ?

C Yes.

Mc Wegman's out of Buffalo ?

C Buffalo or Rochester; I guess they were Buffalo. Yes the truck used to come around, once a week and pick up whatever I had; a crate or two crates - - - depending upon the time of the year - - chickens lay better during one part of the year or another.

Mc Did you let the chickens run around the yard or were they penned in ?

C They had to be closed up because they didn't want these eggs to be colored - - - the dark yolks.

Mc What did you feed them ?

C We had the regular mash. I used to buy the laying mash and then we raised our own corn and wheat, and of course I had water; and in the winter time we used to have the lights on for them.



- Mc Why did you have the lights on ?
- C A longer day and they'd lay better. You see the short days and they go to bed too early and then they got lazy and they wouldn't lay and that's when the eggs were bringing better prices. So we used to light them up; and then I had an electric hot water heater for them too so that they had water to drink all winter long.
- Mc And did you have pigs ?
- C Not any amount of them.
- Mc Just for your own use ?
- C That's about it and we did sell some. I never liked pigs. They squeal and they did smell so terrible.
- Mc Did you do your own butchering ?
- C Yes, my husband was quite a good butcher. He used to butcher the hogs and get help, of course, and he even butchered beef.
- Mc And then you would probably preserve them in some way ? The hams and sausage ?
- C Yes we did but, golly, we used to hang the meat up and let it kind of - - you know during cold weather - - - we didn't have a freezer at the time. In later years, about 30 years ago, we got a freezer and then we had a way to put the meat away. But before that, I'll never forget it, we had a quarter of a beef hanging up in the garage and, my golly, a scale under it - - - but the thing was hanging up high and we had a dog, police dog, - - - we were very fond of police dogs - - - and if he didn't eat up all the steaks out of it! T-bone steaks out of that beef.
- Mc He wasn't a very popular dog, was he, after that ?!
- What about horses ? Did you have any horses on your farm ?
- C Yes, that's all we farmed with until we got a tractor; at least 15 years. Then we got so that we could afford a tractor. That one one thing, we would never buy things "on time"! We'd work

and skimp and save but pay for everything. Our mailman, Mr. Ives, he used to live up here on North Gravel and he says: "What do you folks use for money?" And I said: "Why?" He says: "You get the least bills delivered of anybody I know." But we never wanted to go into debt.

Mc Did you have, years ago, besides the work horses for the farm, did you have any one special horse for the carriage ride you would take into town?

C We always had a car. My husband had it before we was married and then I busted it - - - something happened, I went to church and then we got a new one. But in them days you could buy a car for \$500.00 and less than that, I guess, - - - I had a coupe. No we didn't have to have a horse for a carriage because we always had a car.

Mc What about cows, on your own small farm, did you have cows?

C Yes we had a half a dozen cows there and sold milk.

Mc What do you mean, you sold milk? Who did you sell it to?

C To the dairy.

Mc What dairy would that be?

C Elsworth Wright was the owner, on Park Avenue in Medina. . . . . You know we depended on that money, we needed it; and we'd deliver the milk there and even on Sundays my husband used to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and milk these cows and deliver the milk before we went to church and then when you went to get your money, why he'd hand you over \$10.00 or so. . . . . That was terrible! But then when we got the big farm well then we had a regular dairy. We had a tank to cool the milk, kept a man there.

- Mc A hired man ?
- C Yes.
- Mc When you say "the big farm," the dairy farm that you had; that was on the corner of Beales and Portage Road wasn't it ?
- C Right.
- Mc And you had 167 acres, approximately ?
- C Yes.
- Mc How many cattle did you have there ?
- C There was about 40 head. That was young stock, you know you always have to keep replacing the cows.
- Mc What kind of cows did you have ?
- C Mostly Holsteins . . . We did keep a couple of Guernseys because you had to have certain butterfat in your milk, because if it got below 3.5 well then you had to put in something to build it up.
- Mc Were these registered cattle ?
- C No I don't think so; <sup>but</sup> they were good cattle. We didn't keep poor cows because it takes just as much to feed them as it does a good one. But, they were good big cows, nice cows. Some of them were registered but on the whole they weren't registered.
- Mc Where did you get them from ?
- C Oh, we'd buy them and raise them and if we had a real good cow and she had a calf that was a girl calf we'd raise it and that's how we built the herd up by raising them.
- Mc You had a bull or more than one ?
- C Just one.
- Mc On your own farm did you ever have any sheep ?
- C No. You have to have too good a fence for sheep.
- Mc Yes, they're very agile.  
Do every remember a grocery truck coming around to your house ?
- C Yes. Munzel's from the Ridge. Sure they used to come around. But I didn't used to buy much



because I found that they were kind of high and every penny counted with us.

Mc Where did you go shopping ?

C I went to Town to the super-markets.

Mc Would you go more than once a week ?

C Oh yes, I went - - - although I had a refrigerator to keep stuff but I didn't have a freezer at first so sometimes I went every day.

Mc Do you ever remember trading butter or eggs ?

C Not butter because I never churned to sell butter, just stuff for ourselves; and oh what a job that was, if the cream wasn't just right you could just sit there and turn that churn for half a day.

Mc But you would make it for yourself ?

C Oh yes. But - - eggs yes, I used to take them in until the trucks started coming around - - - I didn't like it either.

Mc How did that work - - - you'd take eggs in to every store or just a grocery store or what ?

C Just the grocery store. And, they would give you a slip, a credit slip, and then they expected, they wanted you, to take it out in trade but I didn't like it. I only did that for a very short time.

Mc Why didn't you like it ?

C Oh, I don't know. Somehow or other I just felt like a pauper I guess. I would rather go in and buy my stuff and pay cash.

Mc I think I would too.

C You know what ? I never had it so good as I have it right now ! With the Social Security and we have income from other sources because when we were farming it we'd have some money put away and when something turned up we'd have to use it up for that - - - or somebody would have to come in and trim or that. Now I get my Social Security - - I get half of his <sup>(Husband)</sup> - - - but I keep better than half and I give him his share because I don't need it for keeping our house.

So if I want anything well I just get it because I have the money now. I got it better now than I ever had !

Mc Well you've worked long and you've worked hard for it.

C That's right.

Mc You said you will be married 60 years this November.

C The 18th of November.

Mc That's beautiful.

C Well I wonder; you know sometimes that you can live too long with one person.

Mc Well it depends, some people are feeling that way.

C Now I've had six rough years with him. Ed was stricken the 16th day of June, on Father's Day.

Mc And yet he's able to be up and dressed and move around.

C He's come a long way. And then after he had that accident - - - I never, never thought that man would be home again because he went into a coma.

Mc Is that when the lawn mower, heavy tractor, turned over on him ?

C Not on him. That's what saved him. You see, it was on the neighbor's here - - right along by the road, a little incline about two feet high. And why he ever went out there with that tractor - - - it was the 28th day of April because my brother said he would mow the lawn for us, which he does yet, - - but Ed got on that tractor and he got confused. Instead of putting it in reverse he went along the road, he put it in quick, and the tractor jumped over the north drive-way and then it tipped over but you see it's a big tractor - - - he paid \$2200.00 for it five years ago. So you see it's not a toy, it's a big machine. And it tipped over and all that gas went on him and that. But that's what

saved him; he was pinned against the wheel. Some lady from Lyndonville come along and she see it happen. But he had presence of mind to tell her to shut off the ignition, and the knives. And I was laying down because I had come home from the hair-dressers and had my lunch and I was laying down and they had quite a time getting me up. But I got up because something just told me - - - this happened at exactly 4 o'clock in the afternoon. And there was <sup>(Tom)</sup> Shirmer at the door - - - well they were ringing the door-bells and they were pounding on the doors and I come out. And Shirmer, he took his jacket off and put it under Ed's head. But, you know, Ed didn't look bad at all. He had his glasses on and he had his gloves on and his hat. He wasn't disturbed and he was lying on the grass and the ambulance was in the drive-way. And Shirmer says: "Lady what shall we do with your husband?" he says: "He got hurt!" And I says: "Oh my God! What happened?" And he says: "The mower tipped over." So I did have presence of mind; I come in and put on a dress and a sweater - - - it was cold that day. And I went out there and he even had macaroni and cheese on his chin because I left him a warm dish in the oven - - - and I said: "Ed, why did you do it?" I says: "Last night Bill told you that he would take care of the lawn." But Ed was fighting like heck with the ambulance driver; he wasn't going to go in that ambulance to the hospital - - - and I says: "Oh yes you are!" I says: "How else are we going to get you up there for X-rays?" So I says: "Load him up, boys." and they did and then Barbara and I followed. You know Dr. Blanchet has been our doctor for years - - - well 25 years - - - but he couldn't do a thing for us and it prearranged with him that Dr. Bath would admit Ed. Well when I got there - - - Barbara and I

drove - - that's our daughter-in-law - - -  
drove behind the ambulance and when we got  
there they were undressing him and <sup>(Dr.)</sup> Bath was  
around. And I said: "Dr. Bath, we had it  
prearranged with Dr. Blanchet that you were  
to admit my husband." And Bath he put up one  
leg and he put up another leg and he says: "I  
don't think I have to admit him." He says:  
"Everything seems all right." And you know,  
in the X-ray room and whatever happened there  
- - - he went into a coma. Well at 8:30 when  
I was leaving he was still in a coma and he  
looked just like a corpse. So I think he's  
come a long ways.

Mc

Yes he has.

C

But we do have problems with his urine and one  
thing and another. His memory is bad too.

Mc

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
Going back to many years ago: Saturday night  
when your children were small was quite a busy  
time for you wasn't it ?

C

Yes.

Mc

When you had baths to take and all that sort  
of thing, would you tell us about that and how  
you gave them their baths ?

C

Yes and we didn't go out because - - - oh,  
once in awhile we did on some special occasion;  
but we had to be home with the children and that's  
where we belonged too.

Mc

Saturday night baths meant drawing the water in the tub  
and putting it on the floor in front of the  
kitchen stove, is that right ?

C

And the water came out of a cistern pump and  
I used to have to heat it because we didn't  
have plumbing. Let's see, when did we put  
our plumbing in there ? Oh, we must have been  
on the farm at least 15 years before we got  
our plumbing. We had quite a time getting  
electricity through first. Then the plumbing;  
that was one of the things I wanted more than

anything.

Mc Yes that makes a difference, especially with farm animals around.

C So we used to stay home pretty much but we had our radio.

Mc Saturday night was a busy time, but then on Sunday morning you said your husband would deliver the milk ?

C And I would get the kids up, when they were old enough - - - now our little girl had to go to church when she was two years old and she was good in church. And, the boy wasn't good; oh, he used to get kind of uneasy and that. I even ~~th~~reatened to take a strap to church with me and then he kind of got to thinking.

Mc But they went to church, didn't they ?

C Oh definitely ! And you know, I always, always told them; I says: "When you don't have time for church, there's no place for you here." I didn't bring up heathens, I brought up Christians. And they go to church.

Mc Do you remember when you went into town to do your shopping; do you remember when women first started getting their hair cut ?

C Yes.

Mc Did you go to a Barber Shop to get your hair bobbed ? Did you get your hair bobbed ?

C Oh, and what a time I had ! My husband wasn't going to let me have my hair cut. He wanted my hair long. And I wanted it just like everybody else; I wanted it short and I wanted a permanent. Oh and what he wasn't going to do ! But I told him it was my head and my hair and I was going to have it cut ! And I did !

Mc Do you remember who gave you your first hair-cut ?

C Steve Chick. (Chosocki)

Mc Steve Chick, in Medina ?

C Yes. You probably wouldn't remember, he's been dead a long time. Do you remember him ?





Mc No I don't. Where was his - - - was it a Barber Shop all by himself or did he have others in there ?

C No he was by himself. He had a nice Barber Shop. I'll tell you where it was - - - about where Goodwin's Card Shop is, about in there or somewheres.

Mc Right on Main Street.

C Then I got to going to a hairdresser. I went Lowell Neal for quite some time and got my hair cut and permanents.

Mc And your husband finally accepted it anyway didn't he ?

C Yes. I guess he wouldn't want me any other way.

Mc Did you buy most of your children's clothing or did you do a lot of sewing ?

C I used to make a lot of them, oh I had to. You know after all, there wasn't that much money around so - - - I'll never forget the pretty pair of brown velvet pants I made for the son with one of those beige shirts with a little ruffle down the front; and I had his picture taken and I guess he's got the picture, I gave it to him. But, oh, I worked so hard - - - but I just <sup>used</sup> to do a lot of sewing. In fact our daughter was always quite chubby and they didn't have the chubby sizes like they do now; so I used to do a lot of her sewing too.

Mc Did you cut the children's hair ?

C No. I never could do that. Well now - - I'll take that back - - I did the daughter's because it was straight but the boy I used to take him to the barber. Goll, you used to get it cut for a quarter then.

TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

- Mc This is Tape Two with Mrs. Sophia Cotriss.
- 
- Mc Sophia, where did your children go to school ?
- C Well, here on the corner we had a school house.
- Mc This is on the corner of the Scott Road and the Gravel Road ?
- C No it's Slade and Gravel. Slade runs east. Scott runs west.
- Mc Was this a one room school-house ?
- C Yes. And I was Trustee there for ten years.
- Mc Good for you. Who was the teacher, do you know ?
- C Oh, we had many teachers.
- Mc I see.
- C Buddy went to Bertha Wilson, she was a good teacher. Then Genevieve went to Catholic School, to Sacred Heart School for a couple of years. Well, and Buddy went to St. Mary's School to make his First Holy Communion for one year but this was so handy here so that's where I kept them. Then, of course, they went to high school.
- Mc Your children graduated from high school ?
- C Oh yes, both of them. Would you believe it - - Genevieve graduated at 16 ? She was 16 in April and graduated in June.
- Mc How did they get to school ? Did they have to walk ?
- C Oh no. Well here, yes they did - - - which I think was good for them.
- Mc That's not far; but when they went into Medina then how did they go ?
- C Oh, Genevieve had a car. We traded a cow for a car. What was that car's name ? She had a

fancy name for it. Buddy; I used to have to take him up. I used to take him to St. Mary's School. And, oh my, I used to have a time looking for him - - - find him back of the tin shop or I never knew where to look for him. If I didn't get there when he came out of school then he wandered off with the rest of the group. Yeah, I used to have to take him up every day and go after him.

Mc You were telling us the other day when we were visiting with you - - - we were asking you about your memories of the Depression of 1929.

C That was horrible.

Mc It was horrible. Tell me about it again will you ?  
It was just before Christmas time.

C When the Union Bank closed - - - the Central Bank closed on, I'm very sure, it was the 2nd day of November. But the Union Bank closed in December and I'm sure it was real close to Christmas when that closed and that was terrible, terrible.

Mc You said they drew a gate, a metal gate, across the doorway ?

C Yes, the Union, not the Central. You see there was about four steps up, it was up kind of high. It was either three or four steps. Then at the top of the steps - - - it wasn't too big of a gate - - - but there was a gate across.

Mc Was this always there ?

C As far as I could remember. It was one of those gates kind of like they have for children, you know on porches to close them down.

Mc Yes, an expansion gate.

C Yes.

Mc Did you have money in these banks and how did you hear about the Depression, or the "Crash" as they call it.

C Well as I told you; I took it very hard because we worked so hard for the money and we was in the process of wanting a new barn - - which we did



put up. Oh I think we had around \$2000.00 in the Central Bank. Then we had a couple - - - we had some money coming from apples; I believe it was from Albert Johnson and we got that and I went in and put it in the Union Bank and my golly if that didn't close in a day or two. Well the same way with Central Bank; now I took that money in a check in on a Saturday and they knew that the auditors had ordered that bank closed Monday; and they took that check in! They shouldn't have never done that, but they did. I just felt that they robbed us. We did get 70% out of the Central and I think 72% out of the Union Bank. All the rest we lost which we very well couldn't afford to but we did. As I told you when - - - when that Union Bank closed, Oh Dear, I was just crushed because being so near Christmas and that. But they had that horrible earthquake in China and so many people were killed and so many lost their homes; it was thousands upon thousands of which it wouldn't be hard in China the way they're over-populated; and I got to thinking then because I went downtown from my folks place, I went downtown on my way home, and I thought then when I heard the news: "well at least I've got a home to go to - - - I'm not as bad off as them people." And you know right away I felt different and my thinking took a different direction and I was thankful that we were all safe, the family like Ed and the children and I and my folks and that, and that helped. But that was a pretty rough struggle.

Mc You said that thinking of Christmas coming you were very thankful you had already bought a couple of Christmas gifts.

C For the children, yes which I was - - and had them paid for. You see I used to get this egg money; of course we thought it was

my money and I bought these gifts. I think there was a sale on and Genevieve, she so wanted a doll buggy and I bought her a nice one. I can remember now, it was a pretty blue wicker, it was beautiful; I remember paying \$7.00 for it over to O'Riley's and she was happy with that. And I think we got the boy a tricycle.

Mc You also said something about a few Christmas lights were out and there were some Christmas Carols.

C Yes.

Mc How did you hear the Christmas music ?

C Well now I just can't remember whether they had one of those - - - but I did hear Christmas Carols when I was downtown. Was it people going around trying to build up people's spirits; now that might have been it, you know.

Mc And then you had the feeling "We will get by".

C Yes. And we did.

Mc And you did.

C And people think that I am a miser. In fact I have been told that I was. But I've always been so very careful how I spend our money because I worked so hard for it and I was just so poor. Well I'm getting by all right now. We have a real nice home in Florida. Of course now we turned it over to the daughter. And we used to buy a car every two years and we made 22 trips to Florida.

C 22 different winters, one year after another until his health got bad we never missed a winter. 22 years we were down there and we weren't throwing money around but we had what we wanted. So you couldn't call us miserly. And we live fairly decent, I mean we have what

we want.

Mc Well, during this period of the Depression when the banks were closing did you feel that the people pulled together because of this ?

C Yes I do ! I think it brought the community closer together, I really do.

Mc In what way ? How did people react ?

C Well they just all felt that they were in the same boat, you know, because so many people had a few dollars - - - probably not over \$100.00, perhaps less and which they saved so hard and then to see it taken away. That wasn't easy.

Mc Another big date in your life probably was the time when World War I happened. I don't know if your were involved in any way. Do you have any memories of World War I ?

C Oh yes, yes I have real memories. I remember the Armistice Day in November, the 11th of November. And I was working at the shirt factory and golly we went out in our summer dresses and that, it was so warm and beautiful and we listened to the church bells and everybody was so happy. Yes, I was - - - well that was 1918 and oh my that was beautiful, it was such a good feeling to know that everything was ended.

Mc Do you remember what you did for a celebration, did people run around in the street, have a parade ?

C We went to church and prayed and thanked God.

Mc Good.

C And I think that was the right thing to do. Well there were parades and a lot of happiness but I remember I went to church and offered a prayer, and some of the other girls too.

Mc When World War II came do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor ?

C Yes. I was in church. To services, evening

- services and when we come out there were so many people upset because - - - well, she's dead now - - - Kate Gottovi, her son was at Pearl Harbor, and there was some others like Shannon and that and when we come out everybody was very, very upset and a lot of people were crying. That was a terrible thing, wasn't it.
- Mc Yes, it was awful. Now was your family involved - - - was your son involved in World War II ?
- C He was in the Pacific - - in radar - - well they didn't have radar - - well he was in something like that. Yes he was in the service for three years. He was in the Marines.
- Mc Oh yes. My brother was in the Marines.(Glenn Masten)
- C That's kind of strict.
- Mc It's very hard; my brother was in the South Pacific.
- C So was my son. (Edward M. Cotriss)
- Mc Is that right?
- C And he got hurt too. A bad knee.
- Mc Does it still bother him ?
- C Oh yes, terrible. As he gets older. Of course he's carrying too much weight. I don't know whether you know our son - - - he's so big ! He's the assessor.
- Mc Assessor for - - ?
- C Assessor for the Town of Ridgeway.
- Mc I see.
- C He has his office there in that new building, a nice place.(West Avenue, next to the Masonic Temple).
- Mc And the Medina Historical Society has moved into the old building.
- C Yes, yes.
- Mc That's right. But at least your son came back! My husband was in the service for three and a half years, and my brother was in for all of that time. Do you remember where you were when we first had V-E Day - - - at the end - -

no V-E Day, that was in June of '45.  
C I was home at the farm.  
Mc But your son was in the South Pacific, still,  
so you probably were - -  
C Well he was too young - -  
Mc Your son was in the service.  
C Yes.  
Mc And when the war was over he came back.  
C Yes.

.....

It should be noted here that Ann Richards  
(Mrs. Dick Richards) of the Gravel Road  
and a friend and neighbor of Mrs. Cotriss,  
participated in the pre-interview session  
with Helen McAllister.

TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

- C Well, we moved here the 28th of December, 1967.
- Mc This is from the West Scott Road down here to the Gravel Road ?
- C Yes. Well in the first place we bought the Elm Park.
- Mc You bought what ?
- C Bought Elm Park there, that place north of us.
- Mc Elm Park where everybody used to go for picnics ?
- C Yes. We bought that and had it one day because we sold the farm and did business the 7th day of July so then my husband - -
- Mc What year ?
- C '67. And my husband said: "Now I'm not a farmer any more, I'm going fishing." And so he came over to Goldsmith's here, that's our neighbor, and Mr. Goldsmith says: "Now that you've sold your farm what are you going to do ?" And I says: "Well we're going to start looking for a place we'd like to build but we'd like to build close by the son's place." You know our son's just down the road there. And he says: "I'll sell you this place." But he says: "You wouldn't pay me what I'm asking." And Ed says: "Well try me." And Mr. Goldsmith said he wanted \$12,000.00. And Ed said: "I'll take it." Well in them days, you know property wasn't what it is now. When Mr. Goldsmith told the family about it - - -you know, he has a daughter, I guess she's in town now, - - and then he has a son home - - and the kids fussed so and he's a good father, he felt he had to have a



home for them. So then he says: "I'll sell you this place, this hill here." But oh, this was rough country; oh my.

Mc           How much acreage is here ?

C           2.3 acres.

Mc           Why did you decide to sell the farm ?

C           Because we felt we couldn't work it, you know, and we had to depend on help too much too.

Mc           How about your dairy farm, had you sold that recently ?

C           Oh no, we sold that 25 years ago. I can remember the year, yeah, 25 years in February.

Mc           Do you remember who bought that ?

C           Oh yes, Dick Overholt.

We came and looked at this place and this was about eight feet higher than it is now. This was all taken down, this hill. And the minute I stepped up on the place I liked it. I thought: "I'm kind of close to Heaven." And one reason I like it too, it's far enough away from the road so we don't get that terrible noise and the smudge too. There's plenty of it comes but not as bad as it would if we were closer, and we're high and dry. We don't get one tablespoon of seepage in our cellar!

Mc           Wonderful. Over here you have - - - what is that ?

C           Just our lawn and that.

Mc           And then there's water in back of there.

C           Yes, creek.

Mc           Is that Oak Orchard ?

Mr.C       That's right.

Mc           Oak Orchard Creek.

C           You would be surprised how much fish are taken out of there now.

Mr.C       They're fishing out there now.

C           They are fishing today ?

Mr.C       Yes.

Mc           Do you go fishing now ?

- C No, Ed used to but he don't no more.
- Mc So you have the Gravel Road on one side and Oak Orchard Creek on the other.
- C This is valuable property, with the water.
- Mc Yes, I should imagine.
- C That's how I can have a garden. Would you believe it that I had 54 quarts of strawberries out of there last year ?
- Mc What do you do with them all ?
- C Oh, give them away and eat them; we eat them twice a day.
- Mc Do you freeze them ?
- C I don't like frozen strawberries - - I did freeze some but I don't like frozen strawberries.
- Mc They are apt to be mushy aren't they ?
- C Not if you know how to defrost them, you know just take them out say for a couple of hours - - just so that they have a little bit of frost in them and that way they'll stay firm. And I have the kind of - - - Sparkle is a freezing berry. Yeah, I had '54 quarts and I froze 16 Zip-Lock - - oh what size are they - - - bags of corn and put 103 quarts of pickles. Well they weren't all quarts either - - but they're not all for us. We don't eat pickles like that. For the kids and the grand-daughters.
- Mc You're close with your family.
- C Oh yes. I love my grand-daughters; oh I love those girls.
- Mr.C Barbara is an awful nice girl.
- C They're both - - well the mother yeah - - no daughter could be closer to us than she is; she's a wonderful person. You know Barbara?
- Mc Yes I know who she is.
- C Barbara and Marcia are identical twins aren't they ?
- C You know their father couldn't tell them apart for years.
- Mc Is that right ?
- C Now that we are coming to the close of this

interview I really appreciate everything that you have told us and I know that many people are going to enjoy reading the transcript and hearing all about this family. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on the world today ?

C Yes, I wonder why and I do think that there's going to be a big change of some kind. You know my grandmother, she couldn't read or write, but she could remember awfully well and she prophesied that at the end of 2000 there's going to be such violence and such a terrible war that there wouldn't be a stone on stone left. Well what have we got now: the atomic bomb, and did you ever see to much violence and unhappiness? And what I feel terrible about - - now who is to blame for all this vandalism in youth, the way they destroyed that cemetery there around Amherst or somewheres - - I think that is a - - they're even doing it right here at our little Sacred Heart Cemetery; they're pulling up geraniums from the urns and who is the blame, do you think for that ?

Mc I think it's the frustration that so many people, young people and older people, have - - that they just strike out.

C Well then me again, I feel that the parents - - - they're not with their families enough.

Mc Families are not what they once were. So many families are breaking up.

C And I think maybe that why - - as you say: that frustration comes from ~~that~~ where these families, because there are a lot of unhappy children from broken homes, and they'll go to any extent. But when they vandalize cemeteries. Now we went out last year and bought a new monument; we've got our bureau of lots in Sacred Heart Cemetery and we went out and bought a monument - - cost us over \$1000.00. Now I'd feel terrible if somebody went - -

cause this is big, they couldn't just take and turn it over - - but they could destroy it in other ways, you know, like chipping it and that. I'd feel terrible if they did any damage to it and I'm sure other people feel the same way; and I would like to get to the bottom of who is to blame for our youth.

Mc I think we all have to bear the blame, really, because of the way the world is. I think we all have to.

C And then you know when they are preaching this starvation in these countries, foreign countries, I do think that the government should do something about controlling the population.

Mc How would they do that ?

C Well they can do it because I think it's terrible to bring these children into this world and see them suffer and starve to death. And they can't look for our country to feed the whole world. I feel it's a wrong thing what they are doing with these Cubans; they're letting them in here, we didn't need that type of a population. We've got plenty of it right here in this country and here it is a hundred-thousand of them Cubans, and they are starting to make trouble all ready. They're unhappy because they thought we should hand them everything on a silver platter. I feel terrible about it; I think it's wrong, I think our politicians should wake up to the fact that we are in real trouble here.

Mc There are lots of problems.

How do you feel about neighbors today ? Do you feel that neighbors have changed - - - people have changed so that you don't have as many - - - you were talking earlier about dancing in the homes and parties in the homes; do you think as much goes on ?

C No not now, that's all done away with. But

I don't know - - we don't really have neighbors here no more because down here - - he's in the Infirmary - - they got married a year ago in April, then he had to go to the hospital to get a cataract removed from his eye and if he didn't go into a bad stroke! And so she's away all the time and these here people keep pretty much to themselves - - they are good neighbors, but they keep pretty much to themselves; the Mister doesn't hear and the boy, he keeps to himself.

Mc The people don't come calling as often as they once did, do you think ?

C They don't come calling at all!

Mc But you do have family around ?

C Oh yes and we are a close family, we're very close. But on the farm I had a neighbor there that I miss, and the poor woman she is in the hospital now and in a bad way. But she was a good neighbor. Now she used to come over and cry on my shoulder or something. She has no children and just her and her husband and they had a real life there because she's got a real good husband. And I miss her 'cause as I said she would come over and tell me her troubles. But she would never bother you like running over every day and borrowing or sitting around taking up your time; she wasn't that type of person, she was just a nice neighbor and I miss her, miss her very much.

Mc There's still an awful lot of good people around.

C Oh definitely and Mrs. Maines, she used to come down to the farm to get eggs, when I lived on Scott Road, and now she's in the Infirmary and she don't know what's going on in the world. She's Dr. Maines widow.

Mc Oh yes.

C I think there are a lot of good people.



Mc And your church is still very strong ?

C Oh yes.

Mc That's a beautiful church. I was at a wedding there last year, I think.

C Who's wedding ?

Mc Judy Potrubacz married - - is it Plumley?

Mr.C Yes.

Mc Plumley, yes. Judy and John.

C Was she married in a veil and white ?

Mc Yes she was. It was a lovely wedding. — —  
You have a lovely home here.

C It's just a modest home but it's good enough for us.

Mc It's all on one floor and I think this is very important. You said that you "bought" Elm Park. Do you still own what was Elm Park ?

Mr.C No.

Mc You only had that for one day you were saying; what do you mean ?

C We didn't put no deposit or anything like that.

Mc I see, you had it in name only.

C Yes and Mr. Goldsmith then told us about this lot and what do you think we paid for this lot ?

Mc Goodness, I have no idea.

C \$600.00.

Mc Oh my word !

C He's got a lot north of the house there and he's been offered \$5000.00 for it and he won't sell it. But I know this property and it's going to be sold before too long - - before too many years because when I get so that I can't take care of this place well we're not going to be here, that's all - - because Ed couldn't take care of it by himself.

Mc By the way, who built this house ?

C Well it was - - what was that name ?

Mc You mean Balcerzak didn't build it ?

C No they wouldn't. Frank said that every retirement home that he built the people

would die so he wouldn't built it; although he did us a lot of good, you know like this excavating and one thing or another - - he was awfully good to him, the whole family was. But the house is a package, it's a Barden Home package and the package is good. Joe Rich was at the head of it and Joe is a good enough man but, oh, I don't know, he's too easy.

Mc Well, it's a lovely home.

C I'm glad you like it. As I said, it's a modest little home. All I had was dollar signs in my eyes.

Mc That's right, it pays; but you have flowers and flowering trees and you have vegetables and fruit.

C And would you believe it that we've had our own peaches ? All but last year we didn't have any but every year - - our two peach trees - - one year we had four bushels and a half of peaches. And we got a cherry tree out there. He set it out into the bank. And, my God, that cherry tree - - I bet it's got a bushel and a half of cherries on it! I told the colored people yesterday, I says: "Them bees must have been working over-time." Because they say it takes bees to pollinate, but the weather was good and they were out and every blossom set. There really is too many on because they're going to be small. Last year they were nice and big.

.....  
 .....

The interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina, N.Y. Mrs. Ann Richards of Gravel Road, Medina assisted with the pre-interview of Mrs. Cotriss.

Transcribed by Lysbeth Hoffman of Waterport, New York. The initial copy was examined by Mrs. Cotriss and she made several additions and several deletions. Final editing and compilation by Helen McAllister. Pictures are courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Cotriss.

## Obituaries

### Sophia Cotriss, <sup>1793</sup>Lifelong Resident

Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss, 98, formerly of the North Gravel Road, died Aug. 23 in Orchard Manor Nursing Home following a long illness.

Mrs. Cotriss was born in Medina and was a lifelong resident.

She was a member of the Sacred Heart Church and the Rosary Society. She and her husband were farmers in the area for several years and she was a former trustee of a one-room schoolhouse on North Gravel Road. Mrs. Cotriss had enjoyed gardening.

Mrs. Cotriss was predeceased by her husband, Edward P., in 1982; three brothers, Frank, Anthony and William Balcerzak, and a sister, Edna Swiercznski.

Surviving are a son, Edward M. (Barbara) Cotriss of Medina; a

daughter, Genevieve Cotriss of St. Petersburg, Fla.; two granddaughters, Brenda (Paul) Hand of Medina and Carol Cotriss of Medina; two great-grandchildren, Abigail and Marshall; a sister, Helen (Walter) Szczecho-wiak of Medina; several nieces, nephews and cousins.

The family will receive friends at the Gulinski Funeral Home, 420 Eagle St., Wednesday (2-4, 7-9) where prayers will be said Thursday at 9:30 a.m. followed by a Mass of Christian Burial in the Sacred Heart Church at 10 a.m.

The Sacred Heart Rosary Society will recite the Rosary Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Interment will be in Sacred Heart Cemetery.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Sacred Heart Church.

# E.P. Cotriss Dies; Once in Pro Baseball

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Edward P. Cotriss, 87, of North Gravel Road, died Saturday in Medina Memorial Hospital after a long illness.

Mr. Cotriss was born Dec. 19, 1894 in Middleport. His parents were the late Joseph and Catherine (Plejachowska) Koterak. Although he did engage in farming most of his life, he had been a professional baseball player for three years with the Hartford, Conn. team.

This was in the "Three I" League, one of the top minor leagues of the early 1920s. As a southpaw, Cotriss could have made it to the major leagues but instead chose to return to Medina. He continued pitching for Medina baseball teams of that era and the highlight of this portion of his career was in October, 1920 when he played with the world-famous baseball home run king, George "Babe" Ruth here in Medina. He struck out 10 of the 15 batters he faced that day.

Cotriss was a member of Sacred Heart Church, its Holy Name Society and the Sacred Heart Society.

He and his wife, Sophia (Balcerzak), who survives him, had been married for 61 years.

Also surviving are one daughter, Genevieve Cotriss of St. Petersburg, Fla., and one son, Edward (Barbara) Cotriss of Medina; two granddaughters, Carol Cotriss of Albany, Brenda Cotriss of Edison, N.J.; two sisters, Mrs. Agnes Balcerzak of Medina and Mrs. Mary Menclawicz of Medina, and several nieces and nephews.

The family will receive friends today and tomorrow (2-4, 7-9) at the Gulinski Funeral Home, 420 Eagle St., where funeral services will be held at 9:45 a.m. Wednesday followed by a mass of Christian burial at 10 a.m. at Sacred Heart Church with the Rev. Msgr. Eugene Marcinkiewicz officiating. Burial will be in Sacred Heart Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers memorial gifts may be made to the Sacred Heart Church.

Members of the Sacred Heart Society and the Holy Name Society will meet at the funeral home at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday to recite the Rosary.

**A DAY HE REMEMBERS--**Walter "Ike" Whittleton, of South Main Street, Medina, holds his scrapbook open to the page with clips of Babe Ruth's visit to Medina. Medina won the game against Lockport, 6-2 and the year was 1920. Ruth was already the "big" name in professional baseball. Story below. -(J-R Photo)

## "Ike" Recalls the Babe

By DON COOK

Major league baseball is fast approaching a fever pitch as the Yanks, A's, Dodgers and Expos all cling to hopes of winning their divisions this week and finding themselves ready to do battle in the big pot-of-gold, the World Series.

Following the action closely as he has done for probably seven decades, is Walter "Ike" Whittleton of 1402 South Main St., Medina.

In a chat with Ike yesterday we found it more interesting to learn of the day the great George Herman "Babe" Ruth visited Medina.

Displaying a neatly kept scrapbook, Whittleton recalled the incident with enthusiasm and pointed out an article of the game from a Journal-Register clip dated Oct. 19, 1920.

The headlines read "And Along Came Babe Ruth And Made Good."

Whittleton emphasized baseball was big in Medina in both pre-World War I and post war days.

"We drew big in those days," he recalled, "and had a big crowd in old Oak Orchard Park to see the Babe."

Surprisingly enough, Ruth didn't hit the first home run of the game. That distinction belonged to Fenton "Darb" Whalen of Lockport.

Whalen was known as an excellent ball player and just as well known as the droll comic of Western New York baseball. According to word passed along, as Whalen drilled one over the left field fence, he rounded the bases and called to Ruth, "You may be the big shot in the city, but I'm a big shot in the country."

Two of Medina's ballplayers who played with Ruth that day are still living. They are Eddie Cotriss of North Gravel Road and George Bufts of Prospect Street, Medina.

The story as it appeared in the 1920 edition of the J-R follows:

Yesterday Medina officially ushered out the 1920 baseball season in a fitting way. The

main attraction of the day, the famed hitting Babe Ruth, lived up to all expectations of the fans and hit the ball hard and high over all sides of the fence.

Ruth was in excellent form yesterday despite the injury to his wrist.

Ruth was accompanied by Vick Hoffman and Carl Mays, a battery from the New York Americans, and Jeff Tesreau, former New York Giant pitcher.

During preliminary batting practice, Ruth made some of the longest hits of his career, according to members of his party. (Note: This was still in the dead-ball era.)

The game started with Mays and Hoffman the battery for Medina, and Lewis and Brown for All-Lockport.

The game was scoreless until Lockport's half of the third inning when the first home run of the day was made, and not by Ruth. Fenton Whalen, the pride of the Lock City, lifted the ball over the left field fence.

Ruth at bat in the first inning fanned.

The next time up he hit for three bases, and the next time he did the trick and hit over the right field fence.

Eddie Cotriss relieved Mays in the fifth inning and in his five innings of work he fanned 10 of the 15 men to face him.



# F.J. Balcerzak Dies;

## Builder 60 Years



Frank J. Balcerzak

Frank J. Balcerzak, founder and former president of a general construction firm bearing his name and prominent throughout Western New York for 30 years, died Saturday night at Medina Memorial Hospital after an illness of over two years. He was 81.

The deceased worked in general construction here as a carpenter and mason as early as the 1920s, using skills taught first by his father, a blacksmith, and then developed through employment with William J. Gallagher, B. R. DeWitt and others.

In the late 1940s he formed his own company to perform residential remodeling work and by the early 1950s was joined by his son, Robert, and daughter, Barbara, in the operation of Frank J. Balcerzak & Sons, Inc., general contractors.

Over the ensuing three decades the company became prominent throughout the region for construction of schools, churches, civic and industrial buildings and public works. In Medina alone the firm built three large public schools in the post-war era as well as a major church, additions to Medina Memorial Hospital, Lee-Whedon Library, the Moose Lodge Home, and industrial work at Abex Corp., Fisher-Price Toys and FMC Corp.; also Maple Ridge Plaza and other jobs.

There were 150 significant construction projects throughout the WNY counties

which bore the company's stamp, and for the work on a bridge, a third of a mile long, across the lake at Waterport, the FJB firm won a State DOT commendation.

There were extensive projects at Letchworth State Park, at Brockport State University, for the N.Y. Telephone Co., A&P Markets, Wegman's, a number of banking concerns, water treatment and sewage facilities and the like. By the 1960s the firm was engaged in over \$6 million in annual building projects and carried 130 people on its payroll. The headquarters remained on Mahar Street, Medina, for three decades until the firm was dissolved early this year. The company's main building is now used by Cormed, Inc.

Frank Balcerzak, born in Medina, served as a village trustee in the 1950s and for some years on the village and county planning boards. He was active as a member of the Sacred Heart Church and Society, the Knights of Columbus and Loyal Order of Moose. He was a veteran of Cavalry duty during World War I.

Mr. Balcerzak's first wife, Florence Dujenski Balcerzak, died in 1956. He is survived by his widow, Louise Nowak Balcerzak.

Also by four children, Robert F. Balcerzak of Medina, Mrs. Robert (Barbara) Waters of Medina, Mrs. Carl (Marcia) Tuohy of Medina, and Mrs. Theodore (Shirley) Weston of Buffalo. Also by 13 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, and nieces and nephews.

Other survivors are a brother William of Medina (a brother Anthony is deceased); and by three sisters, Mrs. Edna Swiercznski of Albion, Mrs. Sophie Cotriss of Medina and Mrs. Helen Sechowiak of Medina.

Friends are being received today (2-5, 7-9) at the Gulinski Funeral Home, Eagle Street, where prayers will be said at 9:30 a.m. tomorrow, followed by Requiem Mass at St. Mary's Church at 10. Officiant will be the Rev. Msgr. Eugene Marcinkiewicz of Sacred Heart Church. Burial will be in St. Mary's Cemetery.

The Rosary will be recited at 7 p.m. tonight at the funeral home.

## Editorial

### He Left His Mark

Frank J. Balcerzak died Saturday night at the age of 81 after several years of falling health, but he died with the great satisfaction of those who are builders, or creators, and he left a mark on Western N.Y. which will live for a long time. He also provided, through ingenuity and hard work, an era in Medina which has come to a close.

For all who look upon "manual" labor as demeaning and of low estate, there is an important lesson to be learned in the life of Frank Balcerzak. He was a strong family man and equally dedicated community booster, but more than anything else he keenly enjoyed creating things with his hands — a trait that was nurtured in the blacksmith shop of his father and honed by thirty years as a carpenter, a mason, even a ditch digger or whatever might be required to complete a job.

He enjoyed the special pleasure that comes in building — in leaving the world better off. He was not handed the role of builder and company executive, but he earned it forthrightly. He was never really happy with being an office executive and was at his best when out on the job site. For that reason he was on a first name basis with dozens of executives and community leaders in WNY who trusted his down to earth wisdom in the construction field.

He was proud of the involvement of his son and daughter, and later his grandsons in a business which accounted for most of the post-war construction in Medina and over 150 projects throughout the region. At one time the special skills of 14 family members were integral to his company's success.

The bronze tablets extant in many public buildings of the area are some lasting tribute to his skill and that of his company, but he was far more satisfied with the friends he made along the way.

Frank was a man of moderate tastes and deep association with church and family. He was a soft touch for a good cause. His work is ended and with it a special era of building in the Village of Medina.

But as long as the buildings and the bridges and the parks and pools and roads that were built under his watchful eye are still on the scene, he will still be contributing to the life of W.N.Y.





# Orleans County Historical Association

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    Frank, William, and Helen  
husband: Edward P. Cotriss  
    son: Edward M. Cotriss  
    daughter: Genevieve Cotriss

(1895-1993)



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mrs. Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss  
3461 North Gravel Road  
Medina, New York

Mrs. Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss was born July 30, 1895.

This interview was conducted by Helen McAllister, Medina  
at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Cotriss.

Mr. Cotriss is present during the interview and makes  
an occasional comment.



Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Cotriss



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Sophia Cotriss

Signed

June 6, 1980

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Helen M. McAllister

INTERVIEWER

June 6, 1980

Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, June 6, 1980, Helen McAllister of Medina, New York is interviewing Mrs. Sophia Balcerzak Cotriss of 3461 North Gravel Road, Medina, New York. Husband, Edward P. Cotriss is sitting in an adjoining room and makes an occasional comment.

Mc Mrs. Cotriss, would you start by telling us when you were born?

C July 30, 1895.

Mc Would you give us your father's name?

C Michael Balcerzak.

Mc Where was he born, and where did he live?

C In Posen, Poland.

Mc What was your mother's maiden name? And her homeland?

C Hedwig Jablonski. Her homeland was Poland.

Mc Would you tell me a little bit about your father?

C Well, he had a trade as a blacksmith, and a little farming on the side; not much. And he was a very good father! Can I say that?

Mc You sure can.

C We all thought the world of him. I always thought he was a bright man because he could speak and read and write three languages.

Mc What were the languages?

C Polish, of course. And he could read and write English, and he could read and write German, very well.

Mc You said that your father spent some time in Germany?

C I think he did because by learning the language -- that's what I go by. ... My sister, my oldest sister, I think she can read and write Polish -- which I can. My dad taught us this at home. So you can see he was, you know, fairly good intelligence to do that. He was a darling father. I loved him!

Mc You said that your father crossed the ocean a number of times. Would you tell us about that?

C He did, as a maintenance man. I heard him say "eight times" that he crossed the Atlantic, and whether that's

correct? But I guess it won't matter what it is for now. But he had crossed it many times on these ships. What line he worked for, I wouldn't know. But I know he crossed as a mechanic.

Mc Do you know why he decided to leave the other soil and come to America and finally stay?

C No I really don't because I think at times he did kind of regret it and wish he was back because he come from a -- one of his brothers was very wealthy. And would you believe it: that he died in a prison camp after Poland got taken over! But gosh, he used to have a beautiful carriage like Queen Elizabeth has there, and more fur coats and fur hats, and had a chauffeur driving him around! Dad often grieved for his family. He come from a family of three boys and two girls. A couple of his nephews came to America and they were here for, oh I don't know for how long. Then they went back to Poland.

Mc Your mother came to America at a different time than your father? They hadn't met before they came to Medina?

C I think they met right here in Medina. Do you know Andrew Marcinowski, on High Street? Well, his father and my dad, they were inseparable and I think the two of them came to Medina together. Dad got married first, and then Pa got a girl-friend for Andrew's father there; for his pal. They were friends right to the last. But I do think them two came to town together and picked up their girls and got married.

Mc I think you said that your father came to this area to work in a stone quarry?

C A blacksmith. He used to sharpen tools for the workers. I remember they used to -- well, you wouldn't remember. You're too young -- but they used to make these blocks for buildings. In fact there's a lot of it around Medina in different buildings, that was put out in these quarries.



Mc So, your parents were married and then children came along. Would you tell us who their children are?

C Well, there's Edna (Swierczewski); me (Sophia B. Cotriss); Anthony (wed Agnes Cotriss); Frank ( F. Dujenski, and L. Nowak); William ( A. Piantek, and E. Woodroe); and Helen ( W. Sechowiak). Six of us. Helen came way later in life. I was 17 years old when she was born. Quite a difference in our ages.

Mc Where was your home in Medina?

C On Horan Road, Medina. A little farm. A small place, on the hardest kind of land. But then we managed to live there. They could keep cow and chickens and that, and help the grocery bills. We never went to bed hungry.

Mc Do you have any memories of your early home life, when you were at home as a young girl?

C Yes. They're good memories. Mom had to discipline us because she was with us. And poor Mother -- would you believe it -- she used to go out plowing; follow a pair of horses with skirts on! Now of course they do have slacks. But, I have good memories of the home life because we were all -- oh, at different times of the year we'd all have to kneel together and pray. And they say, "A family that prays together can't go wrong too much". And I think my folks brought up as good a family as an average family as there is around. None of the boys got into trouble, or the girls either. So.

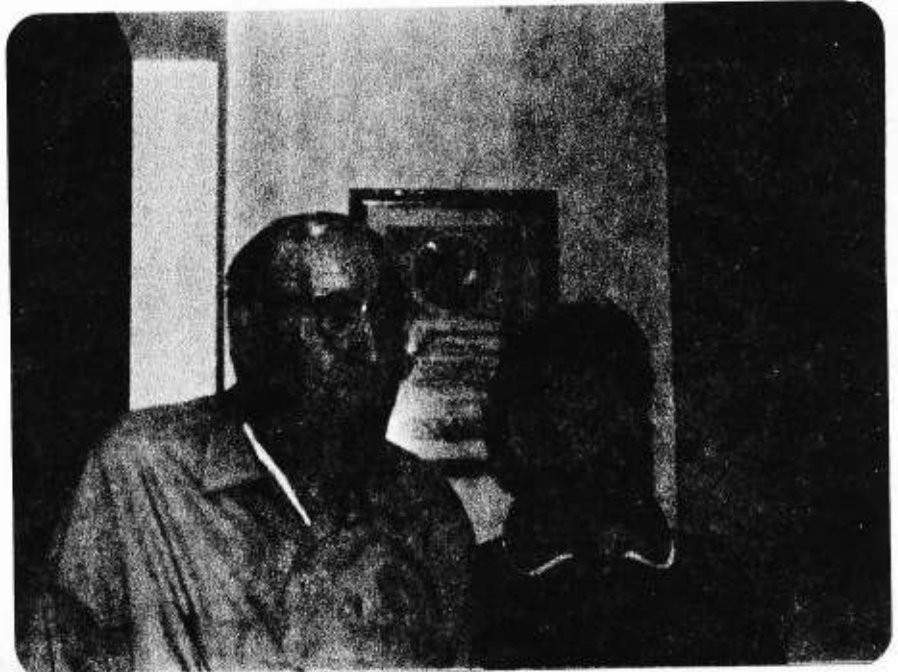
Mc Were you and your brothers and sisters close?

C Yes, we had to be. Now, there was no fighting allowed. Especially at the dinner table. You know, some people will bring up their troubles and then they'll get kind of aggressive, and one thing and another. That was not allowed at our home because our dad always said -- he was the one that used to kind of -- well, he never did

punish us though. ... I only got one kick from my father in all my life; but he never used to beat us up, or anything. Mom did, but she had to !! But Dad, he used to make us behave at the meal times because they said it was God's Blessings, that we should be thankful that we, you know, were able to have what we did have. And so really there was no bickering allowed. They used to bicker, the boys, and I won't say we were a perfect family.

My Dad had a blacksmith shop at home that he used to do a lot of work out there and he'd always have the boys with him, teaching them things; that's why all our boys -- now weren't none of us, only Helen is a high school graduate; but none of us were high school graduates. And look at my brother Frank! I think he's made a big contractor, you know, and that. He made a big come-back. In fact the boys are all mechanically inclined.

Mc When you say your "brother Frank," is he the big contractor in this area?



Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Cotriss Sr.

C Yeah. You know he builds so many projects here. Now the boys, of course, took over. Bob ~~and~~, you probably know Bob Balcerzak, and - -

~~What about boys, Bob and that~~

C Well Bob was the only boy in that family and, of course, then there was the three girls. You know Marcia and Barbara.

Mc Marcia and Barbara and who else ?

C Shirley.

Mc Oh yes.

Well as long as we're talking about Marcia and Barbara and Shirley, for the record: what does Marcia do ?

C Oh, she has that Lakewood Village. And then they have all those houses, . . . . You know those rents and they have apartments and one thing and another.

Mc Now her name is Marcia what ?

C Tuohey. (Mrs. Carl W. Tuohey).

Mc Marcia Balcerzak Tuohey. And what about Barbara ?

C Barbara is Barbara Balcerzak Waters.

Mc Married to Robert Waters. Does she have the Nursing Home?

C Oh, she has that Orchard Manor and she's in the other projects, too, in the contracting with Bob. The kids are all in on that. And, of course, Bob is - - I think he's the president of that outfit now. And then he has his boys working for him. He's got five boys. I'll tell you, there's a lot of Balcerzaks in town. My father always said that if was to run for public office his family alone could put him in.

Mc That's beautiful. What does Shirley do ? Where is she ?

C She's a teacher and she lives in Buffalo. She has a couple of children. She's married to a real nice person.

Mc What is his name ?

C I don't know as I've ever really heard it. I should have but - - (Theodore Weston).

Mc ~~would assume, probably~~ - - - Oh, I wanted to ask you what time of day did you have dinner at your home ?

You said dinner was a very important time.

C In the evening. And, everybody had to be prompt !  
And, they just couldn't come in now and then; they  
had to be home on time, certain time, they had to be  
washed up and my dad set the example because he'd  
always come in about quarter before the meal was ready  
to be served and the kids had their orders and we had  
to be home. Usually it was 6 o'clock, the meal. And  
what meals Mom used to put on ! Ed can tell you, she  
was a wonderful cook ! You know it wasn't this fancy  
food but a great big hunk of beef; they used to  
butcher their own beef, and vegetables and what there  
was.

M. Did she teach her daughters how to do cooking and the  
other jobs ?

C Well, yes. She made us do some but I don't think I'll  
ever be the cook my mom was. Do you Pa ?

Mr C Oh, I don't know.

C I used to be considered a pretty good cook but then  
now - -

M. Well I've been in here several times and each time it  
smelled pretty good around here.

C Thank you.

M. Well Sophia, when you went to school where did you go  
to school ?

C Believe it or not, Bates Road. You know where that  
- - - way up on Bates Road, because our farm belonged  
to that district. We had to walk three miles.

M. And you walked. What about in the winter-time ?

C Walked. We used to run cross-lots like a bunch of  
deer. Well if the weather got awful, awful bad Dad  
would hook up the horses and come after us with the  
bob sleigh but usually it was walking.

M. How far did you go in school ?

C Eighth grade.

M. To the eighth grade.

C Yeah, that was it.

M. Yes, very good.

What did you do after school ? There was a little  
time before you and Mr. Cottriss were married. Did you

work outside ?

C Well my one and only job was Robert H. Newell Shirt Factory in the laundry department. I went there at 16. Oh, I did a little housework for Mildred White, but when I got 16 and old enough to go to the factory I went to Robert Newell and, believe it or not Miss Helen, we worked there 10 hours a day for \$1.00 a day! Imagine, work all week, and Saturdays and all - - - worked all week and at the end of the week we got \$6.00!

M. That would be with no insurance or hospitalization or time off?

C In those days they didn't have it because that's over 60 years ago.

M. How long were you there ?

C Nine years. When I was 18 I was **fore**-lady of that laundry department. I think I had about 10 employees under me. Imagine at 18; Mr. Newell, oh, he was a wonderful person - - -

He was so good to me. And when I was only about 20 they put me on a payroll and whether I was there or not I got paid. And, would you believe it, I was drawing \$35.00 a week when I was married, straight time, **as a fore-lady.**

M. Now what do you mean "straight time" ?

C Well, whether I worked or not, I got paid. Not many men were drawing that kind of pay but I must have earned it. And when I was married, from Newells; what do you think they gave me for wedding present ? 32 pieces of sterling silver !

M. Oh, how beautiful !

C From Mr. Newell. I've got it, I'm going to give it to my daughter next time she comes home this summer. There's no other employee ever got a wedding present like that, Mr. Cox told me. 'Cause I took it in to have it engraved - - initial put on. But I got 32 pieces of sterling silver and that's valuable now.

M. Yes, I should think so.



- M<sub>c</sub> In this area you said that you have had several relatives when you came here. How about the Polish community, as a community: do Polish people unit pretty much?
- C Well they did at that time but I'll tell you where the Polish community really was. It was around Stork Street and Gulf Street, right up in there.
- M<sub>c</sub> Your home was on Stork Street for a while wasn't it? Or is that where you were born you said?
- C Yeah, I was born at Grandma's; but it was on Stork Street. I'll tell you just which house it is. There's one on the corner, that good looking place, and then the third house from the corner is where I was born. We lived on Gravel Road for some time, my folks did.
- M<sub>c</sub> This road?
- C On Gravel Road, right there - - - do you know where that new home was built just below the bridge, that little home?
- M<sub>c</sub> Yes.
- C Well there was an old house there and a little land with it and that's where we lived. And, oh my God, it was the coldest place in the world. That house was so run down and cold.
- M<sub>c</sub> What church do you belong to?
- C Sacred Heart.
- M<sub>c</sub> Did the church unit the Polish community?
- C Oh no, we was here before the church was built. In fact my father was the founder of that church.
- M<sub>c</sub> Oh really. When was this?
- C It's over 75 years ago. My dad, he kind of united - - we had services in a house on Commercial and then finally we got a permanent pastor and the Polish people got together. Well Commercial Street was pretty much Polish and it still is too, I forget about that. The Polish people got together - - - we used to belong to St. Mary's - - - but we had a pastor at St. Mary's, Church Father O'Brian.

He just had his own way. So then we  
- - - the Polish people got together and built their  
own church. And we've been very happy and we do have  
a good pastor; Msgr. Marcinkiewicz is a wonderful  
person. As I said, I'm having a busy week end: yesterday  
I went out to lunch - - well the afternoon was gone - -  
I like to be that way, and today this interview and then  
tomorrow the Monsignor; First Friday, he always comes and  
takes care of us Spiritually which we do appreciate.

M: Comes to your home ?

C Oh yes. Every First Friday.

C Wonderful person.

M: We are in your lovely home, it's a new home, I think.

C Well, it's a modest little home.

M: It's lovely.

Would you tell us how you met your husband, the man who  
became your husband ?

C Well then - - He chummed around with my oldest  
brother and then he got to coming down to the house.

I think that's how we - - because our place was  
always "open house". Ed can verify that - - "open  
house" - - especially on Sundays, the group would  
gather there, young people you know, and they would  
play cards instead of going to these saloons or one  
thing or another they met at our - - - they'd come over  
to the house. Mom would always serve something. In  
fact she would put out a supper, wouldn't she Ed ?  
And then they would sit around and play cards and I  
think maybe - - because we - - - well we knew each  
other for 5 years. But I was engaged to - - well  
he was a nice man too and that - - but I guess it  
was just not to be. He gave me a diamond ring,  
but - -

M: Oh, you had been engaged before ?

C Well I really wasn't engaged, I wouldn't accept the  
diamond ring; but he made me keep it. You believe it

or not, I was not a good looking girl - - well I'm not a good looking woman and I was not a good looking girl. But I had loads of boy friends. You know these foreigners and some of them local boys - - I never was wanting for a date.

Mc Did you like to dance ?

C Oh, I loved it ! Especially the polkas ! I'd still go out if I had a good knee. Oh I used to love dances!

Mc Where would you go for a dance ?

C Mostly they used to have them in the homes, private homes, Saturday nights. Because that's the only entertainment these people had and they had in these private homes - - only then we had our Parish Hall. We used to go upstairs and dance in that. And eventually they got the Sacred Heart Club together.

Mc That's very popular.

C It is now, yeah. At first it wasn't so big but it used to be real homey and nice.

Mr C I've belonged to it for over 60 years !

C Oh yes, all of that.

Mr C Before I was married I belonged to it.

C We will be married 60 years.(November 18, 1920).

Mc Would you tell me a little bit about your wedding ?

C Well, believe it or not, we was getting married two days. We was supposed - - in them days they didn't get married on Saturday like they do now, which is a good thing because most people are not working and it's a good thing. But we had our wedding planned for Wednesday and believe it or not the night before it starts snowing, and it snowed all night!

Mc This was in November ?

C 17th day of November. And we got up the next morning and in them days 'cause they didn't have the snow plowing equipment they do now - - - and 2 feet and a half of wet snow and we just couldn't get out to go to church. And would you believe it, we went to church the next day in a cutter, a horse drawn cutter. Then the girl that stood up for us, lived right across from the church, - - - so I changed clothes there 'cause I had the heavy



coat on and everything. And we were married. But it took us two days to get married. And here it was a lot of people went to church to see the wedding on the 17th and nobody showed up.

M. Oh dear. November 17th. What day were you actually married, was it November? (Priest: Father Kroczyk)

C The 18th, the next day. (Attendants: Walter Cottriss, Frances Levandusky)

M. Did you have a honeymoon or did the snow keep you right in Medina?

Bloom

C It kept us right - - - in fact we didn't want to spend the money for a honeymoon. Well we really did have a honeymoon. We were married November 18th and the 10th of April we went to Evansville, Indiana because he had to go in for training there as a baseball pitcher. And we always called that - - well we planned on it that way - - - we always called that our honeymoon. And, say, I had a wonderful summer there.

M. Now what year was it you were married?

C In 1920. And in 1921 we went to Evansville, Indiana and as I said I had a wonderful summer there. We was there only a couple of months and Ed had to go for a 30 day road trip, and here I was in a strange city alone. So I went out and got a job in a laundry. \$1.00 a day.

M. In Evansville?

C Unhuh. I used to walk to work mornings. I just did it for the time he was gone because I wouldn't have known what to do with myself. We had a lovely apartment, a lower apartment, and then the lady was right there - - - remember Mrs. Skull, Ed?

Mr C Unhuh.

C But I wouldn't have known what to do with myself so I went and got a job in this laundry. \$1.00 a day after drawing \$35.00 a week; imagine! But I didn't care, I was working. But you know I didn't tell them people that I knew anything about ironing.

M. What did you do?

C Iron.



1917 3rd from right: Sophia B. Cotriss



1921 4th from left, top row: Ed Cotriss, Sr.



C

And first I can remember that floor-lady, she was the nicest person, she was a big woman - - - and I can still remember her name. Her name was Elena Wonder. And she would give me a brassiere to iron and of course I would iron it and then she would give me - - finally when I was there prett-near to the last, she would give me uniforms and they'd come out all right. Because I didn't tell them that I had experience in the laundry because I thought, well, they would expect too much of me and I didn't intend to stay there. Well I think they thought I was kind of a bright kid because ironing these things and knowing how to do it. So they was going to give me more money and my Golly when Ed got back, of course, I wouldn't go back to the laundry so I went down in the office and told the owner that I wasn't coming back. He was so angry at me that I thought he was going to hit me ! He wanted to keep me because I was doing good work for him.

Mc Well when you're talking about your husband being in baseball. Was Mr. Cotriss active in baseball when you met him ?

C He played a year before we were married.

Mc This was in the Eastern League, is that right ?

Mr C No, I was in the 3-I League.

Mc The 3-I.

Mr C 3-I League.

C Oh, Eastern League was the last year you played at Hartford. I'm sorry.

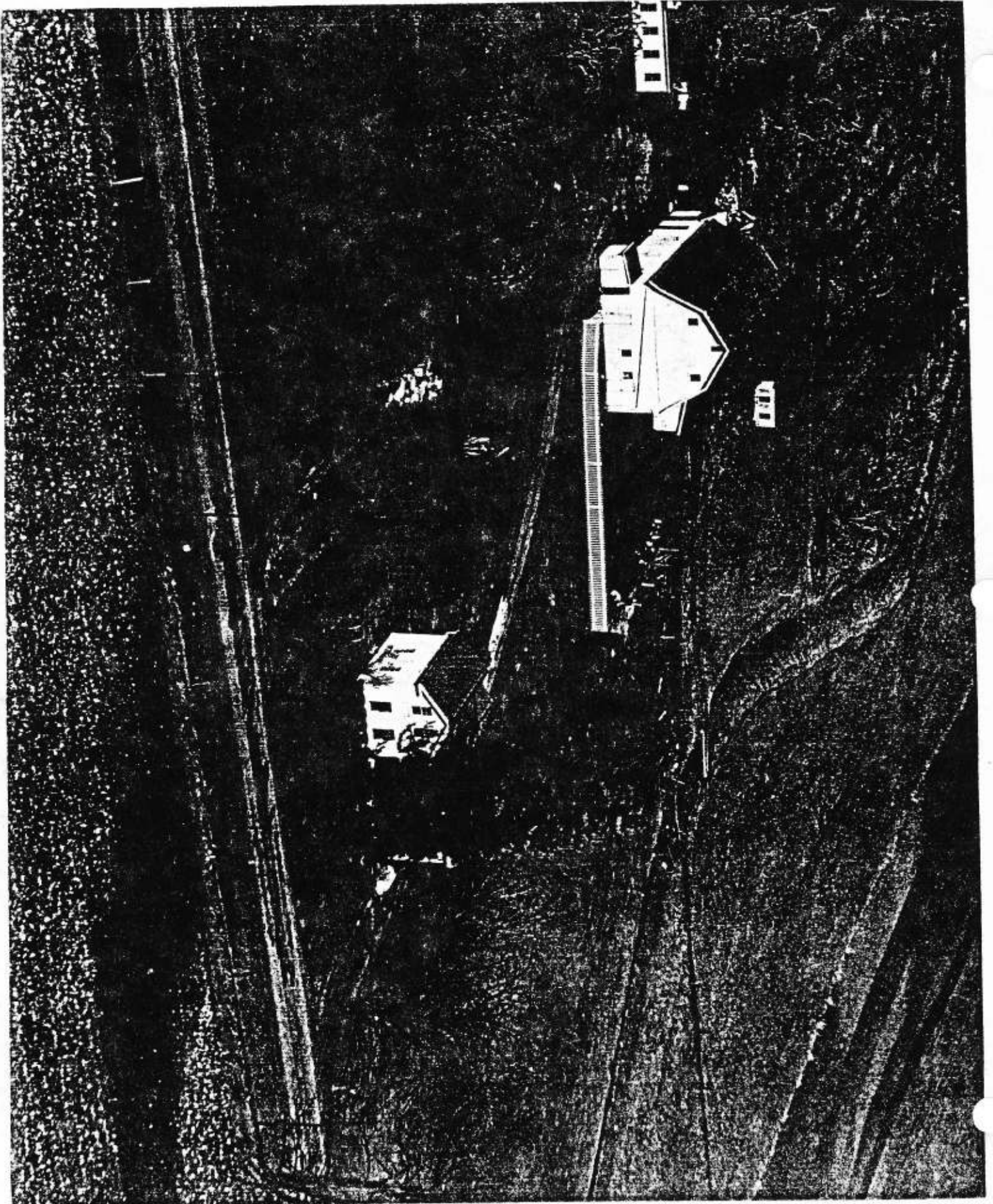
Mc What was the 3 I League ?

Mr C Iowa, Indiana and Illinois.

(NOTE : see Photo)

- Mc. The 3-1 League was first and then later it was the Eastern League, is that it ?
- C Yes, he played a year before we were married and then of course we were married and went down there - - - but oh the people were so nice down there, I liked them. Well I got to tell you this - - - you don't have to put it down - - but the night he went away for that road trip, I remember, it was the 4th of July and always they would leave by train at 10 o'clock and these people that we had met they had a car and there was the manager's wife and the manager's mother and Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Shawl, their name was, wasn't it; and we didn't know just what we were going to do with ourselves so we took a ride to Henderson, Kentucky. And, By Golly, I got drunk there on two bottles of home brew! When I got home at 5 o'clock in the morning I didn't care whether Ed was around or not. Because you see that was the Blue Laws there in Evansville. There was no taverns or anything. But, as I said, I had a couple of bottles of home brew in Henderson, Kentucky and when I come home I was feeling so good I didn't care whether he was around. Oh, and then to top it all off they come over and woke me up that morning and wanted me to work that afternoon. I went.

Cottriss Farm West Scott Road, Medina



14/2 Cottriss

## TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

- Mc Sophia, would you tell us where did you and Mr. Cotriss first live ? Where was your first home ?
- C On Maple Avenue.
- Mc In Medina ?
- C Yes. Outside of Medina, but then it's the Village of Medina - - - not right in the village, it's outside. We bought a home and we traded it in towards the farm.
- Mc You were on Maple Avenue for about how long do you think ?
- Mr. C Not very long.
- C No, I did all that hard work and about two months is all.
- Mc And then where did you go ?
- C The farm. We was there 44 years.
- Mc You weren't on Pleasant Street ?
- C No. We just had that one home on Maple Avenue and then we traded that in towards the farm.
- Mc Now when you say "the farm" - - - this is on West Scott Road outside of Medina, about two or three miles ?
- C About three miles.
- Mc And who had owned the home previously - - - who did you buy it from - - - or who had lived there just before you ?
- C On Maple Avenue ?
- Mc No, on the farm.
- C Clevelands.
- Mc Cleveland, yes. And he had been in the quarry, was it ?
- C No, the foundry, they had the East Avenue Foundry.
- Mc How large a farm was this, how much acreage ?
- C 44 acres. (see also page 21)

Mc I think that there's a little story that you told Ann Richards and me the other day - - - when you went in it was in the summer time, is that right ?

C We moved there in August and, as I say, we were poor - - oh we were so poor, - - and we did have a car. But we moved on a hay wagon - - a hay rack they used to have those hay wagons - - - and what few possessions we had why we had it on that wagon; and I was riding on the wagon with Ed - and the boy was only nine months old.

Mc Now the boy is ?

C Our son.

Mc And you called him Baby Buddy ?

C Buddy. Because when I would say Ed or Edward why they wouldn't know which one I was calling so that's why. I'd never do that again; name a child the same name as the father. Well anyway, unloaded the stuff and Ed took the horses to the barn to unharness them. And, my goll, a man come along with a flock of sheep - - - we'd say there was at least a hundred. And of course we didn't have time to put the screen door on the front door so the front door was open - - - you had to have air, it was hot that day, it was August.

Mr.C It was terrible hot.

C And these sheep see that door open and the porch was only about a foot high from the ground - - my golly - - if they didn't all come in. 'Bout a hundred in the flock ! And, you know, here I was holding the boy because he wasn't walking and I didn't know whether I should take care of him or help to drive the sheep out ! But, you know, they didn't mess the house up too much because they were hot and they were frightened and you'd expect they'd mess but they didn't leave too many droppings. So I always said that they were our first visitors !





Which they were.

Mc That's darling !

C You know it is quite unusual ! They were our very first, a flock of hundred sheep.

Mc You lived on the West Scott Road for a long time.

C 44 years. That is a long time.

Mc Sophia, what did you have on your farm ? When you first went there, were there fruit trees there - - all kinds of fruit ?

C Yes, apples, pears, and - -

Mr.C Cherries.

C Well now, the cherries, we planted them. The apples were there, but the cherries we planted.

Mc When you had apples, Ann Richards said once in a while she would help pick. She can remember helping to pick apples.

C She was a good help too. That was <sup>when</sup> Dick was in the Sea-Bees, in the service.

Mc Did you do your own work, for the most part or did you have a hired man or what ?

C We did most of the work; only it was seasonal, you know, when we was picking apples and that we had to have help, but otherwise we did - - - well on a small place like that - - - and for years Ed followed a team of horses - - - at least ten years, didn't you Ed ?

Mr.C Oh, longer than that.

C Ed did all the plowing himself, you know, fitting the land - - - but we made a living.

Mc Did you prepare your own spray for the fruit trees ? Did you spray your trees ?

C Yes, we had a spray rig and I used to drive on the spray rig.

Mc You worked right out in the field with your husband ?

C All the time. And, believe it or not, I never neglected my house.

Mc I can believe it. It's immaculate!

- C Not that I mean to be bragging but I always thought, well suppose something happens to either one of us and we had to be brought in; I wouldn't know whether I should straighten the house up or call for help, so I would always make my beds and do my dishes and leave things in order before I would go out. And then besides that I used to feed the help. In the fall you wouldn't believe how much cooking I used to have to do! I come in at about 11 o'clock and rush around and get a meal.
- Mc Now when you say the "help" in the fall; were most of your helpers from the immediate neighborhood?
- C They were local help, from the village and that.
- Mc Did you ever have "Ho-Bos" or migrants?
- C No but I'll tell you what; I had a lot of experience with colored people and it was good. You should remember that camp they had on the Marshall Road, there by the canal. Whenever we needed extra help we used to go over there and get these colored boys and I used to treat them like human beings - - - like human beings should be treated. And you know, those colored boys would do anything for me. You treat those people right and they'll treat you right because - - we cut some hay on the neighbors, on shares, and Ed had a baler and he was baling it and I had quite a combination - - - I was driving on the tractor, on the trailer, and I had an Indian, and I had two colored boys working with me - - and I was driving the tractor and the Indian he kicked his heels, he said: "Don't think I'm going to work here!" And he wasn't working for us, he was working for the neighbor that we cut the hay on shares. And he says: "Don't think I'm going to work here all night for you." And I says: "You're not working for me." And as a rule I'm not mouthy, you know, to argue with anybody, but I really was angry at him and I said: "If you don't like it you know

what you can do. You can just go your way." Which he did ! I fired him right then and there in the field and then I tought, " Oh My Goodness, these black boys - - and this was on a Friday and every Friday night they would have a big doings there. People would come from Buffalo with their own orchestra and one thing and another and I said: "well how about you boys ?" I says: "we have to get this hay in." "Lady, we'll work as late as you need us !" And they did and then I took them home. But they'd come over to our place to help and sometimes they wouldn't have their lunches. Most of the time they didn't, so I would fix sandwiches for them. I would take out some milk because we had a dairy farm and we had plenty of milk and I would even bake strawberry shortcake and send them out big globs and, you know, those boys would do anything in the world for me. They appreciated it.

Mc Yes, I should think so.

C Well I'll tell you an example here. We have a couple coming in from Buffalo fishing; yesterday they were here and just because we let them in here and let their car stand here and one thing and another; why you know they are so polite and so appreciative. But, you've got to treat them like human beings.

Mc All people are human. That's beautiful.

On your farm you also had chickens ?

C Oh yes.

Mc How did you raise your chicks; were they day-old-chicks when they were brought in ?

C Yes I used to buy them.

Mc Where did you pick them up ?

C Well they would come by Express, not freight but then they used to deliver them by mail too.

Mc You mean they would be brought to your house ?

C The mailman used to bring them in the backseat of the car.

Imagine 200 chickens ! They'd be in four boxes, big square boxes.

Mc Where would they come from ?

C Oh, where-ever I'd order them. I got them as far as Indiana. Where-ever I got chicks one year and liked them and thought they were a good breed why I'd go back.

Mc What kind did you have ?

C I had Leghorns mostly, for laying.

Mc How many would you have had ?

C I used to have - - - I used to buy about 200 or 250; 250 usually.

Mc How long would you keep them ?

C I would sell the broilers off or we'd eat a lot of the broilers, 'cause you couldn't keep roosters, you had to have an unfertile egg. And then the chickens, I only kept them one year. Then the truck would come along & pick them up.

Mc You said that you sold - - - was it eggs that you sold to Wegman's ?

C Yes.

Mc Wegman's out of Buffalo ?

C Buffalo or Rochester; I guess they were Buffalo. Yes the truck used to come around once a week and pick up whatever I had; a crate or two crates - - - depending upon the time of the year - - chickens lay better during one part of the year or another.

Mc Did you let the chickens run around the yard or were they penned in ?

C They had to be closed up because they didn't want these eggs to be colored - - - the dark yolks.

Mc What did you feed them ?

C We had the regular mash. I used to buy the laying mash and then we raised our own corn and wheat, and of course I had water; and in the winter time we used to have the lights on for them.

- Mc Why did you have the lights on ?
- C A longer day and they'd lay better. You see the short days and they go to bed too early and then they got lazy and they wouldn't lay and that's when the eggs were bringing better prices. So we used to light them up; and then I had an electric hot water heater for them too so that they had water to drink all winter long.
- Mc And did you have pigs ?
- C Not any amount of them.
- Mc Just for your own use ?
- C That's about it and we did sell some. I never liked pigs. They squeal and they did smell so terrible.
- Mc Did you do your own butchering ?
- C Yes, my husband was quite a good butcher. He used to butcher the hogs and get help, of course, and he even butchered beef.
- Mc And then you would probably preserve them in some way ? The hams and sauage ?
- C Yes we did but, golly, we used to hang the meat up and let it kind of - - you know during cold weather - - - we didn't have a freezer at the time. In later years, about 30 years ago, we got a freezer and then we had a way to put the meat away. But before that, I'll never forget it, we had a quarter of a beef hanging up in the garage and, my golly, a scale under it - - - but the thing was hanging up high and we had a dog, police dog, - - - we were very fond of police dogs - - - and if he didn't eat up all the steaks out of it! T-bone steaks out of that beef.
- Mc He wasn't a very popular dog, was he, after that ?!
- What about horses ? Did you have any horses on your farm ?
- C Yes, that's all we farmed with until we got a tractor; at least 15 years. Then we got so that we could afford a tractor. That one one thing, we would never buy things "on time"! We'd work



and skimp and save but pay for everything. Our mailman, Mr. Ives, he used to live up here on North Gravel and he says: "What do you folks use for money?" And I said: "Why?" He says: "You get the least bills delivered of anybody I know." But we never wanted to go into debt.

Mc Did you have, years ago, besides the work horses for the farm, did you have any one special horse for the carriage ride you would take into town?

C We always had a car. My husband had it before we was married and then I busted it - - - something happened, I went to church and then we got a new one. But in them days you could buy a car for \$500.00 and less than that, I guess, - - - I had a coupe. No we didn't have to have a horse for a carriage because we always had a car.

Mc What about cows, on your own small farm, did you have cows?

C Yes we had a half a dozen cows there and sold milk.

Mc What do you mean, you sold milk? Who did you sell it to?

C To the dairy.

Mc What dairy would that be?

C Elsworth Wright was the owner, on Park Avenue in Medina. . . . . You know we depended on that money, we needed it; and we'd deliver the milk there and even on Sundays my husband used to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and milk these cows and deliver the milk before we went to church and then when you went to get your money, why he'd hand you over \$10.00 or so. . . . . That was terrible! But then when we got the big farm well then we had a regular dairy. We had a tank to cool the milk, kept a man there.

Mc A hired man ?  
C Yes.  
Mc When you say "the big farm," the dairy farm that you had; that was on the corner of Beales and Portage Road wasn't it ?  
C Right.  
Mc And you had 167 acres, approximately ?  
C Yes.  
Mc How many cattle did you have there ?  
C There was about 40 head. That was young stock, you know you always have to keep replacing the cows.  
Mc What kind of cows did you have ?  
C Mostly Holsteins . . . We did keep a couple of Guernseys because you had to have certain butterfat in your milk, because if it got below 3.5 well then you had to put in something to build it up.  
Mc Were these registered cattle ?  
C No I don't think so; <sup>BUT</sup> they were good cattle. We didn't keep poor cows because it takes just as much to feed them as it does a good one. But, they were good big cows, nice cows. Some of them were registered but on the whole they weren't registered.  
Mc Where did you get them from ?  
C Oh, we'd buy them and raise them and if we had a real good cow and she had a calf that was a girl calf we'd raise it and that's how we built the herd up by raising them.  
Mc You had a bull or more than one ?  
C Just one.  
Mc On your own farm did you ever have any sheep ?  
C No. You have to have too good a fence for sheep.  
Mc Yes, they're very agile.  
Do every remember a grocery truck coming around to your house ?  
C Yes. Munzel's from the Ridge. Sure they used to come around. But I didn't used to buy much

because I found that they were kind of high and every penny counted with us.

Mc Where did you go shopping ?

C I went to Town to the super-markets.

Mc Would you go more than once a week ?

C Oh yes, I went - - - although I had a refrigerator to keep stuff but I didn't have a freezer at first so sometimes I went every day.

Mc Do you ever remember trading butter or eggs ?

C Not butter because I never churned to sell butter, just stuff for ourselves; and oh what a job that was, if the cream wasn't just right you could just sit there and turn that churn for half a day.

Mc But you would make it for yourself ?

C Oh yes. But - - eggs yes, I used to take them in until the trucks started coming around - - - I didn't like it either.

Mc How did that work - - - you'd take eggs in to every store or just a grocery store or what ?

C Just the grocery store. And, they would give you a slip, a credit slip, and then they expected, they wanted you, to take it out in trade but I didn't like it. I only did that for a very short time.

Mc Why didn't you like it ?

C Oh, I don't know. Somehow or other I just felt like a pauper I guess. I would rather go in and buy my stuff and pay cash.

Mc I think I would too.

C You know what ? I never had it so good as I have it right now ! With the Social Security and we have income from other sources because when we were farming it we'd have some money put away and when something turned up we'd have to use it up for that - - - or somebody would have to come in and trim or that. Now I get my Social Security - - I get half of his <sup>(Husband)</sup> - - - but I keep better than half and I give him his share because I don't need it for keeping our house.

So if I want anything well I just get it because I have the money now. I got it better now than I ever had !

Mc Well you've worked long and you've worked hard for it.

C That's right.

Mc You said you will be married 60 years this November.

C The 18th of November.

Mc That's beautiful.

C Well I wonder; you know sometimes that you can live too long with one person.

Mc Well it depends, some people are feeling that way.

C Now I've had six rough years with him. Ed was stricken the 16th day of June, on Father's Day.

Mc And yet he's able to be up and dressed and move around.

C He's come a long way. And then after he had that accident - - - I never, never thought that man would be home again because he went into a coma.

Mc Is that when the lawn mower, heavy tractor, turned over on him ?

C Not on him. That's what saved him. You see, it was on the neighbor's here - - right along by the road, a little incline about two feet high. And why he ever went out there with that tractor - - - it was the 28th day of April because my brother said he would mow the lawn for us, which he does yet, - - but Ed got on that tractor and he got confused. Instead of putting it in reverse he went along the road, he put it in quick, and the tractor jumped over the north drive-way and then it tipped over but you see it's a big tractor - - - he paid \$2200.00 for it five years ago. So you see it's not a toy, it's a big machine. And it tipped over and all that gas went on him and that. But that's what

saved him; he was pinned against the wheel. Some lady from Lyndonville come along and she see it happen. But he had presence of mind to tell her to shut off the ignition, and the knives. And I was laying down because I had come home from the hair-dressers and had my lunch and I was laying down and they had quite a time getting me up. But I got up because something just told me - - - this happened at exactly 4 o'clock in the afternoon. And there was <sup>(Tom)</sup> Shirmer at the door - - - well they were ringing the door-bells and they were pounding on the doors and I come out. And Shirmer, he took his jacket off and put it under Ed's head. But, you know, Ed didn't look bad at all. He had his glasses on and he had his gloves on and his hat. He wasn't disturbed and he was lying on the grass and the ambulance was in the drive-way. And Shirmer says: "Lady what shall we do with your husband?" he says: "He got hurt!" And I says: "Oh my God! What happened?" And he says: "The mower tipped over." So I did have presence of mind; I come in and put on a dress and a sweater - - - it was cold that day. And I went out there and he even had macaroni and cheese on his chin because I left him a warm dish in the oven - - - and I said: "Ed, why did you do it?" I says: "Last night Bill told you that he would take care of the lawn." But Ed was fighting like heck with the ambulance driver; he wasn't going to go in that ambulance to the hospital - - - and I says: "Oh yes you are!" I says: "How else are we going to get you up there for X-rays?" So I says: "Load him up, boys." and they did and then Barbara and I followed. You know Dr. Blanchet has been our doctor for years - - - well 25 years - - - but he couldn't do a thing for us and it prearranged with him that Dr. Bath would admit Ed. Well when I got there - - - Barbara and I



drove - - that's our daughter-in-law - - -  
drove behind the ambulance and when we got  
there they were undressing him and <sup>(Dr.)</sup> Bath was  
around. And I said: "Dr. Bath, we had it  
prearranged with Dr. Blanchet that you were  
to admit my husband." And Bath he put up one  
leg and he put up another leg and he says: "I  
don't think I have to admit him." He says:  
"Everything seems all right." And you know,  
in the X-ray room and whatever happened there  
- - - he went into a coma. Well at 8:30 when  
I was leaving he was still in a coma and he  
looked just like a corpse. So I think he's  
come a long ways.

Mc Yes he has.

C But we do have problems with his urine and one  
thing and another. His memory is bad too.

---

Mc Going back to many years ago: Saturday night  
when your children were small was quite a busy  
time for you wasn't it ?

C Yes.

Mc When you had baths to take and all that sort  
of thing, would you tell us about that and how  
you gave them their baths ?

C Yes and we didn't go out because - - - oh,  
once in awhile we did on some special occasion;  
but we had to be home with the children and that's  
where we belonged too.

Mc Saturday night baths meant drawing the water in the tub  
and putting it on the floor in front of the  
kitchen stove, is that right ?

C And the water came out of a cistern pump and  
I used to have to heat it because we didn't  
have plumbing. Let's see, when did we put  
our plumbing in there ? Oh, we must have been  
on the farm at least 15 years before we got  
our plumbing. We had quite a time getting  
electricity through first. Then the plumbing;  
that was one of the things I wanted more than

anything.

Mc Yes that makes a difference, especially with farm animals around.

C So we used to stay home pretty much but we had our radio.

Mc Saturday night was a busy time, but then on Sunday morning you said your husband would deliver the milk ?

C And I would get the kids up, when they were old enough - - - now our little girl had to go to church when she was two years old and she was good in church. And, the boy wasn't good; oh, he used to get kind of uneasy and that. I even ~~th~~reatened to take a strap to church with me and then he kind of got to thinking.

Mc But they went to church, didn't they ?

C Oh definitely ! And you know, I always, always told them; I says: "When you don't have time for church, there's no place for you here." I didn't bring up heathens, I brought up Christians. And they go to church.

Mc Do you remember when you went into town to do your shopping; do you remember when women first started getting their hair cut ?

C Yes.

Mc Did you go to a Barber Shop to get your hair bobbed ? Did you get your hair bobbed ?

C Oh, and what a time I had ! My husband wasn't going to let me have my hair cut. He wanted my hair long. And I wanted it just like everybody else; I wanted it short and I wanted a permanent. Oh and what he wasn't going to do ! But I told him it was my head and my hair and I was going to have it cut ! And I did !



Mc Do you remember who gave you your first hair-cut ?

C Steve Chick. (Chosocki)

Mc Steve Chick, in Medina ?

C Yes. You probably wouldn't remember, he's been dead a long time. Do you remember him ?

Mc No I don't. Where was his - - - was it a Barber Shop all by himself or did he have others in there ?

C No he was by himself. He had a nice Barber Shop. I'll tell you where it was - - - about where Goodwin's Card Shop is, about in there or somewheres.

Mc Right on Main Street.

C Then I got to going to a hairdresser. I went Lowell Neal for quite some time and got my hair cut and permanents.

Mc And your husband finally accepted it anyway didn't he ?

C Yes. I guess he wouldn't want me any other way.

Mc Did you buy most of your children's clothing or did you do a lot of sewing ?

C I used to make a lot of them, oh I had to. You know after all, there wasn't that much money around so - - - I'll never forget the pretty pair of brown velvet pants I made for the son with one of those beige shirts with a little ruffle down the front, and I had his picture taken and I guess he's got the picture, I gave it to him. But, oh, I worked so hard - - - but I just <sup>used</sup> to do a lot of sewing. In fact our daughter was always quite chubby and they didn't have the chubby sizes like they do now; so I used to do a lot of her sewing too.

Mc Did you cut the children's hair ?

C No. I never could do that. Well now - - I'll take that back - - I did the daughter's because it was straight but the boy I used to take him to the barber. Goll, you used to get it cut for a quarter then.

## TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

- Mc This is Tape Two with Mrs. Sophia Cotriss.
- 
- Mc Sophia, where did your children go to school ?
- C Well, here on the corner we had a school house.
- Mc This is on the corner of the Scott Road and the Gravel Road ?
- C No it's Slade and Gravel. Slade runs east. Scott runs west.
- Mc Was this a one room school-house ?
- C Yes. And I was Trustee there for ten years.
- Mc Good for you. Who was the teacher, do you know ?
- C Oh, we had many teachers.
- Mc I see.
- C Buddy went to Bertha Wilson, she was a good teacher. Then Genevieve went to Catholic School, to Sacred Heart School for a couple of years. Well, and Buddy went to St. Mary's School to make his First Holy Communion for one year but this was so handy here so that's where I kept them. Then, of course, they went to high school.
- Mc Your children graduated from high school ?
- C Oh yes, both of them. Would you believe it - - Genevieve graduated at 16 ? She was 16 in April and graduated in June.
- Mc How did they get to school ? Did they have to walk ?
- C Oh no. Well here, yes they did - - - which I think was good for them.
- Mc That's not far; but when they went into Medina then how did they go ?
- C Oh, Genevieve had a car. We traded a cow for a car. What was that car's name ? She had a

fancy name for it. Buddy; I used to have to take him up. I used to take him to St. Mary's School. And, oh my, I used to have a time looking for him - - - find him back of the tin shop or I never knew where to look for him. If I didn't get there when he came out of school then he wandered off with the rest of the group. Yeah, I used to have to take him up every day and go after him.

Mc You were telling us the other day when we were visiting with you - - - we were asking you about your memories of the Depression of 1929.

C That was horrible.

Mc It was horrible. Tell me about it again will you ? It was just before Christmas time.

C When the Union Bank closed - - - the Central Bank closed on, I'm very sure, it was the 2nd day of November. But the Union Bank closed in December and I'm sure it was real close to Christmas when that closed and that was terrible, terrible.

Mc You said they drew a gate, a metal gate, across the doorway ?

C Yes, the Union, not the Central. You see there was about four steps up, it was up kind of high. It was either three or four steps. Then at the top of the **steps** - - - it wasn't too big of a gate - - - but there was a **gate** across.

Mc Was this always there ?

C As far as I could remember. It was one of those gates kind of like they have for children, you know on porches to close them down.

Mc Yes, an expansion gate.

C Yes.

Mc Did you have money in these banks and how did you hear about the Depression, or the "Crash" as they call it.

C Well as I told you; I took it very hard because we worked so hard for the money and we was in the process of wanting a new barn - - which we did



put up. Oh I think we had around \$2000.00 in the Central Bank. Then we had a couple - - - we had some money coming from apples; I believe it was from Albert Johnson and we got that and I went in and put it in the Union Bank and my golly if that didn't close in a day or two. Well the same way with Central Bank; now I took that money in a check in on a Saturday and they knew that the auditors had ordered that bank closed Monday; and they took that check in! They shouldn't have never done that, but they did. I just felt that they robbed us. We did get 70% out of the Central and I think 72% out of the Union Bank. All the rest we lost which we very well couldn't afford to but we did. As I told you when - - - when that Union Bank closed, Oh Dear, I was just crushed because being so near Christmas and that. But they had that horrible earthquake in China and so many people were killed and so many lost their homes; it was thousands upon thousands of which it wouldn't be hard in China the way they're over-populated; and I got to thinking then because I went downtown from my folks place, I went downtown on my way home, and I thought then when I heard the news: "well at least I've got a home to go to - - - I'm not as bad off as them people." And you know right away I felt different and my thinking took a different direction and I was thankful that we were all safe, the family like Ed and the children and I and my folks and that, and that helped. But that was a pretty rough struggle.

Mc You said that thinking of Christmas coming you were very thankful you had already bought a couple of Christmas gifts.

C For the children, yes which I was - - and had them paid for. You see I used to get this egg money; of course we thought it was

my money and I bought these gifts. I think there was a sale on and Genevieve, she so wanted a doll buggy and I bought her a nice one. I can remember now, it was a pretty blue wicker, it was beautiful; I remember paying \$7.00 for it over to O'Riley's and she was happy with that. And I think we got the boy a tricycle.

Mc You also said something about a few Christmas lights were out and there were some Christmas Carols.

C Yes.

Mc How did you hear the Christmas music ?

C Well now I just can't remember whether they had one of those - - - but I did hear Christmas Carols when I was downtown. Was it people going around trying to build up people's spirits; now that might have been it, you know.

Mc And then you had the feeling "We will get by".

C Yes. And we did.

Mc And you did.

C And people think that I am a miser. In fact I have been told that I was. But I've always been so very careful how I spend our money because I worked so hard for it and I was just so poor. Well I'm getting by all right now. We have a real nice home in Florida. Of course now we turned it over to the daughter. And we used to buy a car every two years and we made 22 trips to Florida.

C 22 different winters, one year after another until his health got bad we never missed a winter. 22 years we were down there and we weren't throwing money around but we had what we wanted. So you couldn't call us miserly. And we live fairly decent, I mean we have what

we want.

Mc Well, during this period of the Depression when the banks were closing did you feel that the people pulled together because of this ?

C Yes I do ! I think it brought the community closer together, I really do.

Mc In what way ? How did people react ?

C Well they just all felt that they were in the same boat, you know, because so many people had a few dollars - - - probably not over \$100.00, perhaps less and which they saved so hard and then to see it taken away. That wasn't easy.

Mc Another big date in your life probably was the time when World War I happened. I don't know if your were involved in any way. Do you have any memories of World War I ?

C Oh yes, yes I have real memories. I remember the Armistice Day in November, the 11th of November. And I was working at the shirt factory and golly we went out in our summer dresses and that, it was so warm and beautiful and we listened to the church bells and everybody was so happy. Yes, I was - - - well that was 1918 and oh my that was beautiful, it was such a good feeling to know that everything was ended.

Mc Do you remember what you did for a celebration, did people run around in the street, have a parade ?

C We went to church and prayed and thanked God.

Mc Good.

C And I think that was the right thing to do. Well there were parades and a lot of happiness but I remember I went to church and offered a prayer, and some of the other girls too.

Mc When World War II came do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor ?

C Yes. I was in church. To services, evening

- services and when we come out there were so many people upset because - - - well, she's dead now - - - Kate Gottovi, her son was at Pearl Harbor, and there was some others like Shannon and that and when we come out everybody was very, very upset and a lot of people were crying. That was a terrible thing, wasn't it.
- Mc Yes, it was awful. Now was your family involved - - - was your son involved in World War II ?
- C He was in the Pacific - - in radar - - well they didn't have radar - - well he was in something like that. Yes he was in the service for three years. He was in the Marines.
- Mc Oh yes. My brother was in the Marines.(Glenn Masten)
- C That's kind of strict.
- Mc It's very hard; my brother was in the South Pacific.
- C So was my son. (Edward M. Cotriss)
- Mc Is that right?
- C And he got hurt too. A bad knee.
- Mc Does it still bother him ?
- C Oh yes, terrible. As he gets older. Of course he's carrying too much weight. I don't know whether you know our son - - - he's so big ! He's the assessor.
- Mc Assessor for - - ?
- C Assessor for the Town of Ridgeway.
- Mc I see.
- C He has his office there in that new building, a nice place.(West Avenue, next to the Masonic Temple).
- Mc And the Medina Historical Society has moved into the old building.
- C Yes, yes.
- Mc That's right. But at least your son came back! My husband was in the service for three and a half years, and my brother was in for all of that time. Do you remember where you were when we first had V-E Day - - - at the end - -

no V-E Day, that was in June of '45.

C  
Mc  
C  
Mc  
C  
Mc  
C

I was home at the farm.  
But your son was in the South Pacific, still,  
so you probably were - -  
Well he was too young - -  
Your son was in the service.  
Yes.  
And when the war was over he came back.  
Yes.

.....

It should be noted here that Ann Richards  
(Mrs. Dick Richards) of the Gravel Road  
and a friend and neighbor of Mrs. Cotriss,  
participated in the pre-interview session  
with Helen McAllister.



TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO

C Well, we moved here the 28th of December, 1967.  
Mc This is from the West Scott Road down here  
to the Gravel Road ?  
C Yes. Well in the first place we bought the  
Elm Park.  
Mc You bought what ?  
C Bought Elm Park there, that place north of  
us.  
Mc Elm Park where everybody used to go for  
picnics ?  
C Yes. We bought that and had it one day because  
we sold the farm and did business the 7th day of  
July so then my husband - -  
Mc What year ?  
C '67. And my husband said: "Now I'm not a  
farmer any more, I'm going fishing." And so  
he came over to Goldsmith's here, that's our  
neighbor, and Mr. Goldsmith says: "Now that  
you've sold your farm what are you going to  
do ?" And I says: "Well we're going to start  
looking for a place we'd like to build but  
we'd like to build close by the son's place."  
You know our son's just down the road there.  
And he says: "I'll sell you this place." But  
he says: "You wouldn't pay me what I'm asking."  
And Ed says: "Well try me." And Mr. Goldsmith  
said he wanted \$12,000.00. And Ed said: "I'll  
take it." Well in them days, you know property  
wasn't what it is now. When Mr. Goldsmith told  
the family about it - - -you know, he has a  
daughter, I guess she's in town now,  
- - and then he  
has a son home - - and the kids fussed so and  
he's a good father, he felt he had to have a

home for them. So then he says: "I'll sell you this place, this hill here." But oh, this was rough country; oh my.

Mc           How much acreage is here ?

C           2.3 acres.

Mc           Why did you decide to sell the farm ?

C           Because we felt we couldn't work it, you know, and we had to depend on help too much too.

Mc           How about your dairy farm, had you sold that recently ?

C           Oh no, we sold that 25 years ago. I can remember the year, yeah, 25 years in February.

Mc           Do you remember who bought that ?

C           Oh yes, Dick Overholt.

We came and looked at this place and this was about eight feet higher than it is now. This was all taken down, this hill. And the minute I stepped up on the place I liked it. I thought: "I'm kind of close to Heaven." And one reason I like it too, it's far enough away from the road so we don't get that terrible noise and the smudge too. There's plenty of it comes but not as bad as it would if we were closer, and we're high and dry. We don't get one tablespoon of seepage in our cellar!

Mc           Wonderful. Over here you have - - - what is that ?

C           Just our lawn and that.

Mc           And then there's water in back of there.

C           Yes, creek.

Mc           Is that Oak Orchard ?

Mr.C        That's right.

Mc           Oak Orchard Creek.

C           You would be surprised how much fish are taken out of there now.

Mr.C        They're fishing out there now.

C           They are fishing today ?

Mr.C        Yes.

Mc           Do you go fishing now ?

- C No, Ed used to but he don't no more.
- Mc So you have the Gravel Road on one side and Oak Orchard Creek on the other.
- C This is valuable property, with the water.
- Mc Yes, I should imagine.
- C That's how I can have a garden. Would you believe it that I had 54 quarts of strawberries out of there last year ?
- Mc What do you do with them all ?
- C Oh, give them away and eat them; we eat them twice a day.
- Mc Do you freeze them ?
- C I don't like frozen strawberries - - I did freeze some but I don't like frozen strawberries.
- Mc They are apt to be mushy aren't they ?
- C Not if you know how to defrost them, you know just take them out say for a couple of hours - - just so that they have a little bit of frost in them and that way they'll stay firm. And I have the kind of - - - Sparkle is a freezing berry. Yeah, I had 54 quarts and I froze 16 Zip-Lock - - oh what size are they - - - bags of corn and put 103 quarts of pickles. Well they weren't all quarts either - - but they're not all for us. We don't eat pickles like that. For the kids and the grand-daughters.
- Mc You're close with your family.
- C Oh yes. I love my grand-daughters; oh I love those girls.
- Mr.C Barbara is an awful nice girl.
- C They're both - - well the mother yeah - - no daughter could be closer to us than she is; she's a wonderful person. You know Barbara?
- Mc Yes I know who she is.
- Barbara and Marcia are identical twins aren't they ?
- C You know their father couldn't tell them apart for years.
- Mc Is that right ?
- Now that we are coming to the close of this

interview I really appreciate everything that you have told us and I know that many people are going to enjoy reading the transcript and hearing all about this family. I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on the world today ?

Yes, I wonder why and I do think that there's going to be a big change of some kind. You know my grandmother, she couldn't read or write, but she could remember awfully well and she prophesied that at the end of 2000 there's going to be such violence and such a terrible war that there wouldn't be a stone on stone left. Well what have we got now: the atomic bomb, and did you ever see to much violence and unhappiness? And what I feel terrible about - - now who is to blame for all this vandalism in youth, the way they destroyed that cemetery there around Amherst or somewheres - - I think that is a - - they're even doing it right here at our little Sacred Heart Cemetery; they're pulling up geraniums from the urns and who is the blame, do you think for that ?

C

Mc

I think it's the frustration that so many people, young people and older people, have - - that they just strike out.

C

Well then me again, I feel that the parents - - - they're not with their families enough.

Mc

Families are not what they once were. So many families are breaking up.

C

And I think maybe that why - - as you say: that frustration comes from ~~that~~ where these families, because there are a lot of unhappy children from broken homes, and they'll go to any extent. But when they vandalize cemeteries. Now we went out last year and bought a new monument; we've got our bureau of lots in Sacred Heart Cemetery and we went out and bought a monument - - cost us over \$1000.00. Now I'd feel terrible if somebody went - -

cause this is big, they couldn't just take and turn it over - - but they could destroy it in other ways, you know, like chipping it and that. I'd feel terrible if they did any damage to it and I'm sure other people feel the same way; and I would like to get to the bottom of who is to blame for our youth.

Mc I think we all have to bear the blame, really, because of the way the world is. I think we all have to.

C And then you know when they are preaching this starvation in these countries, foreign countries, I do think that the government should do something about controlling the population.

Mc How would they do that ?

C Well they can do it because I think it's terrible to bring these children into this world and see them suffer and starve to death. And they can't look for our country to feed the whole world. I feel it's a wrong thing what they are doing with these Cubans; they're letting them in here, we didn't need that type of a population. We've got plenty of it right here in this country and here it is a hundred-thousand of them Cubans, and they are starting to make trouble all ready. They're unhappy because they thought we should hand them everything on a silver platter. I feel terrible about it; I think it's wrong, I think our politicians should wake up to the fact that we are in real trouble here.

Mc There are lots of problems.

How do you feel about neighbors today ? Do you feel that neighbors have changed - - - people have changed so that you don't have as many - - - you were talking earlier about dancing in the homes and parties in the homes; do you think as much goes on ?

C No not now, that's all done away with. But



I don't know - - we don't really have neighbors here no more because down here - - he's in the Infirmary - - they got married a year ago in April, then he had to go to the hospital to get a cataract removed from his eye and if he didn't go into a bad stroke! And so she's away all the time and these here people keep pretty much to themselves - - they are good neighbors, but they keep pretty much to themselves; the Mister doesn't hear and the boy, he keeps to himself.

Mc The people don't come calling as often as they once did, do you think ?

C They don't come calling at all!

Mc But you do have family around ?

C Oh yes and we are a close family, we're very close. But on the farm I had a neighbor there that I miss, and the poor woman she is in the hospital now and in a bad way. But she was a good neighbor. Now she used to come over and cry on my shoulder or something. She has no children and just her and her husband and they had a real life there because she's got a real good husband. And I miss her 'cause as I said she would come over and tell me her troubles. But she would never bother you like running over every day and borrowing or sitting around taking up your time; she wasn't that type of person, she was just a nice neighbor and I miss her, miss her very much.

Mc There's still an awful lot of good people around.

C Oh definitely and Mrs. Maines, she used to come down to the farm to get eggs, when I lived on Scott Road, and now she's in the Infirmary and she don't know what's going on in the world. She's Dr. Maines widow.

Mc Oh yes.

C I think there are a lot of good people.

Mc And your church is still very strong ?

C Oh yes.

Mc That's a beautiful church. I was at a wedding there last year, I think.

C Who's wedding ?

Mc Judy Potrubacz married - - is it Plumley?

Mr.C Yes.

Mc Plumley, yes. Judy and John.

C Was she married in a veil and white ?

Mc Yes she was. It was a lovely wedding. — —  
You have a lovely home here.

C It's just a modest home but it's good enough for us.

Mc It's all on one floor and I think this is very important. You said that you "bought" Elm Park. Do you still own what was Elm Park ?

Mr.C No.

Mc You only had that for one day you were saying; what do you mean ?

C We didn't put no deposit or anything like that.

Mc I see, you had it in name only.

C Yes and Mr. Goldsmith then told us about this lot and what do you think we paid for this lot ?

Mc Goodness, I have no idea.

C \$600.00.

Mc Oh my word !

C He's got a lot north of the house there and he's been offered \$5000.00 for it and he won't sell it. But I know this property and it's going to be sold before too long - - before too many years because when I get so that I can't take care of this place well we're not going to be here, that's all - - because Ed couldn't take care of it by himself.

Mc By the way, who built this house ?

C Well it was - - what was that name ?

Mc You mean Balcerzak didn't build it ?

C No they wouldn't. Frank said that every retirement home that he built the people

would die so he wouldn't built it; although he did us a lot of good, you know like this excavating and one thing or another - - he was awfully good to him, the whole family was. But the house is a package, it's a Barden Home package and the package is good. Joe Rich was at the head of it and Joe is a good enough man but, oh, I don't know, he's too easy.

Mc Well, it's a lovely home.

C I'm glad you like it. As I said, it's a modest little home. All I had was dollar signs in my eyes.

Mc That's right, it pays; but you have flowers and flowering trees and you have vegetables and fruit.

C And would you believe it that we've had our own peaches ? All but last year we didn't have any but every year - - our two peach trees - - one year we had four bushels and a half of peaches. And we got a cherry tree out there. He set it out into the bank. And, my God, that cherry tree - - I bet it's got a bushel and a half of cherries on it! I told the colored people yesterday, I says: "Them bees must have been working over-time." Because they say it takes bees to pollinate, but the weather was good and they were out and every blossom set. There really is too many on because they're going to be small. Last year they were nice and big.

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The interview was conducted by Helen McAllister of Medina, N.Y. Mrs. Ann Richards of Gravel Road, Medina assisted with the pre-interview of Mrs. Cotriss.

Transcribed by Lysbeth Hoffman of Waterport, New York. The initial copy was examined by Mrs. Cotriss and she made several additions and several deletions. Final editing and compilation by Helen McAllister. Pictures are courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Cotriss.