

Preserving the Past

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Under the Direction of Deann Sanner, Committee Chairman

Interviews of the Senior Members of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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*Walter Wiegand was interviewed by his daughter, Alice Schneider, at a later date.

*K. Eleanora Fry submitted this article for publication in our August, 2000 Newsletter.

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by Celia Sarver

First Interview as told by Celia Sarver at her daughter's home in Natrona Heights.

My maiden name was Kuhnert. I'm the only one left of ten children. None of them lived as long as I have--2 boys and 7 sisters. I was next to the last. I had one sister younger. She passed away 3 years ago. I had a lot of nephews and nieces, but not too many any more.

In 1914 I got married. I was married at home in Natrona by Rev. Amschler of St. John's Lutheran Church. We had a dinner at 6 o'clock and then about 11 o'clock we went by train to Freeport. I always did say we had such a LONG honeymoon. We went from Natrona to Freeport. We lived in Freeport a few years and then we decided to go back to Natrona. We lived in Natrona in a double house.

Ferd was always great for having rabbits. We had a yard in the back and we had rabbits in pens and when we moved, we had a big wagon with 2 horses and they put our furniture on and then piled those rabbit hutches up on top. Ha--it was like 'Tobacco Road'! Oh, he had rabbits for a long time out in the country.

Ferd worked night-turn in the West Penn Mill 13 hours a day and he was getting fed up with that at night (it was a steel mill). He decided he wanted to move to the country. So we had saved \$450 and he knew about this place in Sarver. It belonged to Mr. Wilkewitz. We bought 6 acres from him. Mr. Wilkewitz was pretty old then. He lived in Sarver. He owned this land that was about 1/2 mile from Sarver. So then after a couple of years, Ferd decided he wanted to build a house out there. He got Mr. Montgomery to build a house. It didn't amount to much I'll tell you! Then we were supposed to move out there, after the house was supposed to be finished. But it wasn't finished inside, and it wasn't finished outside--not very good. And so Ferd went out to the house and I stayed in Natrona two days. I had Bernie my oldest daughter, who was 4 years at that time and Betty who was 6 months old. So he came to Monroe. There was not a station there. There was a small building that you could go into if it was raining. It was about 1-1/2 miles out to our house. We had a man to take the furniture up before and oh my golly, it was a mess! The floor had plaster on it and you know what that was like! Start cleaning right away. But the land was really built up. Mr. Wilkewitz had manure sent in by car load. It was really good land then and of course it was real warm. We moved out there in May.

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I'll tell you when we first moved out there we didn't have much and he would go to the farmers and help out there and wherever he could make a dollar or not even that. Sometimes a piece of meat or some eggs or something. I got tired of that and I said, "You ought to go down to the mill to get a job." So he went down there 3 or 4 times and then Mr. Caplow who lived above us saw Ferd there and he said, "You ought to give that man a job. He has a family". Mr. Caplow had a real good job in the mill. Before that, Ferd worked at West Penn Cement back at Winfield and when they build Monroe road he worked for the state building that road. Then for a long time he worked at what was the Hillville Coal Mine in Sarver. He had charge of motors that brought the water out of the mine.

So after several years we joined St. Matthew's church on Wetzel Road. Rev. Fetterly was the Pastor and he had three churches--St. Luke's in Saxonburg, St. Paul's and St. Matthew's. Well we joined St. Matthew's then. Ferd had told me that they didn't have church very regularly there, maybe once a month. I don't know. They would ring the church bell when there was going to be church. They usually had it every two weeks. Later on, of course, then you knew because the Pastor would give it out. Well Rev. Fetterly was pastor in those three churches for 25 years, and we had programs up there at children's service, Christmas, and Easter, and that church would be full. You'd wonder...out there. It was pretty hard to get to in the winter. And what was it Rev. Fetterly said? -- "St. Luke's was the church in the village, St. Paul's was the church on the hill, and St. Matthew's was the church in the mud"!

We really did enjoy the programs they had there. We were just talking about all the young fellows that came out to practice. There must have been about six or eight. Walter Wiegand and his brother were some. We always had a pretty good program and the church would be full. There was a balcony in the back and I remember one Christmas service I went up there and sang Silent Night. I don't know why I was told to go up there. I did it anyway.

And you know I can't remember what year we did join St. Paul's. There were several from St. Matthews who joined the Sunday we did. There must have been at least eight.

The church had gone down so far that at times there were only three there. At one time (Ferd was a janitor up there) you had to take your own kindling wood to start the fire. They had two big potbellied stoves. There were two aisles, one stove was on one side and one was on the other. You had to go to the coal shed and get coal in the coal bucket and usually you could put about a bucket of coal in one of those fires and it would last through the service.

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When Rev. Fetterly was going to retire, St. Paul's was going to have a dinner for him and they really had a nice turkey dinner. Mrs. Colwell and my self were supposed to decorate the speaker's table. So we thought we had it fixed up pretty nice. We had place cards. Betty, that's my daughter, drew a little church on each one of those place cards to try to make it look like St. Paul's, and I know I put the names on the place cards. I believe the council men and their wives also sat at the speaker's table. Elvia Heim stuffed the turkeys and they had electric roasters. The whole basement was full.

Then Rev. Oney came as supply pastor from Zelienople. He came several Sundays to preach. He was a little man. Some used to say when he stood up front, part of his feet would be out over the step and they were afraid he was going to fall off. He had little feet.

Rev. Ortner was the pastor at St. Matthew's before Rev. Fetterly. When he was at St. Matthew's, the women decided to have a dinner for him. They had it at Mr. and Mrs. George Wiegand's. That was Walter's home and they lived on a farm. So they had this dinner and the table was set up in the dining room. There were quite a lot of children there that day. They took an offering for Rev. Ortner. They wanted to surprise him, and they put it under his upside down plate. All the women were watching while he had prayer and they told him to turn his plate over, and what they got was \$40 and at that time we thought that was a big amount and he was really surprised. He was a real young man just out of seminary. He was engaged. After about 4 years being there, he did get married and they had a baby girl and then a boy.

Up at St. Matthew's when we had the children's service, we would have to get lined up outside and march and process in. That was a big event. At that time, they had gas lights and they were on the wall. All those mantles would be breaking. Then at Christmas time we'd have a real big tree and then have candles on it. They had a bucket with water in and I don't know what they had on this big long stick. If the tree would have caught on fire, they would have to put it out.

During the summer, they usually had a lawn fete or social or festival. They had no basement in that church. *But it was a big church and the ceiling was way up went up a lot higher than St. Paul's. And the bell was up there. And after the church closed, they gave the bell to St. Paul's. It was a real heavy bell and they couldn't put it up in that belfry until it was reinforced.*

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On the side of the church, there was a yard and they would have a summer festival. They would sell wieners and put a counter the whole length of the church. The hot plates were put behind the counter. They had the gas there. They could operate a two burner gas plate. They would have a hose out the window to the hot plate to get the gas. So they would make coffee and get the wieners hot in water and then another. Mrs. Wiegand would brown them in a big skillet and sell them that way. Everyone would bring a cake if they could. They had canteloupe with ice cream--they were called "Boston Coolers." They got a quarter for half a canteloupe piled high with ice cream. Someone would have to go to Butler to Rick's Junket and get ice cream at the last minute so it wouldn't be melted. That's how they made money for the church. All Rev. Fetterly's salary, if I'm correct was \$400 a year. And when we were janitors, we got \$50 a year. I guess we needed the \$50.

I was in the choir and sang a lot of funerals. I even sang at funerals when I belonged to the church in Natrona. We even sang at the graveside. Mrs. Sell and I sang at a lot of funerals. She was Laura Krumpe's mother, Mary. Mrs. Charlie Wiegand, that was Walter's dad's brother, wanted me to sing at her sister's funeral in German. So I did. I learned three verses in German. And there was a man afterward who came up to me and he told me "I could tell every word you sang." So I guess it wasn't too bad. My parents were German. My father came from Lysig, Prussia. My mother was born in Natrona.

You know in Sarverville, when you come down the hill toward the intersection, there's a yellow house that sits to the right at the corner. That's the house Ferd was born in. It used to be where Mr. Walter's house is but they moved it up around the corner. It originally faced the main highway. His people were some of the first people in Sarverville. And how I met him -- Myrtle McCafferty was a high school teacher in Natrona when I went to high school and she would take us up to Buffalo Presbyterian Church. We would have little skits and programs and that's how Ferd and I met. Myrtle lived on a farm not far from St. Paul's.

(The Ladies Guild would like to thank Celia for sharing her memories with us.)

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by Bernice Sontum

Hillville Mine

To get to the mine, you go from the Buffalo Township fire hall toward the school where there is a curve in the road. That mine was right down over the hill. It was a slope mine.

Ferd, my Dad, took me in there one time. He had to go out on Sunday's and go in and check these pumps that pump the water out so that it would be ready for the men on Monday morning. And I was always bellyaching about going with him. He took me out with him and I wanted to go in the mine. You had to walk because it was a slope mine. You walked back, and we were walking and walking, and every once in a while, we had to go through water and I was scared to death. It was so dark! All he had was that little light on his head and he didn't give me a light. He could have fallen and his would have gone out and we would have been stranded in there. When I think of it now I get petrified. We walked, and after a while he told me that we were under where the school was. Then it was called Kelly School. In a little bit, we could hear a couple of men talking and OH-H-H I was scared to death! They went in there and they were in there doing some drilling of coal so they could get a couple of carloads out real fast in the morning. They weren't allowed to do that. They got paid by the number of cars that went out.

The mine would close down in the summer because nobody was needing coal and they would haul the carloads out of the mine with a big pony. So Dad would bring the pony over to our place and let it eat grass all summer long.

We had hay up on the hill where the evergreens are now and Dad cut it. We were wanting to go to Natrona to see a parade. I don't know if it was the Fourth of July or not. My aunt was there and so I said, "I'll hitch up Dick the pony" (and I'm only a little kid). Well Dad told us we couldn't go to see the parade till we got the hay in. So we decided this morning, while he was working somewhere, that we were going to haul that hay in (my aunt and I). I went over and I got part of the harness on the pony and then I brought him over a little bit toward the house and I was going to finish putting the harness on him. And when I went to throw the harness on him, he started to rear up on his back legs and paw with his front ones and my mother said (she was standing on the back porch), "Take him back! Take him back! Take him back!" And then I got scared and did take him over and take the harness off him. So when my dad did come home, we told him that we wanted to surprise him. We wanted to have all that hay hauled in. But Dick would not cooperate. We told about trying to put the harness on him. Dad kind of just smiled to himself and said, "We'll get it in." When he put the harness on him and when he got him hitched,

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old Dick reared up on his back legs. Dad picked up a board and hit him over the rump. He went the rest of the evening and never quit. We got the hay hauled in and went.

My Dad said that every time a new driver had that pony in the mine, instead of rearing up in the mine, the driver would get him back and hitch him up to a load of cars to pull it out and the pony would lay down. The driver would walk clear out of the mine and say, "The pony's sick." And Dad would say, "No, he's not sick, we'll just hit him with a board." He would be all right the rest of the day.

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by Clara Smith Falkner

While I was visiting with Ferd and Celie Sarver shortly before Ferd's death, Ferd told me the story of the day I was born. December 9, 1911 was a bitter cold morning. So cold that the horses were white with frost. Ferd had been sent to the Sarver Station to call Dr. Rodgers from Freeport. The doctor arrived on the train and Ferd brought him to the house, which still stands today on Monroe Road in Sarver.

Like many other children of this area, I grew up on a farm. As children, we did not have all the toys that kids have today, but what we did have was fun. We would make skinny sticks and bat a tin can around the yard or roll barrels down the hills. Of course, we always had pets with which to play--dogs, cats, etc.; but the best of all was that we had each other. We were a close family. My mother in her spare time liked to play with her children. My dad was a very quiet man, kind, and warm and not much of a conversationalist.

Oil lamps burned in our house until they found gas on our farm, then we progressed to having gas lights. Then a couple of years later they brought electricity to our area and the Smith household went electric.

We always had to carry our wash water up the hill from a spring because our water at the house was so rusty that it turned the clothes yellow. My dad never liked to carry water, so when he would go to the bucket for a drink and find it empty he wasn't thirsty anymore.

All the children went to Knob School. To get there we had to walk no matter what the weather was like outside. Our school had eight grades in one room with one teacher. There would be a different teacher almost every year. If you wanted to go to high school, you would have to walk to the train station and take a train to either Butler, Cabot, or Freeport. I went to what was called the Academy in Cabot. I did not attend very long as my mother was not well, so I had to quit to look after her and the housework.

On February 17, 1932, I was married to Harold Falkner. We were married in the parsonage at Saxonburg by Pastor Donald Fetterly. We have two children--Marilene and H. John, Jr.; both still live in the Sarver area.

Harold helped to haul the seats from St. Mark's Church in Butler to St. Paul's when the church was remodeled. He also helped lay the floor, build the tower and helped put the bell in the belfry. He also put the concrete walk in.

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The belfry was built in 1953 and Harold's dream was to have chimes put in the belfry. He was a councilman at the time of his death in 1954. Harold was a fireman and died fighting a fire at the home of Henry Berg.

I've been a part time organist since 1948. There were three organists at that time. Mrs. Lillian Cogley, Irma Shearer and myself. I took five piano lessons and seven organ lessons. At that time Irma Shearer and I were the only two available to help and had it not been for Pastor Fetterly and Ralph Stobert, I doubt if I ever would have touched the organ. Irma and I were constant companions, she helped me and I her. She and Bill were like our own kids.

At one time, all the hymn books didn't have the music, just the words. The organist's book had both words and music. In choosing hymns, I always try to pick at least one hymn the congregation knows. When Pastor LaFontaine was here, he would always choose the hymns and not all were very familiar. I usually spend between four to six hours per week at church practicing if I can, including Sunday morning.

We've had quite a few organists through the years. Mrs. Charles Sauter, Bertha Martins, Bernice Falkner Nauman, Lucille Nixon, Olive Mochel Gaulding, Lillian Cogley, Ruth Garbrick, Marilene Falkner Kradel, Delores Bicker, Nancy Sanner Murphy, Nancy McFarland Ruser, Irma Falkner Shearer, Diane Henkel, and myself. There were more before that time, I'm sure.

I was baptized at St. Paul's by Herbert Martins and confirmed by Elmer Ortner. *At one time my mother had a book with the entire history of St. Paul's from the beginning when people met in the different homes.*

I also worked at DuCo Ceramics for almost 15 years -- 1964-1979. I like to quilt and have made quite a few. I have a scrap book of almost all my quilts I have made in recent years. When I have a quilt in the frame, I spend all hours of the day and night quilting. I have the quilting frame my Grandfather Duerr made for my Grandmother before they were married and that's way over 100 years ago and it's still in good working condition. I added a brace here and there.

I think in all, I've had a pretty normal life, nothing too exciting as far as the world goes. There have been a lot of heartaches and discouragements galore, but God has blessed me and through faith, friends and especially prayer, I'm a more patient, sympathetic, warm, quiet, understanding person. Thank you for letting me tell about a small but important part of my life.

PRESERVING THE PAST
by Alfred Smith

I was born in 1905, that makes me 81 years this year. A lot has happened in that time. My parents came from here. My mother's name was Duerr. This farm belonged to my grandparents (Duerr). My parents lived on a farm over on Monroe Road. I was born over there. Dr. Rodgers from Freeport delivered me. Things were a little different then; the doctor would walk out here and deliver a baby for five dollars. I was just a baby when we moved over here. We got this farm when my grandparents passed away.

I have three sisters; Elivia Heim, Clara Falkner, and Mazie Sarver. And I have a brother, Tilmer. My mother died in 1960; she died here at home. My sisters came in the morning and bathed her and I took care of her the rest of the time. I was the only one here. There's a lot of work with that. She was in bed six years--three years steady. She was 86 when she died.

My dad farmed and I always farmed. I was township supervisor for four years. About ten years ago we used to have cows and chickens. We had milk cows; milked them twice a day. At one time, we had a milk, egg, butter, and vegetable route in Natrona. We served between 40-50 customers. We took buttermilk in five and ten gallon milk cans and sold it for 10 cents a half gallon. Butter sold for between 25 cents and 50 cents a pound. Eggs sold for 30 cents a dozen. For measuring milk, we used a quart and half gallon container and just poured milk into the customer's milk pitchers or small buckets. We also sold potatoes and apples. In summer we always sold excess garden vegetables.

In the winter and summer, we used a team of horses and a spring wagon to haul produce to market. Much later we bought a Model T Ford Truck with side curtains that could be rolled down in bad weather which made the trip much faster.

We sold milk to Cramers Dairy. We milked 15 or 16 cows. There's 64 acres here. We had fruit trees but they're all gone now. We grew oats, wheat, and corn. We did our own threshing, used to be a little different though. Used to have what they call a chaff piler. Used to use a flail. You flail the grain off, pick it up, and blow the chaff out of it. Then we got a binder. We worked with horses then and the horses pulled the binders. Then we got a tractor. I done all the work around here for everybody combining. Helped fill silos towards Fall. The wheat was ready first then oats and whatever else. Then filled silos after that. We'd have 10-12 men to help. We'd all eat here in the kitchen. Mother made her own bread and pies (we couldn't get along without a pie). We had to get up at 5 in the morning to do the work. Everyday was the same. After we did the milking, we washed up and came in and got our breakfast. We did a lot of work here. We had stainless steel milker and tanks that had to be washed up every day, every time you used them. In the winter time, the cattle were in the barn and the barn had to be cleaned out