

**SAN PIERRE REVITALIZATION PROJECT**  
**ORAL HISTORY**

ST: Sarah Tannehill, interviewer

GJ: Germaine Jones, interviewee

ST: *This is Sarah Tannehill with the oral history portion of the San Pierre Revitalization Project, and I'm here in the home of Germaine Jones. It is the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2007, and I'm interviewing Germaine on her memories of San Pierre... Do you want to come a little closer?*

GJ: [laughter] I'm just not too... I remember a lot of stuff, but...

ST: *That's great. That's what we want! So do you want to start with the names of your parents and your full name?*

GJ: Yeah, well, I'm Germaine Jones... Germaine Laverne Jones... and I'm the youngest of four children of Mathilda and John Will. I was born on November the 12<sup>th</sup> 1924. My sister's name was Edna, Mildred, and Edward, and Edna being the oldest; and she lives here in San Pierre, yet, she's 90 years old. So she can remember a little bit more than I, but she's not... can't converse very well. And my one brother is dead. And the place I was born was out... well we always called it the county line between Tefft and San Pierre, and it was out on the farm, of course, and then... very humble circumstances, but I mean it was that time, in 1924, why, it was just before the Depression and that. My grandparents were of German descent. They came from Germany, my great-grandparents, and how long have I been a resident? Well... all but about three years, during the war [when] I went to Detroit and worked, and otherwise, like I say, I was born and raised, graduated from San Pierre, and then I went to Detroit for about three years, and my husband-to-be came home from the service in 1943, '42... I guess, someplace in there... and he umm... in fact, that's him right there [laughter, points to photograph].

ST: *Oh, handsome! Very handsome.*

GJ: And he... when he got home from overseas we got married within two weeks after he got home.

ST: *Wow.*

GJ: Well, we knew each other before, you know.

ST: *I know. It wasn't an overnight thing.*

GJ: Yeah. And, in fact, when he was overseas he sent me a hundred dollars. He says, "You get your own engagement ring!" [laughter]

ST: *[laughter] So efficient!*

GJ: Yeah!

ST: *And his name?*

GJ: Is Charles Jones... Charles R. Jones. And, gee, I don't know, he... we got married, and then after that, why, we were out in the country for just a year or two, and then we moved to what was the apartments there on 421... Mary Helen lived there for a while, too, I remember; and her and John had just barely gotten married. And then from that we built this house—Chuck and I built this house, and we've lived here for 50-some years now.

ST: *Can I just go back for one second?*

GJ: Sure.

ST: *I don't think you mentioned where you were born.*

GJ: Oh, I was born on a county line between San Pierre and Tefft.

ST: *At home?*

GJ: At home, yeah.

ST: *At home, okay. Maybe I missed that.*

GJ: Yeah, those days, most everybody was born at home. [laughter] So I consider myself a fairly lifelong resident of San Pierre, because I've lived here all my life, and went to school here, and was confirmed in the church here, and everything.

ST: *And which church was that?*

GJ: St. Luke United Church of Christ. What else was there? Yeah, I was raised in San Pierre. And some of the events I remember—before I even went to school, I remember voting. It was in where Jeanette Wobith's folks lived—Pete and Anastasia? They lived in the building there... they lived above, and the voting machines were down below, but that was where the... let's see, what's there now. I think it's where the drive in to the old bank used to be... that's where that was located. I got a picture of it someplace here. I got all kinds of pictures.

ST: *Someday we'll have to look at your pictures, 'cause I think they may be useful down the road, too.*

GJ: There was the voting machines in there, and I can remember one November, why, my folks, of course, they believed in voting, and so I came along to town with 'em, and of course, I couldn't go in, 'cause I was too small at that time... they was pretty particular about those kind of things. And the snow was a-blowin', by they time they come out there was about eight inches of snow and that old Pontiac we had was just a-rockin' [laughter]. I thought, oh, we'll never get home, but we did. And of course the other events they had was the free shows that they had here in town.

ST: *Which were at the baseball diamond?*

GJ: Yeah, un-huh. It was... that was when they had a few of those silent movies yet. Of course, Decoration Day [Memorial Day] we'd always start at the schoolhouse and march to the cemetery, and the band and stuff.

ST: *I'm curious, what did they project the movies onto?*

GJ: They had a... I don't know if it was a white sheet or what it was. It was just sitting out there in the ball diamond.

ST: *Making our own amusements.*

GJ: Well, it was... of course, about that age I was getting a little interested in boys, you know, and of course that was the main...

ST: *... social event.*

GJ: Yeah. It was fun. It was... Before that, it was all school activities, you know, we had. The one thing that the kids missed out on when they went to school was when we were in the grades, why, the last day of school they'd have a big picnic, and in the hall downstairs they'd have a big long table and everyone would bring a dish. And of course, nowadays, why, it's too unsanitary for that kind of stuff, you know. [laughter]

ST: *Yeah. It's interesting though, nobody really... died... from those picnics... or even got sick!*

GJ: That's right, that's right! [laughter] You shooed away the flies, and... of course you had the big bonfire at Halloween, and everybody dressed up, even adults dressed up, and the kids and that.

ST: *So did you dress up as an adult?*

GJ: No, my husband did though, a couple times. He went as a Purple People Eater. [laughter] It was fun, it was interesting. But those days you could leave your kids walk out on the

street—in fact I walked to town on the sand roads and on the railroad tracks many, many times. You could just leave ‘em, where today you can’t do that.

ST: *Even here?*

GJ: Yeah, even here. Even here it’s iffy. And you never used to lock your houses or your cars or anything, and now you better lock ‘em... even here.

ST: *So you mentioned walking to town on railroad tracks or sand roads; about how long a walk was that?*

GJ: Oh, about two and a half miles. It didn’t bother me. A lot of time the kids from town’d walk back with ya, and, I mean, if your parents couldn’t bring ya, if they were out in the fields and stuff, why, you just walked to town to get to the different functions. So to us it was fun. You didn’t think anything of it!

ST: *Walking wasn’t work!*

GJ: Well, it depends on what you had to do if it was work or not.

ST: *Sure, of course. What kinds of things other than the fun things of walking to town, what kinds of things did you do as a child? Did you have chores?*

GJ: Oh, sure. You always come home from school, get off the school bus, you change your clothes, then you went out and did your chores with different farm animals, you know, or you had to weed the garden... there was always something to do.

ST: *Oh, on a farm there’s always something to do.*

GJ: Yeah, always something to do, yeah.

ST: *Well, what kinds of things were you responsible for? Feeding the animals?*

GJ: Oh, most anything, I mean... gathering the eggs, and all that kind of stuff. And then of course after you got done with that you did your schoolwork, and... we didn't have electricity out there until about 1940... oh, gosh... '42? '41? 1940-something like that. And this farm... I think it was REMC or something like that... came through... boy, that first year we had lights on our Christmas tree, we didn't have the candles, and that was really... and we had a refrigerator, and that was living!

ST: *Oh, yeah! Refrigerators have a lot to recommend them!*

GJ: I always enjoyed coming to town because they had electric in town, and it was just... different, you know. Another thing I remember I was going to mention in town here, was I can remember when it was Kingman's store—it's the post office now—and Kingman had a store there, and he had one single, lone gas pump, and I was just a little girl, and I can remember that... and I've got a picture of that someplace, too!

ST: *Do you have a lot of pictures of like areas of the town; like buildings that aren't there anymore?*

GJ: Oh, yeah!

ST: *See, that would be so valuable to us down the road. I hope that sometime we can go through some things, because I know there are a lot of things even that I remember that aren't here anymore.*

GJ: Oh, I've got a picture of... well, let's see, I've got some here, but not a lot [starts searching].

ST: *You don't have to do it now, I'm just mentioning it.*

GJ: Oh, I've got scads of stuff I found in newspapers when Falvey's old store was... I don't know if you knew where that was at.

ST: *I know where it was, yeah. I don't think it was ever Falvey's when I was there, but...*

GJ: Yeah, it was probably maybe Mussel's or maybe it was Woosley's Antique Shop. [Shows newspaper ad] Well, this was quite a while before then.

ST: *You can tell by the type.*

GJ: Of course you've seen those pictures of Mary Helen.

ST: *Oh you've got some out! I didn't realize that. That's nice. And you're in this picture? Which one are you?*

GJ: Oh, gosh.

ST: *[Pointing to picture] That looks like a McCauley.*

GJ: That's Shirley, un-huh. [Germaine points to different girls in photo] She was from Grovertown, I think; that's me; and that's Mary.

ST: *Wow! Weren't you something!?*

GJ: Oh, gosh, we sure were!

ST: *Those are great costumes; I love it!*

GJ: [Laughter]

ST: *Oh, and here on newspaper clippings!*

GJ: Yeah, we went to Michigan on that one.

ST: *Oh, that is wonderful; you've really saved some nice things...oh, and the old high school! That's beautiful!*

GJ: And here's one time we went to Chicago at the Soldier's Field to the music festival there.

ST: *Wow, 1941!*

GJ: See now to me, that's not old! [laughter]

ST: *I know. To me, the '60s aren't old.*

GJ: [Pointing] Yeah. Mary Helen's on there too, someplace. That's Shirley; that's me; there's Mary Helen, and the instructor. You probably saw that. She's probably got one of those too, someplace.

ST: *I don't know that I've ever seen this. So do you happen to know if you have a picture of the original Dolezals store anywhere? And you don't have to look for it, but I'm just curious.*

GJ: I've got... no, it isn't either. This is the depot.

ST: *Oh!*

GJ: I remember gettin' on a train going... I went to Kankakee; and we called it the Doodlebug! [laughter] But they had passenger trains here that went from Lafayette clear to Michigan City, and I think it was the New York Central then... No, the New York Central went this way, from Tefft, and that way, into Judson; and the Monon went from Monon on into [Michigan City]...

ST: *Can we pause just a second so I can check and make sure that [we're recordin]g?*  
*[Pause]*

GJ: We've got pictures of that, too, someplace. It was one of the first grade classes standing in front of it, you know.

ST: *[Looking at another photograph of school] Oh, so this was where the new school... or the original school that housed all of the grades?*

GJ: No.

*ST: This was just grade school?*

GJ: Yeah, I think so. No, I don't remember... but that picture would tell what I've got. But that burnt down... oh, I would say... my sister said it burnt the year she was gonna start first grade, 'cause then they had to go to school in different churches, and they had different classes, and different houses and stuff, until they built this school that was over here then—the high school

*ST: So this school was located where the Catholic Church is now?*

GJ: Next to it. Even next to the hall, where there's big cement slabs out there; that's where it was located.

*ST: Any other events, or traditions, or festivals that you remember?*

GJ: Well, we wasn't too much into festivals. Even before me they used to have a lot of festivals, stuff like that, I can... according to the newspapers there was all kinds of stuff going on. And one article, I can remember reading it, the Monon train was carrying a whole load of chickens, I guess, and it caught on fire, and everybody came to let the chickens out, and, of course, they said then everybody had chicken for Sunday dinner! [laughter] Oh, those articles are so funny in the newspaper; you go back that far, they're really strange!

*ST: And what was the newspaper?*

GJ: The North Judson News.

*ST: And that's still around today?*

GJ: Yeah. I don't know what they've done with the originals anymore, but I went a long, long time, and looked, and it tells about different things that happened... [shows article]

ST: *Ha! [Reads] The Dairy Special—A fair-sized crowd greeted the Dairy Special at San Pierre last Thursday, shortly after noon. Special was run under the auspices of the Purdue Experiment Station and the State Dairy Association. A special train was furnished and equipped by the Monon Railroad at a cost of \$250 per day. [laughter] They spend that much now in the first hour!*

GJ: Right!

ST: *[Continues reading] The work of the Special was counted a success by all who took part in the furthering of the great dairy interests of our state. Wow.*

GJ: And it tells in another place about convicts escaping in San Pierre from the train. [laughter]

ST: *Oh, really! Not on here... it's another article that you saw?*

GJ: Another article, yeah. But I... see, that was even before my time. They must have had a lot of stuff. I know they had a baseball team, they had a town band—I've got a picture of that—and, it isn't the band as we know it; I think everybody played trumpets or something! [laughter] Or all tubas.

ST: *All tubas?*

GJ: Yeah, it was brass alright! They must have had a lot going on, because they had an opera house here in town; they had a millinery shop—I've got pictures of that; and they had a drugstore—Green's drugstore in town—I think that was next to the old Dolezals store, I think; I'm not sure. But that's all gone now... a lot of it is.

ST: *But it would be really sweet to have pictures that people who never saw that could see! Because a lot of what you're talking about was gone even before I was a child, so it would be a treat for me, but even just to see the old, original Dolezals store would be a treat, because I remember that.*

GJ: It was on a postcard! And I know I got the postcards here, but what happened to them, I don't know.

ST: *That's okay. They can't see them on the tape anyway.*

GJ: I've got a sequence of the oldest store, and then I've got another postcard of when it was remodeled and they had the side door that went into there; and they had an upstairs... I can remember going upstairs once or twice on the stairway. I remember the store real well. And then, of course, they built the new one; and then this last one that burnt. There's been about four Dolezals stores.

ST: *And there was a postcard that showed each one?*

GJ: Yeah.

ST: *Oh, that's interesting; I've never seen that... Okay, well, I'm going to go on to number 7, and ask about your educational background.*

GJ: Well, I went to high school here at San Pierre from first grade right on. Mrs. Richardson was my teacher then.

ST: *Mine too.*

GJ: Really?! She taught a lot of kids.

ST: *Apparently.*

GJ: And of course, Mrs. Richardson. Yeah, I was educated here in San Pierre, and proud of it! But I never went on to college or anything, because... that was during the war then, like I say, World War II, and I worked for the war effort. But it was a good education. I think it was a lot better than a lot of it is now. Not that I want to downgrade anything, but actually the kids now don't get the camaraderie. I think they've lost a lot in their... being in different things and being in competition. Now if you don't have a high grade or aren't

an “oddball” in school, let’s say, you don’t get to be into anything. But those days, everybody either was on a basketball team or did something.

*ST: Yeah. So you’re saying... are you saying that the competitiveness now has eliminated some people, or...*

*GJ: To a certain extent.*

*ST: Okay. I wasn’t sure if you were making a claim that competitiveness was a good thing or a bad thing.*

*GJ: No. It was a good thing as far as I’m concerned; because it taught you different factions; I mean it taught you both sides. And if you didn’t make a good grade, you weren’t put down; you weren’t put in a...*

*ST: A special class?*

*GJ: A special class, stuff like that. You went to school, you did what you could do, you did your best, and that was it.*

*ST: But the class wasn’t broken up into the smart guys and the not-so-smart, gotcha.*

*GJ: [Laughter]*

*ST: Okay. I’m gonna ask you to come a little closer again.*

*GJ: Okay. [Adjusts shoes for warmth]*

*ST: So any other members of your family go to college?*

*GJ: Oh yeah, except my brother; when he got out of the service he went back to the family farm—he took over the family farm. But my other two sisters, Edna, she was a nurse; and my sister, Mildred, she went to business college in Kankakee, and she was... she was up*

in the Sears Tower for quite awhile, with the... one of the vice presidents of Sears or something. We all did pretty good for a little...

*ST: A small town?*

GJ: Of course, my parents, they did farming for a living, you know.

*ST: And that's all they ever did.*

GJ: That's all they ever did.

*ST: Did they get to retire at a certain point?*

GJ: No... well, my dad did; but my mother, she died fairly young. But otherwise, they all retired from the farm.

*ST: How old were you when your mother died?*

GJ: Oh, gosh! See I was just married at about 1940... I don't remember that far back anymore.

*ST: But it was when you were a young girl?*

GJ: Yeah, about 1945. 1945. Maybe it was '47.

*ST: Was it right after the war, maybe?*

GJ: Yeah. 1947, I think, she died. And she died fairly young, considering now the people live to be 100. I don't ever expect to, but then [laughter]...

*ST: Would you like to?*

GJ: Not really! If I was able and everything... if I was in good health, it'd be different. But when your down and susceptible, I think, what's the use? Why live that long? It's

interesting, though, considering what I saw when I was younger; the first airplane I ever saw—boy, did we run out in the yard and look, and watch that thing! [laughter] And the world's changed an awful lot.

ST: *An awful lot. You've seen a whole lot of change.*

GJ: A lot of change. I didn't see a horse and buggy, but I saw some of the first cars that were out, and they've changed. We had an old Model T Ford, and it had the side flaps on it, and it was... it was interesting.

ST: *I don't want to go too far away from this, but I'm noticing those books in that little room there... [points to oversized, leger-type, antique-looking books] What are those books?*

GJ: That's where I get a lot of material, but they're from the other county, but they had a San Pierre column in it, and it's for the Kankakee Valley Newspaper. See, they were even started... well, one person got some, that was is 1895, and they had a San Pierre column in that, even, all those years. And Tefft, of course.

ST: *How did you come by those books?*

GJ: Well, we went to an auction in Roselawn, and—my husband and I loved auctions, we always went to them—and we went to it, and they had a wagon out there, and they had about, oh, about 25 of these books out there, laying out there. And so I started bidding on them, and another fellow started bidding on them, and then there was another person that bid on 'em. And she wanted just one book. Well, we went up pretty high to get it, and this other fellow says, "You know, I'd like to have all of 'em, but I can't afford to pay for all of 'em." And I says, "Well, I'll split with ya, and then we'll exchange books." And that's what we did! And it turned out that he was looking for the same thing that I was as far as the family tree is concerned.

ST: *So those books must be a goldmine, too... of information!*

GJ: Oh, yeah, they are; they are. It takes a while to get through 'em, 'cause they're such fine print. Each book is one year of newspapers.

ST: *Oh! And I'm just going to describe them for the tape: They're about two feet long, it looks like, by maybe a foot and a half wide, and some of them are an inch thick, and some are more like an inch and a half; and you can tell, very old—they've been around a long time. The bindings are...*

GJ: I think I've got one or two that's 1895 or later, and then most of 'em are all 1909, or 1905. It's interesting! In fact, that's where I got that one Falvey ad from.

ST: *I'm sure the advertising from those periods must be really fascinating, and provide some historical content.*

GJ: Oh yeah, it's quite interesting.

ST: *What kept you here?*

GJ: Well, mostly it was when my husband come home, he worked up in Gary. And he'd come home and he'd say, "You know, I'd like to live out here." 'Cause I thought, a lot of times, let's just move up there, 'cause he drove back and forth every day. And he said, "No, if we're gonna have a family we're gonna raise 'em out here in the country," he says, "I don't want my kids raised up in Gary or in the city." And to this day, I'll go up and see my daughter and that, and I just... the city just bothers me, I don't know. It's nice to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there. [laughter]

ST: *Where does she live?*

GJ: She lives in LaGrange, Illinois. So that's what we did, we raised our family out here in the country; we never did live in town.

ST: *And is it the quietness; back then, the relative safety?*

GJ: Yeah, it's the quietness. And there, your house—some houses are only a foot and a half from each other. Yeah, I like my wide-open spaces.

*ST: How would you talk about the roles of men and women in this town?*

*GJ: Oh, gosh, I don't know!*

*ST: I mean, do you see a difference in what was expected of women, or...?*

*GJ: I don't think you see it out here as much as you do in a more... corporation town. I think the women probably are more concerned about the kids than some of the men are. I shouldn't say that for this purpose, but I think it's just a natural thing that women seem to be more concerned with community affairs and stuff like that. But now, here in a small town, I shouldn't say that, because some of them are pretty well... concerned about what happens, and...*

*ST: Involved.*

*GJ: Yeah, being involved. 'Cause I mean, they have little leagues and all that stuff. And of course, then, when I was younger 4-H was a big thing. That was another highlight.*

*ST: So would you say that you've seen men's roles and women's roles change during the course of your life, as you've seen other changes?*

*GJ: Not really out here too much.*

*ST: So pretty much here it's still the man who's the provider, and the woman who stays home.*

*GJ: Well, no, I can't say that the woman stays home, because most of 'em all have jobs and stuff now, too.*

*ST: Moreso than when you were growing up?*

*GJ: Yeah, oh yeah. When I was growing up, the women stayed home and took care of the house and that, but... no, I think it's about equal; really I do.*

*ST: In terms of... equal...?*

GJ: As far as responsibility is concerned.

ST: *Okay. Now what kinds of changes have you observed in the town... economically, socially...?*

GJ: Well, socially I think the town has been hurt by not having... by the school being taken away, and the store of course, Dolezal's store; and the churches keep up fairly well, the social... that's about the only social outlet we have here now. But economically, no; possibly the, like I say, the... well, I can't say that either, 'cause gosh, San Pierre's growing out—there's houses going up all over, so economically, why, I think we're alright, as far as that's concerned, but it's a small town, and people like it small. I like it small [laughter].

ST: *So you think that when people... I'm assuming that the people that are building houses and making it grow are from someplace else, is that true?*

GJ: Yeah. A good part of 'em come out from the city.

ST: *And why do you think they come... why do you think people from the city would come to a place that doesn't have a grocery store or a gas station?*

GJ: It's cheaper.

ST: *Everything is cheaper?*

GJ: A lot cheaper, yeah.

ST: *The property and building?*

GJ: Taxes. Property taxes. Although sometimes we don't think so, but boy, when you talk to some of the city people and the taxes they pay, why...

ST: *You find out!*

GJ: It's much different, yeah. I don't know, I think people that are more... have more friends out here. I mean, when you know somebody, you know 'em. I mean, you know what they're from, and what they do, and they're more concerned about each other. I mean, like, our neighbors here, we've had three of 'em move in brand new in the last couple years, and within weeks you know 'em. It's the same way out with the farm people. They always helped each other years ago, and they still do. If somebody's in need of helping they'll get together. I don't know, I think the reason that they come out is just to get away from all of the hubbub.

ST: *Is it mostly people with young families, or are there retirees as well?*

GJ: Well, there's some retiring, and then there's still some that... now San Pierre, I've noticed, has gotten more kids again than they used to have a few years ago. So evidently they're moving families out, too.

ST: *That's usually a good sign, if there are families with growing children moving in, I think.*

GJ: Of course, like I say, if San Pierre had a few other things like they used to have, it'd be a lot better.

ST: *Nicer for the kids, yeah. Because kids need things to do and look forward to. What about politically; how would you characterize the town politically?*

GJ: Well, I don't know, I think they're involved in politics, and I think they're about the same, I mean, you have both parties and stuff here, and they all seem to get along.

ST: *And not one more than another? You think it's about even?*

GJ: That, I wouldn't have any idea on that, because it changes, I think, from year to year.

ST: *So have any of those changes affected your life?*

GJ: No, I can't say they have, because like I say, everybody knows each other, everybody else, whether... it don't make any difference what party you're at, you're still friends.

ST: *Do you have a sense of what your role in this community is?*

GJ: No, not really. Just an interest in different things that go on.

ST: *I mean, do you know anybody that's doing the kind of historical research that you're doing?*

GJ: Well, I think there's a couple of 'em that have tried it, but I'm just kind of a novice at it. I do it because I like to do it. I'm not doing it for any certain purpose or that.

ST: *But I think that's why most people do research—they like to do it! It's fun to go digging for things.*

GJ: Same with genealogy, I love genealogy, but, of course, now I can't do it very well... I used to go to different places and that... no more!

ST: *And you don't use a computer.*

GJ: No. My daughter, she's got the computer and stuff, but I don't even know how to turn one on! [laughter]

ST: *[Laughter] Some of us still struggle with it. It's a great resource now for genealogy.*

GJ: Yeah, it is. But you know there's some things on there that you can't depend on.

ST: *Oh, that's absolutely true. And I mean, it's all somebody else's research that you're looking up, so it depends on how accurate that was. [Looks across the room] Is that an old Victrola over there?*

GJ: Yeah.

*ST: Oh, my goodness! That's beautiful! I love it—does it still work?*

*GJ: I know, I'm gettin' ready for an auction, and my kids say, "Oh, you're not gonna get rid of that, are you mom? You're not gonna get rid of that, are you?"*

*ST: And are you?*

*GJ: No. No, it's... a good part of it, I'm not. I've divided up some of the stuff, but I can't keep it all.*

*ST: Yeah, yeah, right. That's beautiful. It's amazing to look at how beautifully things were designed back then... it's just this gorgeous wooden cabinet! [laughter]*

*GJ: [Laughter] Yeah.*

*ST: You've probably already touched on this, but what, in your opinion, was the single most damaging thing to happen in the town?*

*GJ: Well, like I say, gettin' rid of the school, and the store burning down, and the elevator, too. The elevator is no more, 'cause that used to bring a lot of farmers into town. The first elevator I don't quite remember. It's been about the same elevator, but I can remember coming into town and going to the elevator to get... either sell or buy.*

*ST: And how long has this one been out of commission?*

*GJ: Oh gosh! Quite awhile... I don't know when that was that Vanek let go of it. Oh, I don't know, there's been a good ten, fifteen years.*

*ST: Oh, it's been that long. Gosh, and the school has been gone since the '60s?*

*GJ: Let's see, my oldest daughter, she graduated from San Pierre yet, I'm pretty sure. My other two didn't, so it must have been gone for quite awhile.*

*ST: Must have been the early '60s.*

GJ: I think so.

ST: *When they consolidated.*

GJ: I've got so much of that stuff, and I tried finding it.

ST: *Don't worry. I don't want this to be a lot of work for you. Say you were going to be here another 20 years—what would you like to see happen in this town?*

GJ: Well, I'm about like everybody else, I'd like to at least see a filling station and a convenience store. The idea of running 10, 15 miles just to get a gallon of milk or a loaf of bread is just ridiculous, as far as I'm concerned.

ST: *Even just the cost factor of gas and time now is pretty ridiculous.*

GJ: And gas, gosh, I don't know where the... you either have to get to Medaryville or LaCrosse, and then if it's nighttime, LaCrosse is closed, and you have to try to get clear to Wanatah or Judson. But you know, I think that would be a big help.

ST: *Germaine, you're getting further and further away from me. [laughter]*

GJ: I rolled a lot! [laughter]

ST: *[Laughter] I must be scaring you! Yeah, you're the first person I've talked with who's on wheels, and you can actually leave during the conversation! I'm going to remember that. What are your concerns or fears about the town? Do you have things that you would not want to see happen?*

GJ: I wouldn't want to see it go down any further... and I'd like to see more people get interested in it. There are a lot of 'em that just... well, we don't want it improved any, you know. And as far as anything else is concerned, no, I... I'm happy with it the way it is, other than those few inconveniences.

*ST: Would you think it would be a good thing to have a school here again?*

*GJ: Oh, I think it would be. Even if it's just a grade school, I think it would... these kindergarten kids that use this school now, they really enjoy it, because when they went to the other school at Judson and them other places, the bigger kids at recess time took over the playground. Here, they've got it all to themselves! [laughter] And I think they enjoy it here a lot more. I don't know, that's just my opinion.*

*ST: Well, it was a big school, as I recall, that they built over there for first through sixth grade, was it? Or first through eighth?*

*GJ: First through sixth.*

*ST: So do they actually use all of the space?*

*GJ: I don't know.*

*ST: That would be interesting to know, because it was big, and I don't know how many kindergarten-age kids there are. [End of Side A] So it seems like a lot of that space maybe isn't being utilized, or at least not as a school.*

*GJ: I have no idea; I have not been in there since... oh gosh—a long, long time. I did go back to school... I wrote a poem! One of the Paulsen girls, she was teaching in third grade, and she asked me to come and tell what San Pierre was like to the kids, so they'd know a little bit about it. So I did, and I spent the afternoon there telling about San Pierre and different things. And I wrote a poem on the day I went back to school at the age of 76! [laughter] And I showed it to the teacher, and she said she thought it was pretty cute.*

*ST: Do you remember it?*

*GJ: No, I got it here someplace! I saw it the other day again.*

*ST: Well, maybe sometime you'll share it with us if you find it.*

GJ: Sure, sure. You know, how the old school used to be, and what we used to do and different things. And it was interesting, but I was surprised about what the kids knew, and report cards and different things. They got the biggest kick out of some of the report cards! [laughter] And they could ask the questions, too.

ST: *Really? They were curious.*

GJ: They were real curious about it. And I took some pictures and things... They even missed the recess, and it didn't seem to bother 'em at all, they were so interested!

ST: *Really! Oh, that's... you must have done a great job! So were there other things that you told them that we haven't talked about today?*

GJ: Yeah, there was a lot of things, if I can find it, why... but I think it's in that one cabinet there, and I can't reach it. But yeah, I told them different things of how San Pierre used to be, and the railroads, and the different shops they used to have, and blacksmith shops, and about the... they said at one time that the Indian trail went through here to Rensselaer, it was, and it... they enjoyed it; the different types of things that we did.

ST: *I'll bet! Because it's just... you wouldn't get a sense of that at all now if you just landed here today—you wouldn't have any sense of all of that! Where was the blacksmith shop?*

GJ: There was about two or three of 'em. One was back of the firehouse—where the firehouse is now. And I think there was one that became part of Dolezal's store, because that was before Dolezals had all of the lumber. And I think it was where the tennis court is now.

ST: *I remember some older buildings there from my childhood that are not there anymore.*

GJ: And then there was the leather shop... that was Alberding's, the leather shop. That was behind Woosley's—Stella thought it was behind what was Woosley's store then. I didn't see 'em—it was before my time, even. And the old telephone exchange used to be down below where Pete and Anastasia used to live. And I remember going in there and

seeing... I don't know which one it was... which woman it was... but I can remember going in there and seeing her punching in the different... when somebody would call.

*ST: Wires? Gosh, I didn't know about that. Pete and Stitch lived in commercial property, it sounds like!*

*GJ: Of course, they had a lot of other things going on that I didn't see in town. When you go, I'll show you a picture of my grandfather and grandmother. They're in a horse and buggy, and they were here in San Pierre. I can barely remember... I don't remember the dirt roads... it was mostly gravel, 'cause we were real young.*

*ST: Well, I remember a lot of gravel roads when I was a kid. Not everything was paved.*

*GJ: Especially your alleys... well, this here, when we built, was a sand road. We had a barn dance here—there was an old barn here, and I think it was Derflingers used to have a barn dance every Saturday night. Of course, you came to town for that, and then Eckerts out there used to have—Gus Eckerts—used to have dances every once in awhile at their house. George Ledvina, and they always had... so there was always some place to go! We always had... when the parents would dance, and us kids, when we got tired we went in on the bed and laid down.*

*ST: So when people had like barn dances, would everybody just bring refreshments?*

*GJ: No. Sometimes they did, at some places; at some places they didn't.*

*ST: Yeah. So it wasn't like everybody brought their own drinks or anything like that.*

*GJ: Yeah, if they wanted to... usually there wasn't too much of that... going on. At like Ledvina's and that, you'd bring some plates and stuff... dishes.*

*ST: But not even soda pop...*

*GJ: No. Soda pop was a thing... you didn't have the money to buy soda pop!*

*ST: I see. That was on the luxury list. [laughter]*

*GJ: [Laughter] Yeah. That was on the luxury list.*

*ST: I'm just imagining that as warm as it gets here, if you were dancing vigorously you'd really want something to drink!*

*GJ: Oh sure. Then they had dances in... well, it was a garage; and then it was a meat market at one time; and then it was... well, Ernie Zimmerman had a garage in there, when we was living here... in the early part of it.*

*ST: Oh, across the street from the Texaco station?*

*GJ: Yeah, next to the Texaco station there. It was a garage, and then it was a tavern, and then it was a meat market, and then... but it had a big back room and they always had dances there. I can remember going to a lot of them.*

*ST: And would that have been when you were like a teenager?*

*GJ: No it was... before teenager. Just growing up. There was some in town'd bring their concertina, and another one'd bring his fiddle.*

*ST: So people played the music—it was live music. Great!*

*GJ: Yeah, they didn't have jukeboxes or anything like that then.*

*ST: Do you remember who played those instruments? Who those musicians were?*

*GJ: Well, I think Henry Timm played banjo... I think... Hewitts would know, but of course, they're livin' in Indianapolis now. And then they had a fiddle—they had a man could really fiddle—and concertina. They'd just all get together and play, that's all!*

*ST: Who were your friends—your closest friends at different times?*

GJ: Well, the closest friend was Mary Margaret Sparks; she lived right outside of town there, you know where the Catholic cemetery is, and then there's that empty field, and then there's a brick home... where she lived there. And Ardella Alberding, of course. And Adelaide Hankey; they were all mostly out... country kids, too. But you got to see 'em in school, and in the summertime you got together at different functions.

ST: *And they remained your close friends through the years?*

GJ: Oh, yeah, even Mary Margaret, to this day, we're real close. I haven't got to see her now for quite awhile. Her husband just died a couple of weeks ago.

ST: *I heard that. I saw them at my Aunt Jean and Uncle Ronnie's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, 'cause I think Mary Margaret stood up for Jean in her wedding.*

GJ: Oh, she did!

ST: *Yeah, she was one of the bridesmaids.*

GJ: Yeah, her and I, we were real close friends. I stayed at her house a lot of times. [laughter] I always remember going into—there was a log cabin there at one time, I think, and that was the first priest in San Pierre—I think that was where he was at. Because I can remember Mrs. Sparks showing me the... part of it was still there, because they kind of built the house around it or something, I don't know... but, of course it's all gone now.

ST: *Did you have a sense of how old that log cabin was, or did you ever discover that?*

GJ: No. According to the anniversary book that the church put out, it had to be 1860, or something like that. It had to be fairly old, because it was about the first one that was ever in San Pierre; and the first church and stuff.

ST: *And that was where?*

GJ: I think it was where Sparks used to live; you know where that empty field is by the Catholic cemetery.

ST: *Oh, it was right there!*

GJ: Yeah, it was right there.

ST: *I've never seen anything like that there, for sure. If you were asked to name somebody in the town who had a major influence on you, or somebody that you kind of admired...*

GJ: No, not really. All I can say is the teachers. Teachers then had time for you. If you couldn't learn something, why, they had time for ya. Jan Richardson and Miss Batzka—a lot of people, kids, didn't like her teaching, but you learned under her; you learned under her. And you were corrected when you did something, too! [laughter]

ST: *In a not-very-polite way, sometimes, as I recall! [laughter]*

GJ: Well, of course, that school there had cloakrooms, you know. If you got sent to the cloakroom, why... [laughter]

ST: *Yeah. Sometimes we were sent to the cloakroom!*

GJ: And Mrs. Sharritt. She was Henrietta (sic) [Herretta] Daly, of course, when I was in school. And of course Mr. Richardson, and Mr. McCauley. But they all, you know, I think most of the kids—my age, anyhow—that's who they'd remember. And of course, the church—I think that had a lot of influence on the young kids at that time.

ST: *And you were always a member of that same church.*

GJ: Yeah. Because it's mostly all your activities... if it wasn't the school, why, you had an activity in church, and that was just a way of life.

ST: *I don't know why this just came up in my mind, but was there a particular type of cooking that you were raised in?*

GJ: Cooking?

*ST: Yes. How did your mother cook?*

*GJ: I don't know... Of course, most of it was mostly farm... we raised our own vegetables, and our own meat, grain. But there was no particular type, but, well, chicken! [laughter] We always had chicken! And I like chicken to this day.*

*ST: Fried, or roasted, or...?*

*GJ: Don't make any difference! [laughter] And of course you had your fruit trees, and pretty much canned our own stuff for the winter... we didn't buy very much canned stuff.*

*ST: What types of things did you can?*

*GJ: Most anything they had plenty of! [laughter] Because you always had a big garden, and of course applesauce; we never had very many peas, 'cause they always got eaten out in the garden, before they got to the house! [laughter] But most any vegetable.*

*ST: Tomatoes?*

*GJ: Oh, yeah. I remember once my mother had... we had what we called the fruit cellar, and it was a dugout place out from the house, and it was covered, of course; it was a cellar-type thing. And it was in the fall, and she had really had that thing full—I mean there was a lot of stuff in there. And we never thought anything of it, and we was sitting on the porch one day, and we heard a big crash. Well, we knew the shelves had given away down there... it was...! But she made do. I mean, we got through the winter all right, and she started canning again right away. But that was somethin' to clean up.*

*ST: Yeah, that would be heavy losses—the things in mason jars...*

*GJ: Yeah, that, and we had our meat down there and everything! And of course we had to throw it all away on account of the glass.*

*ST: Did everything go, or were there some that survived?*

GJ: Well, some of the stuff, like maybe that was canned was still sealed. But we didn't keep it very long, because you never knew about the seal on it. Of course at that time it was the old mason jars.

ST: *Did you pickle things, too?*

GJ: Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. Dill pickles... [laughter] I even did that when I was first married, we did a lot of canning and stuff like that. But no more!

ST: *Well, it's a lot of work. Are you getting tired?*

GJ: No, that's all right... Now will you edit this?

ST: *If there's something that you want me to edit...*

GJ: Well, names... I'm not too keen on givin' names; of course, it's the truth, but... [laughter]

ST: *Yeah; I mean, I don't think you've said anything uncomplimentary about anybody!*  
[laughter]

GJ: No, I hope not!

ST: *The typical process is that I'll take the tape, and I'll put it in a transcribing machine, and have headphones on; and then I'll sit at my computer, and type in word-for-word what was said. It depends on how we're going to use it... we'll probably keep the written transcript and a tape in an archive, so that that's always there in its totality. But then, if we take pieces from it to use in another project, like say, a book about the town revitalization, we would just take something out and credit the person interviewed that it came from.*

GJ: Yeah. I prefer that, 'cause I could ramble on and on and on... [laughter]

ST: *That's what I'm here for! [laughter] But I mean, it's also valuable to have the thing in its totality as an archive, because it's amazing for people to be able to listen to someone talk about what they experienced, what they saw, and to actually have the voice attached to it... It really is fun! It adds a whole other element, rather than just reading a piece of it on a piece of paper, because you get a sense of the personality, too, and who's saying these things; who is it that saw it this way, and remembers these things that maybe somebody else doesn't remember; or remembers the same thing differently. Because there isn't really a right or wrong perspective on it; it's very subjective, it's very personal.*

GJ: Well, if you see anything in there that's repeated or anything like that, why, you can take it out.

ST: *Okay. So basically, you're saying if there's anything that I want to pull out, I have your permission to do that. Probably in the total thing I won't take anything out, but if I see something that we're repeating what we've already covered...*

GJ: Yeah, that's what I mean, because I know that some of the other ones are probably basically the same.

ST: *Well, it's probably going to be just fine. What you're saying is great. What I'm saying is if I asked you something that you've already told me, then I'll get rid of that.*

*Anything else you want to ramble on about, because I'd love it!*

GJ: No! There's so much that I can't remember! If I could get out all my papers and stuff, I'd...

ST: *It jogs your memory, yeah. Well, you know, if there's another time that I'm here, or if somebody else starts doing interviews, and you feel like you have more, I'd love to do another...*

GJ: I'll try to hunt up those pictures and all that stuff.

ST: *But don't labor over it! If you feel like it, it would be lovely to see some of those; and you know, maybe there'll be a time when we can somehow get photocopies and be able to use them down the road... 'cause it sounds like you have some really great photographs that I haven't really seen... I mean, I've seen a few things that the Dalys have.*

GJ: Yeah, they have some nice pictures, too.

ST: *But I haven't seen anything of the Dolezals, of the store. There are lots of businesses that I haven't seen... or just pictures of that sort of central town block. It seems like there were a lot of things there over the years. And Weninger's meat market...*

GJ: Well, that's changed quite a bit, too. I remember it when I think... let's see, who had it before Weninger had it? Distal had a meat market there, and before that, one of those places, I know Baker had a shoe shop where he fixed shoes.

ST: *A cobbler.*

GJ: Yeah. And the post office of course. I don't remember the first one; that was across the street. And I don't remember it when they moved it to this side of the street; because I didn't start in it until when it was in Kingman's store. When they changed it to the post office, I wasn't there. Was it Mr. McCauley... well, Pauline Tannehill, she was there. I got some stamps that I bought from her a long... oh, when I first started in the post office she had kind of a stamp collection, and I went down there, and she said, "Come on down, and I'll show 'em to you," and I got some real early stamps. I still have 'em! I can barely remember her.

ST: *Un-huh. Yeah, I remember as a really little girl, going to the post office... you know, maybe my mom had something to do for a while, and I'd spend a couple of hours with Grandma Tannehill... while she was being postmistress! [laughter] It was fascinating! All those old mailboxes in there!*

GJ: No, I didn't... 'cause I retired in 1996, 'cause I worked in there for about 20 years before that. Of course, that's when you knew everybody in town. Now I don't hardly know a

guy over in the next block. They've changed hands a lot. 'Cause even in the last year, now, four or five changed just right next door to me.

*ST: And it's not just people in town moving to different places; it's new people.*

*GJ: 'Course George, down here, died. And Zimmerman's—Clara and Ernie; they're both gone now.*

*ST: When did your husband die, Germaine?*

*GJ: In the year 2000; not that long ago.*

*ST: So you had how many years together?*

*GJ: I think it would have been 55.*

*ST: Wow, that's awesome... Well, I really appreciate you taking the time to do this.*

*GJ: Now like I say, if there's anything in there that you think needs to be cut out, that's fine.*

*ST: I think we'll just probably want more! [laughter]*

*[END OF INTERVIEW]*