

TOM WERNZ TRANSCRIPT

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Interviewer: Maury Miller

Transcribed by Donna Duzan, June 2017

M: Tom, can you tell us where and when you were born.

T: I was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, May 25, 1942.

M: And who were your parents?

T: Antone and Ruby Wernz.

M: And you had some brothers?

T: Yes, I have two brothers, Danny Wernz and Albert Wernz.

M: Now tell me where you lived.

T: We lived about 8 miles south-east of Marshall. Right straight east of Lincoln Trail State Park five miles then across Route 1 3 more miles on what was called then the Zion Road. I think that road is a number road now.

M: How long have you lived there?

T: I lived there with my parents until I got married in 1962. And then I moved across the field. And I lived there for about seven years. Then we moved into the south end of Marshall and then for about 20 years then we moved into a house on North Eighth Street for several years and now I live here in the west part of Marshall.

M: Let's talk about the neighborhood where you grew up. How would you describe it?

T: Oh, a lot of fun, just a lot of fun. We had all kinds of kids to play with, neighborhood boys to play baseball with and swing on grape vines in the woods, rode our bikes around the neighborhood, it was just great fun.

M: Let's talk some more about that, what types of things do you remember about growing up and the neighborhood kids?

T: Mostly I just remember that they were all great to get along with, don't remember having fights or anything like that. We might have had little disagreements when we were playing ball games. The big kids always made the rules up but we just never really had any big problems.

M: How was life on the farm? Did you have chores?

T: Oh yes, when the school bus pulled up to drop you home, we had about fifteen minutes to get our clothes changed so that we could gather the eggs, feed the chickens and carry water in five gallon buckets, feed the cows, we had to milk the cows before we went to school.

M: Talk about some of the other things about the neighborhood, you mentioned the church.

T: Yes, the Zion Church was about a mile up the road. That's the church where I got baptized, and later married. That's where we always went to church, they had pretty good sized congregation there. There would be 60-75 there on a Sunday morning.

M: Did you have other activities around the church?

T: Yeah, Youth Fellowship, that kind of thing, and we would go to skating parties in Paris. That was always a big deal for us youth.

M: Tell us about the schools you went to.

T: The first year I went to the Marshall South Side School. Then I went to second grade in the North Side School. Then fourth grade I went to the Ohio School Building which was the old Ohio Oil Building. Then Junior High and High School I went where they are now.

M: What are some of your memories about school?

T: Well, one of the memories is that in second grade, I had Al Connerton's mother she was a nice lady, I really liked her.

M: What memories do you have of high school?

T: I belonged to FFA and played basketball (in 8th grade) I wasn't very good at it. Then I played football for the first two years in high school. My dad thought I would do a lot more good on the farm than sitting on the football bench.

M: Let's talk about your family. What types of things do you remember doing as a family?

T: Oh, we would have big family holiday meals. And would go and visit my grandparents. When I was little, we didn't have TV's or telephones, I was seven years old before my family got electricity. We had a lot of fun at the big family dinners.

M: How did you spend your time? Did you have hobbies?

T: Yes, I had FFA, or rather 4-H. I had calves and pigs and that kind of thing and we went to the fair. We thought it was great when we had to spend the night out at the fair.

M: Did you have pets?

T: Yes, my dad was a bird hunter so we always had bird dogs. I always wanted a rabbit dog but he didn't want his bird dogs pointing rabbits. So I didn't get a rabbit dog until I got married.

M: Let's talk about marriage. How did you meet your wife?

T: Well, we went to school together, we went the Junior-Senior Prom together and I guess we just stayed together.

M: Did you get married right after high school?

T: I graduated in 1960 and we got married in the Fall of 1962.

M: Have you ever lived anyplace other than Marshall?

T: No, I haven't lived anyplace else.

M: Tell us about being a farmer. Some of the memories you have about being a farmer.

T: Oh my, I just started out farming when I was about twelve years old. My dad let me run a tractor and I thought that was the greatest thing that ever happened. I planted my first crop when I was thirteen. He gave me a little plot of land with about ten acres, and I planted that, it just grew from there, I have never known anything except farming.

M: Let's talk about history in general for a while, is there a person or a particular incident in your life that has had a big influence.

T: Yes, I think my grandfather had a big and good influence on me.

M: Tell us about that.

T: He was born in 1876. That was the year that General Custer was out in the west. Jesse James was running around. My grandfather told me all kinds of stories about that. He grew up in horse and buggy days and didn't ever have a car or truck but he lived to see man land on the moon. He didn't believe they could do that, he said just look up there, there is no place to land up there. But he had a really big influence in my life.

M: When you think of all the events that have happened in your life, what historical events stand out in your mind?

T: Oh, I suppose World War II had a big influence because I was born during the war. My parents talked about the war and the atrocities. They came from Germany and after the war they went over there and a lot of their relatives weren't there because they had perished. That made a big impression on me. They talked a lot about hardships from the war and about the depression time.

M: What modern conveniences in your life have had a big effect on your life?

T: We didn't have electricity until I was about seven years old. The farm that my dad bought, there was an old bachelor that lived there and he said that when rural electric came to the area, he didn't want it because he said "Electricity can kill you." So everybody up and down the road had electricity before we did and we just couldn't believe the difference...you could flip the switch on the wall and it

was like daylight.

M: If you were talking to someone who was not from here, what would you tell them and how would you describe Marshall?

T: Well, I suppose it's kind of a small community but most everybody that lives here knows everybody. And there is very little crime. It's just been a good place to live.

M: Thank you Tom for talking with me today.