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**The Iowa Blind History Archive  
History of Blindness in Iowa - Oral History Project  
Interview with [Name]  
Conducted by [Name]  
[Date]  
Transcribed by [Name]**

**NOTE: Any text included in brackets [ ] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.**

**Janice Borgwardt, Vinton, Iowa  
Barb Weigel  
Janice's home in Vinton, IA  
5/13/2011**

**Barb Weigel: Narrator's full name?**

**Janice Borgwardt: Janice Borgwardt.**

**Weigel: The city and state?**

**Borgwardt: Vinton, Iowa.**

**Weigel: And we are interviewing at your home in Vinton. Today is May 13.**

**Borgwardt: Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>!**

**Weigel: That's right, 2011 at 10:42 a.m. Interviewer is Barb Weigel. Relationship is Jan's Rehab Teacher. Purpose of the interview is part of the Iowa Department for the Blind's History of Blindness in Iowa Oral History Project. Jan, do you consent to have the interview recorded?**

**Borgwardt: Yes, I do.**

**Weigel: Okay, and we're ready to go. Go ahead.**

**Borgwardt: Where do you want to start?**

**Weigel: Why don't you start at the beginning. Tell us about what caused your vision loss, and when did it happen?**

**Borgwardt: I was born with retinopathy of prematurity in 1962, and I was a triplet, and due to our size, only two of us survived. My sister, Joyce, who has low vision, is married and she lives out in Bellingham, Washington. And, I am legally blind. I have enough residual vision to get myself in trouble.**

**I grew up in Southern Iowa. The first few years of my life we lived on a farm. I don't remember a lot about it, but I**

do remember that Joyce and I were allowed to play outside, pretty much go wherever we wanted, as long as we stayed away from the road. And, we took full advantage of anything we could find to entertain ourselves. One of the few things I remember doing, was Joyce and I decided that we were going to help dad feed the pigs. So, we went out to the garage, which the back of the garage opened up into the hog pen. And, dad had sacks of corn there, and still in the ears of corn. We picked them up and we were just going to throw three or four in for the pigs. Well, then we got to seeing who could throw it the farthest. So, we had a little challenge at that for a while, and then we decided because one of us accidentally hit one of the hogs in the head; decided who could hit the hog. So, then we threw more corn in seeing if we could hit the hogs. Well, the next thing I know dad comes home. And, at that point I don't remember what happened, but Joyce does, and she says that we got a really good spanking for it. So, that's about all I remember about the farm. The only other thing I remember about the farm is the day that mom and dad sold the farm. We had an auction, and we moved to town, and that's when we moved to Ottumwa.

**Weigel:** So, are you and Joyce the only children?

**Borgwardt:** No. I have two older sisters and a younger brother.

**Weigel:** Two older sisters, and that's in addition to you and Joyce?

**Borgwardt:** Um-hum.

**Weigel: Okay.**

**Borgwardt: Yup. And my brother and sisters, they have no vision problems, except those related to age. Moved to Ottumwa. Joyce and I started in school in Ottumwa. Mom and dad waited till we were six to start school, because we were so small. They wanted to give us a chance to grow a little bit, and kindergarten at that time was either morning or afternoon. And, I got stuck going in the morning, Joyce went in the afternoon. And, it really bummed me out because she could stay home and watch Captain Kangaroo. All I had in the afternoon was General Hospital.**

**Weigel: Little bit of a difference.**

**Borgwardt: Little bit of a difference. Don't remember much about kindergarten. First grade, I remember they gave me some large print books in first grade, but I didn't like them because they didn't have the color in them like the other kids' books. And so, I didn't like being different. And, I wanted the color pictures. So, I thought if I held the book close enough I could read it. And, my mom always laughed and teased me. She always said I looked like a typewriter, because when I would read, my head would move across the page, and I'd get to the end, it would be like a typewriter, going back to the other side; back and forth, back and forth. So, mom always called me a typewriter when I was reading.**

**Weigel: Did they have teachers specific to helping you with the vision piece of it?**

**Borgwardt: No.**

**Weigel: It was just the regular class teacher?**

**Borgwardt: Just the regular classroom teacher is all I had, and I think I used the large print books, maybe, the first two weeks of school, and that was it. So, I didn't use any large print again. That was, like, first grade I did. I didn't have any large print books again until, like, third grade. Second grade, the only thing I remember about second grade was I went to Cono Christian School in Walker. And, I ended up having a desk away from everybody else, and I was pretty much just left alone to do what I wanted, because I don't remember doing much school work. I do remember taking a ruler and a pencil, you know when those rulers had a little round hole in them, in the center; put the pencil in it and then airplane propeller all day long.**

**Weigel: So, do you think the teacher didn't know what to do with you?**

**Borgwardt: They didn't know what to do with me.**

**Weigel: So, you sat.**

**Borgwardt: So, I sat. And see, at their school you learn cursive in first grade. Well, in the school I went to in Ottumwa, they didn't start teaching cursive until third grade. So, in second grade, according to them I was already behind because I didn't know how to do cursive, and I don't think my print was all that wrong, either. So, I was pretty much just left to do what I wanted.**

**Weigel: So, was Joyce in the same class?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah.**

**Weigel: She wasn't separated?**

**Borgwardt: I don't remember.**

**Weigel: On the other side of the room?**

**Borgwardt: I don't remember. I just know I was. And, I'm not so sure if it was they didn't know what to do with me, or if I was just too much of a distraction to the other students because I was always just playing, because I didn't know what else to do. I couldn't read the board. You know, they put stuff up on the chalkboard, what you're supposed to do, but I couldn't read it; too far away.**

**So, then you know, in third grade they introduced large print books again, and I used them because it did help; until I got to math class one time and we were learning how to use a ruler, and how to measure. And, you had a little box you had to measure and find the area, you know, times length. And so, I was using a large print book and a regular ruler, and it came out a pretty good-sized number. It was supposed to be like  $2 \times 3$ , and it ended up coming out a whole lot different because of the size. And, I gave my answer in class and everybody started laughing. And, the teacher laughed, and then she stopped, and she came over and looked at my book, and she said, "Show me what you did?" And so, I showed her, and I had it right. I did it right with what I had, but then she took a  $3 \times 5$  card and made a**

**large print ruler for me to use, so that it actually came out the same as the others.**

**Weigel: So it was to scale.**

**Borgwardt: Um-hum. But, as soon as I could I quit using large print books again, because I didn't want people laughing at me.**

**Weigel: That's understandable when you get reactions like that.**

**Borgwardt: And, in fifth grade, my teacher in fifth grade could not tell Joyce and I apart. And, that was quite a year. That was, well, there were some interesting things that happened, and we definitely don't have time for that.**

**So, sixth grade, from third grade to sixth grade I was going to a Cedar Rapids Christian School. And, for noon recess they would divide each class. One week we'd play kickball, and the next week we'd play softball. And, the class would be divided up into teams. So, each class had their own section of the playground to play on. Well, by sixth grade, I figured out how to get out of softball, because I didn't like playing it, because I couldn't see the ball and I didn't like it. And so, I figured out that if I didn't get my work done I'd have to stay in at noon to do my work. So, about mid-way through sixth grade, the teacher figured out what I was doing, and she told me I couldn't do that anymore. She made me go outside and play softball, and she put me in a part of the field where the ball didn't come very often. And, when we were in the field, then she would try to be over by me, so in case it got hit towards me, she could help me. So,**

**she was pretty good. She was one of the...And, in grade school I had two really good teachers. One was Mrs. Holloway, and the other was Mrs. Shedenhelm, and those are my two teachers in grade school that really helped me out.**

**Weigel: What grade levels were they?**

**Borgwardt: I had Mrs. Holloway for third and fourth, and I had Mrs. Shedenhelm in sixth.**

**And, then in seventh grade I went to the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School. And, that's where a whole new world opened up. I still use regular print books though, because they did have them on campus. You could use regular print or large print or Braille, and I had enough vision that it was slow, but I used regular print books.**

**Weigel: And, it was probably more of a struggle than it needed to be.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, it was. But, they figured you have the sight to use, just go ahead and use what you got. They didn't...**

**Weigel: They didn't try to get you to use what would be more efficient?**

**Borgwardt: No. They just...It was my choice. In fact, when I first went there I thought I was going to have to carry a cane. But, once I got on campus, they said, "No, you don't have to use a cane." The only thing I had to do was when I went off campus, I had to carry my cane. I just had to have**

**it in my hand. I didn't have to use it. I had to just have it on my person when I went off campus.**

**Weigel: What was the reason behind that?**

**Borgwardt: To identify that I was blind or one of the Braille school students. And, I just would carry it. They had me carry it diagonal across my body, and most of the times I just carried it like a baton, and twirled it, and played, and I mean, there were some of us that would actually go off campus. We had to carry our cane off campus. We had to carry it back on campus, but they never said we had to keep it with us off campus. So, one of the house-parents lived down the street from the school. So, a lot of the kids would just lay their cane against their front door and pick it up on the way back to campus.**

**Weigel: Kids will be kids.**

**Borgwardt: Kids will be kids, yeah, you know, however you can push the envelope. So, but I enjoyed my time at Iowa Braille. I think I enjoyed the rec. activities and the extra stuff outside the classroom more than anything. We had a lot of adventures. One year our housemother wanted to play a practical joke on a friend of hers. So, she had saved up newspapers, and her friend came to visit. She lived down south somewhere, in southern Iowa, and she'd just come up every now and then to visit. And so, she'd stop at the school to visit. And so, our houseparent found out when she was coming, and had saved up all these newspapers. And, then had some of us girls stuff her car with these newspapers when she was visiting. So, we did. It didn't bother us none.**

**We had a ball. Stuffed her, we stuffed her car. There was not an inch of room left, I mean, we had it so stuffed, and we still had newspapers left over. And for some reason, they decided that the next morning, for some reason, we were starting school late because they were having a teacher's meeting or something; it was on a Friday. And, it was also a Friday that we were going home on the buses in the afternoon. So, we went to breakfast, came out of breakfast. We didn't have to be to class until 9:00, and we didn't want to spend the time in the dorm, so we decided we had a few newspapers left over, so we went to the teacher's parking lot to see if any teachers left their car unlocked. One teacher left their car unlocked, and it was a Ford LTD station wagon, mid-70's. So, you're talking big, huge, gun boat station wagon. Well, we stuffed hers and two others. Okay, now granted, she's in the main building at a teacher's meeting, then she has classes, okay.**

**15:00**

**Borgwardt: The students go home at 2:00. She doesn't go home till 4:00. She comes out at 4:00 O'clock. She cannot get in her car, and there's no students around.**

**Weigel: Oh, I bet she was mad.**

**Borgwardt: For some reason, they never did have any other teacher's meetings.**

**Weigel: I bet she locked her car after that, too.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. So, we had adventures.**

**Weigel: One time you told me about, like, a manikin.**

**Borgwardt: Oh, Michelle.**

**Weigel: Michelle.**

**Borgwardt: Michelle was the dream child of one of the girls in my dorm. It was around Halloween, and she wanted to make this dummy to hang out the window of the dorm facing one of the streets, trying to scare people from town.**

**Weigel: Thinking someone was hanging out the window.**

**Borgwardt: Thinking one of us kids somehow fell out the windows and is hanging out the window sill. So, we had the Home Ec. teacher, who was very willing to help us, and she just happened to have a pair of old blue jeans that belonged to the industrial arts teacher, who just happened to be a very tall gentleman. So, we had these pants that are probably a 35-36 inch end seam. And, an old flannel shirt of his, and we had a pair of old tennis shoes, you know, the cloth tennis shoes, the real tennis shoes. Okay, so we take and put newspapers in the shoes, then we sew the shoes to the bottom of the pant legs, and then we stuff the pants full of newspapers, then we sew the shirt to the pants. Okay? And, then we took a pair of old garden gloves, stuffed those with newspapers, and then sewed the gloves to the shirt. And, then we had a Styrofoam head that a wig came on, and we used a piece of rope to tie that on around the neck of the shirt collar. So, then we had a face drawn on the Styrofoam. Found an old pair of glasses to stick on, and then a wig.**

**And, this becomes Michelle, and Michelle becomes a very honored member of campus. Michelle's first visit ended up being to; well, it was the teacher whose pants we used, Mr. Willberg. He lived on C Avenue just off 10<sup>th</sup> street. So, we took Michelle to his house, and he left his house, no, he didn't leave it unlocked. The Home Ec. teacher had a key to his house. So, we take Michelle into his house and put Michelle in his bed.**

**Weigel: So, the Home Ec. teacher is helping you?**

**Borgwardt: Yes. The Home Ec. teacher is helping us.**

**Weigel: Oh, my goodness.**

**Borgwardt: We put Michele in his bed. She goes to the kitchen, she comes back with a wine glass and a can of beer, and we put the beer and the glass, and we propped Michelle up with one leg up holding this wine glass and beer looking very sexy, as sexy as we can get her to look. And so, then we leave. Well, he comes home. He just happened to be out on a date with a lady by the name of Deb, and it happens to be their first date. So, he comes home and he walks into his bedroom and he sees this thing in his bed, and he flips his billfold at it. Then he takes and parks Michelle out on his front porch for the night. So, she has to spend the night outdoors. So, the next day we go and retrieve Michelle, bring her back to campus.**

**Weigel: So, does the man know that you were behind this yet? Does he...**

**Borgwardt: Well, I'm not sure when he found out who exactly was behind it, because the next morning my sister, Joyce, calls him up and asks, "Hello, Mr. Willberg. Is Michelle up yet?"**

**Weigel: Goodness.**

**Borgwardt: He says, "She's on the porch."**

**Weigel: So, right then he knew that.**

**Borgwardt: So, he didn't know who was calling him, but he knew it was a student. So, we get Michelle. We bring her back up to school. I mean, throughout the next couple of years, she shows up in false ceilings with her feet hanging out. She ends up in the faculty's bathroom. Oh, that had to be one of the more funny ones. The principal at that time was Dorothy Petrucci, and she was blind, and she went in to use the faculty restroom. And, she comes back to the office and she says, "Mrs. Bruce, I need you to come with me, please. There's a student in the bathroom." So, they go down to the rest room and Mrs. Bruce just starts laughing. She says, "Oh, Mrs. Petrucci, it's just Michelle." And Mrs. Petrucci says, "Oh, I finally have been gotten by Michelle."**

**Weigel: She'd been waiting for it, huh?**

**Borgwardt: She'd been waitin' for it. So, she had Mrs. Bruce help her take Michelle back to her office, so Michelle could spend the next couple of days in her office, being honored in her office. You know, we weren't being punished, you know,**

**she wasn't taking her away from us, she was just wanting the honor of having her in the office.**

**Weigel: Didn't you set her in someone's office chair when they came in?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. One time...Okay, the State Board of Regents always comes to the Braille School, or they have in the past. I don't know what they do now. In the past, in the spring the Board of Regents would always hold a meeting at the Braille School, and the students, the older students, the girls, we would help fix lunch and serve lunch. And so, it was the year Michelle was there, and we decided that we were just going to keep her back, hidden in the Home Ec. area, you know. We weren't going to do anything goofy. You know, we didn't want to overstep our bounds. You know, we knew when and where, and there's just something you knew. No, don't do that. Well, evidently someone from the press noticed Michelle and asked about her. And, we kind of told a little bit about what she was and what she did. They thought it was pretty cool. They thought, you know, it was pretty neat. So, they took Michelle, and took her into where the conference room was at, and they sat her in the Chairman of the Board of Regents chair. And, I don't remember who was the President of the Board of Regents at that time, but it was fun, and it went over well. I mean, it wasn't...Everyone found the humor in it, and it was pretty fun. But, they would not allow Michelle to keep that chair for the afternoon meeting, but they did allow her to stay in the meeting. They just found a corner spot for her.**

**But, she's been at State Board of Regents meetings, not just at the Braille school, but she ended up in the**

**Superintendent's car when he was going to a state Board of Regents meeting, too. So, yeah, he parked his car outside the main building and forgot to lock it. So, we stuck her in the backseat. The sad thing was, is he left really early in the morning, and he didn't notice her until he was on his way.**

**Weigel: Did it scare her, or didn't she?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, it kind of took him for a moment, but.**

**Weigel: I bet. That thing sittin' in the backseat. Yikes. Oh, funny.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, we had a lot of fun with Michelle. She even traveled out to Ohio. One of the teachers that moved out to work at the Ohio School, and so we sent Michelle out to visit her. Sent her out on the bus. She had her for about six months, and then she took all the newspapers out and folded her up and stuck her in a box and sent her back.**

**Weigel: So, you actually purchased a ticket, a bus ticket?**

**Borgwardt: Somebody...I don't know how it worked out, but somebody shipped her out there.**

**Weigel: And put her on a bus, and how did this lady out there?**

**Borgwardt: She took all the newspapers out of her, you know, to send her back. She took all the newspapers out, so that everything just folded up.**

**Weigel: How did she get her, like, how did she get from the bus to the building?**

**Borgwardt: I have no idea.**

**Weigel: Oh, my goodness.**

**Borgwardt: I just know she went to Ohio and she came back in a box. And you know, it was a whole lot harder to re-stuff her the second time, because the first time we did it as we went. Well, this time, it's still altogether. So, we had to...It took a long time to re-stuff her, and then, I don't know, I think one of the cleaning ladies finally got tired of her and destroyed her.**

**Weigel: Ah.**

**Borgwardt: That's what we surmised happened. One of the cleaning ladies, that wasn't very nice and didn't like our practical jokes, destroyed her.**

**Weigel: I was going to ask if she was still around somewhere?**

**Borgwardt: Not to my knowledge.**

**Weigel: So, do you keep in touch with the students that were doing that with you?**

**Borgwardt: Once in a while.**

**Weigel: A lot of memories.**

**Borgwardt: A lot of memories.**

**Weigel: So, then you could tell, you know, a big difference in going from the Christian School like you were in, to the Braille School?**

**Borgwardt: Um-hum. See, you know, I'd been in public school, Christian school, and then, you know, a state school. So, I've actually had three different types, and they were all different. But I think the funnest was the Braille School; the activities. I learned how to bowl, was able to be on the track team, was able to be in music.**

**Weigel: Didn't you do wood shop?**

**Borgwardt: Did wood shop. Learned to play a musical instrument. Sang in choir.**

**Weigel: So, do you think any of that would have been open to you if you had stayed in Christian or public school?**

**Borgwardt: No, not at all. Not in a classroom setting. Now, at home I was always helpin' around the house. I mean, mowin' the yard, helpin' dad paint, helpin' put up paneling.**

**Weigel: Your parents didn't treat you any differently than the rest of the kids?**

**Borgwardt: Not really. A few more challenges, maybe. I mean, I got my first pair of glasses at 18 months. And, I**

**remember the story where mom and dad were, had gone to a family picnic in Ottumwa, it's the big city park, and got home from the park and I didn't have my glasses on. I always had a tendency; if I couldn't see something, my glasses were in the way, so I'd take my glasses off, lay it down so whatever I was tryin' to look at so I could get closer. And so, we get home and I don't have my glasses, and dad says, "Where's your glasses?" I couldn't remember. So, they had to go back to the park and they had to go to the general area where we had our picnic, and they had to start walking and they found my glasses laying in the grass, unbroken.**

**Weigel: Oh my gosh, that's amazing.**

**Borgwardt: But, I'd taken them off and laid them down. We were down visiting my folks, oh, probably the first part of April. And, we were just chit-chatting about stuff, you know, that we'd done in the past. Evidently, between my junior and senior year of high school, my parents moved from Cedar Rapids to Ottumwa. And, dad was going to blow some insulation into the attic, and he had some machine he had to use. He had to put the stuff into it, and then evidently I helped him. I do not remember helping him do this. He says, but it scared him watching me put this insulation in that machine, afraid I'd get my hand caught. As he was up in the attic blowing it.**

**Weigel: Because it kind of comes in a big bale kind of a thing, don't you think, and then it goes in this machine and chops it all up?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah.**

**Weigel: There'd be movin' blades or something.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. I was feeding the machine. I do not remember doing this.**

**Weigel: Really?**

**Borgwardt: I don't. It just drives me nuts. I can't remember this. But, it's stuff like that, I'd help dad with. I mean, we tore the driveway out. Dad used the jackhammer, I was pickin' up the concrete and throwing it I the truck. Dad had a carpet cleaning business. I'd go help him with the carpet cleaning business. I helped him with the furniture. I'd get the water, the hot water, put the soap, chemical, whatever it was, you know, whatever it was into the water, and I'd put the water into the machine.**

**30:00**

**Borgwardt: And, he'd just keep goin'. Well it'd get to a point where the water would have to come out. Well, he didn't want me havin' to dump the water, 'cause he'd dump it into a five gallon bucket. I was puttin' in three gallon buckets of water, and he was dumpin' out five gallon buckets of water. But, I was keepin' the water in the machine, but he was emptying the machine. But, I helped do carpet cleaning.**

**Weigel: Good partnership, sounds like.**

**Borgwardt: Well, it gave me money to go to McDonald's.**

**Weigel: So, you grew up partly on a farm, then you moved to Ottumwa, then you moved to Cedar Rapids, and then back to Ottumwa?**

**Borgwardt: Back to Ottumwa, yeah.**

**Weigel: So, that's why you ended up at Cedar Rapids Christian School?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah.**

**Weigel: Okay.**

**Borgwardt: And, then after I graduated from high school and went to Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa, I took just a year of general studies, 'cause I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. And, then after that I took a year of chef training, and then after that, I came back to the Braille school and worked for two and one-half to three years as a cook. And, then I went back to college and got my business degree. So, yeah, the experiences at working was...that was a trip, too. There was a lot of double standards when I was working. Some people would do somethin', nothing was said. If I happened to do the exact same thing, I got called on it. I got written up for six dirty spoons. I got written up for some dirty plates, which ended up being the dishwasher was not working properly, which I'd told them it was not working properly, but it was just let go. Oh well, you know, it's all right, but then when stuff was coming out when I was dishwashing, I was called on it and I was written up. Yeah. Someone, who didn't work in the kitchen, told me that I had to work twice as a hard, twice as fast to get half the credit.**

**Weigel: So, the counterparts that were doing the same thing and not getting into trouble were sighted?**

**Borgwardt: Yes. So, but you know, the lady that hired me she really pushed to have me hired. She was really, really good. I always enjoyed working for her, but she retired. I was hired in November, and she retired at the end of December. So, she got me in, but then she retired, because her husband was wanting to go to Florida during the winter. So, she took early retirement.**

**Weigel: And, that left you with a new supervisor?**

**Borgwardt: And, that left me with a new supervisor.**

**Weigel: So, the way that you were treated there, is that why you left?**

**Borgwardt: No. I got to the point where I was ready to go back to school. I decided I wanted to get my Bachelor's degree in Business Management, with the idea of getting into managing a kitchen, rather than just working in a kitchen. And so, that's why I ended up going back to college, and I went to Maranatha Bible College up in Watertown, WI to get my bachelor's degree. So, I actually traveled out-of-state on my own, so. And, that was a fun time up in Wisconsin. The professors were really good. Two or three of the professors actually typed up their class notes for me. So, I didn't have to try to take notes in class. One of the professors went to all the trouble to take the tests and exams, and he would spend two or three hours at the copy**

**machine enlarging it for me. So, he went beyond what he had to do. It was while I was at Maranatha that I got my first closed circuit TV, which really came in handy when I was doing my accounting class. And, my accounting professor, for the final exam, allowed me to use his private office to take my test in, because I could set my closed circuit TV up in his office and do the test.**

**Weigel: Very nice.**

**Borgwardt: So, and back then, you know, the closed circuit TV's were 50 pounds. I mean, huge.**

**Weigel: Huge.**

**Borgwardt: I mean, I had to carry it from the girl's dorm up to the main building, you know, we're taking two or three blocks is what I ended up walking.**

**Weigel: Oh, my gosh.**

**Borgwardt: So, and, none of the guys offered to help. I could not figure that out.**

**Weigel: They just watched you carry it, huh?**

**Borgwardt: They just watched me carry it, so. But, it worked; got her done.**

**Weigel: Good thing your dad had you moving all that water, building up the muscles to carry it.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, but then after I graduated from Maranatha, I came back to Vinton. I consider Vinton my hometown. I fell in love with Vinton. Easy to get around in. Easy to know what streets and avenues, and just travel-wise it's excellent, if you like to walk. Public transportation; there is no public transportation in Vinton, but I'm back here because I wanted to live here. And, I got involved in my church. I've taught Sunday School, I've served on the Church Board.**

**Weigel: You did accounting.**

**Borgwardt: Oh, I was the Treasurer for 18 years in the church I attended. I've since changed churches. I've already been the clerk pro-tem for one of the business meetings, so I'm not eligible to hold office for another year and a half. But, I'm sure when the time comes I'll be holding another office.**

**Weigel: Because you're a new member?**

**Borgwardt: New member. The new members, you have to be there two years before you're eligible to hold office.**

**Weigel: Okay.**

**Borgwardt: So, and I figure by the end of two years I'll be ready to hold another office. I'll be chompin' at the bit.**

**Weigel: You like to be involved, don't you?**

**Borgwardt: I like to be involved. Yeah, very much so.**

**Weigel: Well, a lot of that is you're a giver. You like to give back for what you receive, and part of that is you're giving back to the church.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. Anyway.**

**Weigel: And, you got married along the way?**

**Borgwardt: I got married along the way. In fact, next week my husband and I will be celebrating our 18<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.**

**Weigel: Oh, my goodness.**

**Borgwardt: And, we have a 15-year-old son.**

**Weigel: And what else? You home school him.**

**Borgwardt: Home school, yeah. Nick is a freshman this year. We're doing video school through Abeka Academy from Pensacola, FL. We also have Nick involved in the Vinton-Shellsburg high school basketball, and he's also very involved in the youth group at our church.**

**Weigel: And, how do you manage all of that. How do you manage the paperwork, and textbooks and all that's involved with home schooling, activities at the church, and...**

**Borgwardt: That's why I have grey hair.**

**Weigel: That's the only reason, huh?**

**Borgwardt: Well, some days I wonder how I manage it, but I have a closed circuit TV. I scan materials into the computer. I have JAWS on my computer. I do have some Braille skills. Nick is really good about helping get stuff together. He'll go through and look up when he has tests, and he'll say, "Mom, I've got a test or a quiz in this class." You know, and then I'll have to get those out for him. The grading, a lot of times Nick and I will work at that together. I have a horrible time reading his writing. Abeka requires all his work done in pen, except math. Math has to be done I pencil. And, even with the closed circuit TV I can't read the pencil, but he's really good about helpin'. He's harder on himself than I am. He'll count somethin' wrong that may not necessarily be wrong, but, you know, we work at it together. It's been a challenge, but it's been a fun challenge. I've enjoyed some of the classes just as much sometimes, if not more than Nick. I don't have to take the test or the quizzes, but I enjoy the material. So, but he's taking, he had, one Bible class. He has a science class, English, he's taking algebra 1, world geography, he had a health class this year. So, he has basically, just pretty much what you'd have in a regular school, other than the fact that we do it at home. And, we are going through the accredited program where Nick, when he graduates, he'll actually get a diploma from Abeka Academy in Pensacola, FL. And so, we have to send all of our tests and quizzes into them, and they keep track of the grades and send us his report card.**

**Weigel: Wow.**

**Borgwardt: So, and we are winding down. We have 170 lessons, and today we're on lessons 151. So, the end is in sight.**

**Weigel: Summer vacation.**

**Borgwardt: Take two weeks off, and then I order next year's materials, so I can start getting stuff together for the fall. And, try to figure out how I can do things differently, to make it just a little bit easier on mom next year.**

**Weigel: Yeah. A lot of trial and error, and figure out what works and what doesn't, huh?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. They have us giving pop quizzes dictated, where I'm supposed to read him the quiz. Well, that's not working well for me, so I think next year I'm going to spend some time and actually have them typed up, and I'll just hand him the quiz, and he can take it. The scanner is going to get lots of work this summer.**

**Weigel: So, where along the way...You use JAWS?**

**Borgwardt: I use JAWS.**

**Weigel: So, where along the way did you learn your computer skills? You use JAWS; because you're a pretty avid computer user.**

**Borgwardt: Pretty much I'm a self-made geek.**

**Weigel: So, you taught yourself?**

**Borgwardt:** I pretty much taught myself. I've got a little bit of help here and there through the Department, but basically, most of it's just been trial and error on my own part. I even have people callin' me and say, "Jan, I'm having trouble with this computer program, how do I fix it? What do I do?" You know, so I can, over the phone I can trouble-shoot.

**Weigel:** I didn't realize you had taught yourself. I just assumed it was something you had learned at the Braille School or college or something.

**Borgwardt:** No. We didn't have computers when I was at the Braille school. The Braille school didn't get the computers until two years after I graduated. I took, let's see, I took a computer programming class in college, which was a basic programming.

**Weigel:** This is the desktop type.

**Borgwardt:** Basic, the binary access, whatever.

**Weigel:** Basic, that's beyond the rest of us.

**Borgwardt:** Well. Yeah. Anyway.

**Weigel:** Yes, depends on the person.

**Borgwardt:** Depends on the person. Yeah. See, I took a programming class and they used the code Basic. And, I don't remember what it stands for, but I actually wrote...For

**the final project I had to write a program for the class. So, I made a game. So, what I did was, I took the first five books of the Bible and made it a game. You had to type in the names of the books, and you had to spell it correctly to go to the next one. And, you get to the end of the first five books, then I actually programmed the computer to play a little tune.**

**Weigel: Really.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. And, my goal was to do it for the whole Bible. To have a whole 66 books, and that was my goal. I never finished it, but for the project I did the first five books and got an A.**

**Weigel: Good for you.**

**Borgwardt: That's one of the few classes I got an A in.**

**Weigel: That's a lot to be proud of; to teach yourself how to do all that.**

**Borgwardt: In college, I took...One of the other classes I took was, I took a word processing class, and it was one of those you do on your own. So, you had so much time to complete this course, and it's kind of at your own speed. You had certain levels you had to meet to get certain grades. And, what I didn't like about it was to do my stuff that had to be handed in, you had a time limit, you know, say 15 minutes to get an A.**

**45:00**

**Borgwardt:** Well, it'd take me 30 minutes to do it, because I couldn't see the text very well. So, I'm trying to bend over this book, look at what I'm typin', trying to type, can't see the screen of the computer.

**Weigel:** Frustrating.

**Borgwardt:** Frustrating. You know, I finished the course. I think I got a C in the course, but I personally, if I'd had the right tools at the time, I probably could have aced the course.

**Weigel:** If you studied that hard and got a C, I would say an A would have been almost a given.

**Borgwardt:** Oh yeah, you know, if I would have had the right tools at the time, I would have done better. So, you know, a lot of times, the tools have been there. But like in grade school, you know, the large print books were there, but because of people laughing at me or looking different, I didn't want to use those tools. You know, and here I am, you know, at a point in my life where I'm looking, and have looked, and am using different tools that have helped me tremendously.

**Weigel:** You think over the course of us working together, I've seen kind of that struggle that you have with accepting non-visual methods and alternative ways to do things, 'cause you are used to doing things the way you do them.

**Borgwardt:** Oh, yeah.

**Weigel: And, I can tell that that's a hard skill today to accept some of those.**

**Borgwardt: Yes.**

**Weigel: Yup, but today you use your cane.**

**Borgwardt: Use my cane. My cane and I, Buddy and I. Buddy goes everywhere with me. Buddy went with me to the bowling alley the other night. We went bowling.**

**Weigel: Well good, that's good.**

**Borgwardt: That was fun.**

**Weigel: And, you use Braille for some of your course work?**

**Borgwardt: I use Braille for some of my course work.**

**Weigel: Textbooks and things like that?**

**Borgwardt: Yeah. I take classes through Hadley School for the Blind. Right now I'm doing a Braille writing class though Hadley. And, I just submitted my second lesson, so I should be hearing back from them here in the next few days. I've taken food series courses, did those all in Braille. I did my assignments on the computer, where I could just send them electronically. So, then I did the textbooks were in Braille. So, that was fun. Anytime I find anything to do with food, I latch on to it.**

**Weigel:** 'Cause here at home, you manage the home.

**Borgwardt:** I manage the home.

**Weigel:** You do all the cooking, cleaning, and the laundry, and pay the bills.

**Borgwardt:** Yeah.

**Weigel:** You make the house run.

**Borgwardt:** Yeah. In fact, a few weeks ago, on Wednesday nights we have a teen class; we have an activity and Bible study for the teens. And, one of the things we do is we feed them supper, and so a couple weeks ago, I fixed supper for the teens, and they really liked it. I made 'em homemade scalloped potatoes and ham.

**Weigel:** Yum.

**Borgwardt:** They said I could do that again, and I'll probably be doing that here shortly; making 'em meals.

**Weigel:** Very good. And, you do the grilling in the summer.

**Borgwardt:** I do the grilling in the summer, yes. My husband, he doesn't like to grill. He likes the food that comes off the grill, but he doesn't like to grill. But I love it. I love it.

**Weigel:** Is there anything that you shy away from? You don't really shy away from anything in the kitchen, do you?

**Borgwardt: No, not in the kitchen. Not in the kitchen.**

**Weigel: That's kind of your comfort zone isn't it?**

**Borgwardt: That's my place.**

**Weigel: Yeah. Very good. Anything else you want to...?**

**Borgwardt: There's probably lots I could, but I can't think of anything right now.**

**Weigel: If there's, you know, one thing that you think through your life that has made the biggest impact related to your vision, what would you say that is? Is there any one thing?**

**Borgwardt: I don't know. I mean my vision's just, that's just me. I don't know.**

**Weigel: It's part of you, isn't it?**

**Borgwardt: That's just me.**

**Weigel: And, it's not without its challenges along the way; certain people that don't understand or...**

**Borgwardt: Oh, there's times my husband still doesn't get it. He's, you know, he's always saying, he says, "I just; there's times that I just don't understand. I forget you're blind." And he says, "And then there's times like I just know it."**

**Weigel:** And, there's been issues and different things that have come up with at your old church and different people in the community; their reaction to what you can and can't do.

**Borgwardt:** Yeah, "You need to learn your place." "You have limitations." There's one day the church I formerly went to...the pastor's wife tripped over a chair leg. And, it came across that she'd tripped over my cane and therefore, I should keep my cane...I always just lay it underneath the desk at my feet, so if I need it, I just reach down and take it. Well, I was told I could not leave it there anymore. I had to put it over in the corner so that it wasn't on the floor for someone to trip on. So anyway, people can get some funny ideas sometimes. Being told, "Don't even think about doing that;" "You need to learn your place;" "You can't see well;" "You know, there's certain things you shouldn't even be attempting to do."

**Weigel:** You don't let that stop you, do you?

**Borgwardt:** Well, sometimes I do, and sometimes I don't. I mean, last month I went to a Ladies Retreat up in Wisconsin and had the opportunity to go down a zip line. I mean, I did it. I would have done it a second time, but it was time for lunch. You know, the other night we went bowling. I mean, three years ago, they took a group of kids bowling from the church. I wouldn't have bowled. I would have sat and just watched. Well, Wednesday night I decided I was going bowling, and I had my own money and I went.

**Weigel:** Good.

**Borgwardt: So, it was fun. First game I bowled a 31, and I was pretty devastated. Second game I bowled a 61, still devastated, but I got one strike.**

**Weigel: Awesome.**

**Borgwardt: So...**

**Weigel: And, the more you do it, the better you'll get.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah.**

**Weigel: Not bad for not bowling for a long, long time.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, that's the first time I'd actually been bowling since, well, I guess, I did a type of bowling one time at Senior Orientation, but.**

**Weigel: Oh yeah, we did that little bowling.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, but this was the first time I'd actually gone to the bowling alley, you know, to use the regular bowling ball; kept the gutters really clean that night.**

**Weigel: That's all right, too.**

**Borgwardt: I got beat by a five-year-old; the pastor's son beat me.**

**Weigel: Well, he's probably done it more than you have in his five years than you have.**

**Borgwardt: But, it was fun, it really was. I enjoyed it. I'd like to do it again sometime.**

**Weigel: I'm sure you will. So, then with relation to the Department then, gosh, I don't remember what year we started working together.**

**Borgwardt: 2007.**

**Weigel: Was it 2007?**

**Borgwardt: December 2007. I got to the point where I knew I needed help. Things were not working. That's when I was ready to do the major, let's see, evolution; I don't know. Print wasn't working. I was having a horrible time just getting around. So, I was ready to.**

**Weigel: Because you were having regular headaches, 'cause you were trying to do things visually and your vision was getting worse.**

**Borgwardt: My vision was to the point where, let's see, at that point I don't know if I was even seeing an eye chart. I think I was to the point of seeing fingers. I don't remember for sure. My vitreous had clouded up. So, I mean, I just basically, all I could see was light, dark, shadows.**

**Weigel: 'Cause I remember Curt would be in the living room and you'd bump into him because you wouldn't see him.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, I wouldn't even see him. Yeah, I just, I mean, I'd trip over my husband. He's says, how do you miss**

**me. Six foot over 300 pounds, and I'm hitting this guy and don't even see him. So, that's when I learned to really use the cane and not just carry the cane. I started learning to use Braille. Got JAWS, you know; learned some alternative techniques.**

**Weigel: And, I think a big part of that was the confidence, too. Because when we did cane travel, you did just fine. You know, crossing the highway or...you know, certain aspects scared you, but you had the skills to do it.**

**Borgwardt: I still don't cross the highway. It's really going to get tougher now. The grocery store down here on the corner closed, so I don't have the grocery store down here. So, if I need to go to the store, eventually one day I'm going to have to take myself, which means I'm going to have to cross the highway.**

**Weigel: No way around it now.**

**Borgwardt: Crossing the highway goes back to my years at the Braille school. We were not allowed to cross the highway.**

**Weigel: Because they didn't think you were safe doing it?**

**Borgwardt: That's where I am, I don't know. And, I think that's where part of that block comes from; me not being able to bring myself to cross the highway, 'cause I was always told students do not cross the highway. That, and the fact one time when I was riding my bicycle and didn't see that big white semi. That kind of scared me, too.**

**Weigel: So, we've crossed the highway.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah.**

**Weigel: And, you did just fine.**

**Borgwardt: Yeah, but I just could not bring myself to do it alone. If Nick's with me, I'll do it, but I can't bring myself to do it alone.**

**Weigel: Some day I suspect you will, maybe.**

**Borgwardt: Maybe. My friend, Judy, you know she says, "Well, Jan, if it's something you really wanna do, you're gonna do it."**

**Weigel: Yup, you just have to convince yourself you're gonna. And, then we worked doing homemaker case, worked on managing the home, and then you went to Senior Orientation.**

**Borgwardt: I went to Senior Orientation. Still trying to bribe my way back to another Senior Orientation.**

**Weigel: Yeah, you've got to get makin' lunch pretty soon, huh? And that Senior Orientation, there was one time after Senior Orientation, I'm tryin' to remember what you did. There was something that you did, that you said the old Jan never would have done that. Do you remember what that was? You haven't done it in like 30 years, I think you said. I don't remember what it was.**

**Borgwardt: Got me.**

**Weigel: Because you commented that a piece of the old Jan is back. I'm drawing a blank, but I do remember you saying that.**

**Borgwardt: I remember, but I don't remember what was goin' on.**

**Weigel: I don't remember if it was that you got up in front of someone, or there was a challenge that you typically would have shied away from, and you didn't shy away from it; you just got up and did it.**

**Borgwardt: Probably a conflict with my husband.**

**Weigel: Well, I'm thinking it was something with the church. You did a show or a, I think you got up in front of people, you did a reading or something. There was something. But, you had commented that after Senior Orientation you felt like you got a piece of the old Jan back.**

**Borgwardt: I don't remember.**

**Weigel: The wild Jan from the younger days.**

**Borgwardt: The wild Jan, oh my gosh.**

**Weigel: And, now you manage everything and manage well.**

**Borgwardt: Um-hum.**

**Weigel: Depending on the day.**

**Borgwardt: Depending on the day. Some days are better than other days.**

**Weigel: Yes, that's with everybody. All right, well, thank you, Jan, for your time in allowing us to record it. You'll be asked to review the transcript of the interview once this is all put in; they'll send you something to review. And, then we'll have you sign that form, and any questions about the use of the material?**

**Borgwardt: No.**

**Weigel: Okay.**

**1:00:25**

**(End of Recording)**

**Jo Ann Slayton**

**7/29/2011**