Theresia Jones

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Really interesting. I had a question right before I stopped, but I have such a short matter nowadays. I am pushing 50, so

Answer: I wish I was 50 again.

Question: Seems like. When I was 17 I joined the Navy. It seems like yesterday when I think about it. It seems like it went just like that! Um, let's see we talked about your house burning. That's what I was going to ask, did your room get damaged?

Answer: Oh, yeah. I was ok, um, all the beddings, the windows were blown out. There was none of that, and it was an open sky, the roof was gone. Um, and we were getting, now I know that from my father, ok. My father said, we had 8 incinerator bombs in our bedroom upstairs because we wanted to know how come this got burned and not the rest of it. Well, they were quick enough and saved it. The house immediately next to us was hit by a bomb. It was completely gone, ok? And we were just lucky to get the burn bombs, incinerator bombs. The top was gone, but the bottom was still there, so we were very fortunate just to have that. Other houses, the whole town had damage, of course, and God, I can still smell that awful smell when everything burns, you know. It stinks, it's horrible.
I lost a cousin that way. My mother's brother in town had one child, one daughter. She was in Munich at work, and Munich really got hit. It was just leveled, and she got killed being in a basement in the building with all other people, employees and what have you, and this building really got hit, and the gas pipes leaked and they all suffocated. And I remember father telling us about it and we just could not imagine anything like that, but we all made faces of pity and my father, my mother started to cry and, of course, the kids joined the parents in crying that our cousin, Katarina will no more come to see us, and so family wise I just lost this girl as a cousin. She must have been 5 years older than me, and one more boy. My mother's other sister, she had one child, one son. I was drafted and he had to go to the Russian front. Now in those days there was no discussion what went on in the Russian front. I know it from TV on history, uh, what went on. They all froze to death. They didn't have the clothes to keep them warm, the German soldiers, ok? So I picture myself, my poor cousin Willie, he was 19. He must have been one of them. But I lost no uncles, not my father, so we were very fortunate in that.

Question: Did the loss of your cousin was just hard. Being a child must have been hard to understand death to start with, wasn't it? Did you have many relatives just pass away naturally at that time?

Answer: No, you see, um, although all the towns in Germany are so clustered together, it still took time and means to get to them. You had to go either by bicycle, and how can you travel with 6 kids. It's ridiculous, impossible. Um, or you went to the bus and in the next town you took the trolley car connection to get to them, but during the war, everybody had no food, so when my mother was told from my father. Hey, my father and my mother are coming tomorrow. My mother went to pieces. Heinrich, how can you do this? I have nothing to serve them. I've got no coffee. You know what we have. So when my grandfather on my father's side and his wife, my grandmother, they brought their own whatever it was, because they also knew with 6 kids to feed, how can we eat what they have. So gradually, it got so bad, nobody went nowhere. My grandfather, they stayed where they lived. We stayed there. Aunts there, cousins there. You just grew apart. You lost contact. And I've never seen them again. After the war, how old was I when the war ended

in '45 in May? 14? Was I 14? '45 minus '31 is what, 14? Yeah, I was 14. But a dumb 14, a naïve 14. Not like the 14 years of today, huh? Nothing like that. Um, well, the war's over. No more air raids, no more bombings. Quiet. The house gets built up good. Let's go be a normal, whatever that means. Then the occupations came to town, what '45, sure. Woke up one morning, German houses have shutters, Rollladen What's a Rollladen in English? Roll shutters. My father's house was shutters. You open the windows and shutters on the outside. You crack the shutters, you hook them you close the window and that's your, it's the drapes. Ok. Mama, the first one up every morning, she opens up the kitchen window, her bedroom window, get the air in, first thing you know. I've still got that habit today. And God Almighty!, she screamed bloody murder. Heinrich!!! Yah! There's something out there! Ein Panzer! Ah, you gotta be kidding. Father got up, looked, by that time, we heard it upstairs, mother screaming, something's terribly wrong. So we all open our windows, and my brothers… they were at Ahhh, a panzer a real live big panzer, a tank. Americans. Ok. They were parked outside, and no doubt they knew when the shutters are closed, the people are still in bed. It was early in the morning. And as soon as they noticed that somebody wants to open up, there was this knock on the door. My mother wouldn't go. My father wouldn't let her go, but behind my father were not us sisters. Behind my father were the 3 brothers. Curious. And whatever was, we don't understand English, and you do with motions. You start using your hands to communicate, ok? And these GI's came in the house and they were nice, they were friendly, they were armed. We saw all this and scared, oh, we were scared to death. We were afraid they would take the little food we would have. You know, had no idea what they wanted, but whatever it was, my father was behind them or ahead of them opening doors. Went upstairs, went everywhere, everywhere, the basement, they combed the yard, they went everywhere, and then they left. And then the tank left. But that was a morning my mother will never forget. The first thing you see is a tank in front of the door, and that was the occupation. Americans were settling in town.

Question: so were you afraid of them? Did you didn't know what they were up to?

Answer: Pooohh, what do I know what occupation means? What do I know what they're doing there?

Question: But you knew they were the one that had been bombing you.

Answer: No, I did not know it. Just airplanes. They were so high up. I didn't know what I know now, their logos. I know now that the Americans came by day and the British flew the nights. I know all this now, but way back then as a 10, 11, 12-year-old. I mean, whose to tell you? My father never talked about it.

Question: Did you. When we were talking about outside. You were pretty young, but Germany had been in a great depression after the first war.

Answer: Yeah, but that was, what year was that, '29? Like you people say? I was born in '31. How would I know about this?

Question: I mean, you were born in a time that things started to change, though, that the economy improved.

Answer: So I was a baby in diapers, what do I know.

Question: Your experience in Germany. I'm trying to think how to put this.

Answer: Well, let's just say from 1939 on…

Question: Yeah, from '39 on, your view of things because some people they look, even me being second-generation American, but German ancestry, you sort of feel this guilt.

Answer: Guilt?

Question: Yeah, having grown up as, especially having a name like mine, like Adolph, growing up…

Answer: Well, don't be ashamed of it!

Question: Oh, I'm not ashamed of it, but there is this perception people have of the Germans are evil, that they all knew what was going on, but in reality, you were just a family…

Answer: But, Good Lord, every country, every nation got the good and the bad. Not everybody is bad. Not all Germans are bad. Not all Americans are bad. The Japs, the Chinese. There's good people, too. The Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. My goodness, when you see the movies on history, other Japanese people, my God, did my country really do this? They were against it, so why not the same thing in Germany, who not the same thing in Russia, wherever?

Question: That's what I was trying to get at, that you were, that your view of Germany, I mean, everybody thinks you knew, everybody knew it was evil, everybody knew…

Answer: Well, maybe some people knew more than we did. Good for them. I wish we did. I wish I did.

Question: But in your view, it was just family…

Answer: I was so young, I was busy, I was helping my parents. What needed to be done? I looked at it as ? It had to be. I didn't know nothing else. I didn't know better.

Question: We interviewed a man named Alfred Wehner in Richland, Washington, and Alfred Wehner was older. He was probably, I think he was 17 in 1945, and Alfred grew up by Wiesbaden?

Answer: That's close to my home as well, yes.

Question: And he said that in the very last year of the war he volunteered because things were going so badly. And

Answer: But he was a boy.

Question: Yes. But what he said about the end of the war, he said that losing a war was one thing, because you know the war ended and we lost, but he said, when

I found out what had happened I felt like the rug had been pulled out from underneath me. When he found out about the atrocities that had happened.

Answer: Hmmhmmm. Well, how could he have known about this at age 17?

Question: Well, that's it. He said, you know that people's perception that it was well known is not true. He said, I was a German doing what I was going for my country, you know, and that I had no idea, which I believe is true. He said most people didn't know what was going on.

Answer: I had no I idea anything like that happened until I came to the United States and understanding English. I mean, I didn't come to the United States in '53 and right away I know how to talk…as I do today. No! It happened when I knew English besides yes, no and ok. It took years for me to understand and translate each work and put it into a sentence, and then try to retain all this, huh? I didn't want to lose my German, then I had to in order to learn the English, I had to go into stores. All this stuff in front of me. I have no idea what it is, I mean. If it was a clothing store, yah, sure I see the shirts, and all that sort of thing, but hey, how about the first day I step into an American grocery store in Oklahoma in Bristow?, Oklahoma, where I wound up with my soldier husband at the time, and his mother and I and my children we went to town walking. It was a nice day, and she told, introduced me to her neighbors, this is my son's, Bob's, new German wife and family, blah, blah, blah. Go to a grocery store and I almost went bananas. I couldn't believe everything there, and I had just left home. Nothing is there. How much is it? How can I get it to Germany? The little money my divorced husband, I divorced him some years later, he was an Air Force Sergeant. Of course, that's what he was when I met him in Wiesbaden. Uh, if he had a million dollars I'm sure he would have given to me every penny of it. I would have bought that store. Get it to my mother. Get everything over there to feed my family. I couldn't believe it. I've never seen it in my life. And there was names, what does it mean? My ex-mother-in-law says, Well, in English. She spoke Chinese. I don't know what she said, what is it? Is it something to eat? Yeah. What? Well, she bought it and at home she opened it, and then I knew it was beans. I mean, you get the idea?

Question: Now, things after the war things were really bad in Germany. I mean, they were still…

Answer: Good heavens, it took years, you know. We kept writing, of course, all that time, and when my mother. For instance, when my baby sister's turn came to go to Holy Communion, there was no white dress for her to wear like it was in 1939 with me. And I went everywhere looking for a Communion dress, and when I did see one, my ex-husband at the time says, that costs too much money. I can't give you that money to send to your sister, you know, and so I remember sending my baby sister a robe. It was just an ordinary flannel, red robe. It had a pattern in it. And I sent that home, and I sent what I could send for her Communion was a pair of white shoes. Communion shoes. I managed that, to get the money from him. Fine. And you know what, I don't remember when her Communion day was, but it was past, and here come a letter form my mother and there's a picture in it. My baby sister, Mareda, in her Communion outfit. Guess what she had on? I got that picture somewhere. I'll dig it up for you. A candle. Picture it in my mother's yard at home, ok? At that time. She had a candle, fine. It was supplied by the church anyway, so no problem there. She had her candle. Not as pretty decorated as mine was. Guess what she wore for a communion dress? That robe I send her. She wore that

and I could see the white shoes and I said to my ex-husband at the time, look at this. Look what Mareda is wearing for Communion, and look at my picture and look at that picture. She couldn't find a Communion dress for my baby sister when she went to Communion and I don't know the date, but she had to be under 10 at least, 8 and not younger. She was born '44 and 8 years makes what? 1952, '53. I was already in United States, so it was in the summer of '53 when she went to Communion. I left home in January, Communion is usually in April. Wearing a robe. That's how long it took for Germany after the war to get the goods of stores to build, to have a store, and then where to get it?

Question: So the occupation of, when the Americans came, they actually came into your town then. You had soldiers there?

Answer: Oh, yeah. The main track, which you would call it over here, the Hauptstraße, the main street. WE had some gorgeous, single dwelling homes, all brick. Nothing wood like here, and they were owned by the well-to-do people like my doctor was one of them. Ok? The lawyers had a house like that. The teachers had a house like that, and that's where most Americans, how do you call it? Confiscated? And, uh, they were living in that, yah, and all their equipment parked on the streets, yeah.

Question: So did you, um, I know that the Americans weren't supposed to fraternize, but did you ever speak…

Answer: Well, no, I didn't, but my brother next to me was a good one at that. You couldn't keep him at home, Uh, because he either saw or heard that they had candy which we hadn't seen in years and stuff like that, you know. My brother came home one day and had a duffel bag over his shoulder. How picture him with his polio leg, you know, half a boy, having this duffle bag, and he brings it to my mother. My mother says, Herbert what have you got there? You got a wash this Mom.. Mutti, and this is laundry from American soldier. You gotta wash this. I ain't got no soap. I can't wash that. So he took that duffle bag, turned it upside-down, everything comes out. Some underwear, socks, handkerchiefs, uniforms, and here comes soap. Ivory soap, and brown soap, whatever you call it. American. And my, and then my brother told her that's gotta get washed, and then I gotta take it back. You gotta iron it. You iron it, you're the tailor you help ironing, huh? So we started a laundry shop. And not just one duffel bag. Pretty soon he needed our garden cart, he came home with it full, and they were all packed, identified whose what and whose what. So mother now had to figure out how to do all this laundry and not get the laundry mixed up from this guy to this guy. I mean, how do you do this? I don't know how she did it, but she managed. She did it. So all of it was washed, boiled. There was no washing machine. We had a boiler in the basement that heated even the water for us to bathe in the basement. Our bathtub was in the basement, not upstairs. And so the white clothes and towels, everything white was boiled and we had a thing that stomped it, and then it was heaped out into a great big vat. My father put it up high so mother could do the scrubbing and, of course, me too, and then it was scrubbed, then it was rinsed, then it was taken upstairs, put on the line, let it dry, take it in, put in on the table, and to iron it, and then it got ironed. The shirts for the GI's, at the time, you had to make 3 creases in the back of the shirt. God they looked good. I like that part, and one up front. And then my brother Herbert would have all the clothes in the duffel bag that's folder and the uniforms on hangars, and he would return them in evening hours, so I guess the GI's were busy during the day whatever it is they're doing, and he delivered the laundry at night. And there was no

money. We needed goods. Money was no good, couldn't buy nothing, but he came home some what do you want to say, a client from the laundry returned to, one GI would give my brother more and this guy maybe less, or different, but before you knew it, we were in soap. Hallelujah! We could wash and scrub and do as we pleased! And candy, and stuff. WE had to learn and find out what stuff in cans were. Well, they were their rations. GI rations. Some things we liked. Some we figured out what it is. My mother did most of the testing. No, I don't know what this is, so my brother took it back and somehow, what is this, you know. So that was good, because mother had stuff to cook, mother had Crisco, cocoa, coffee, candy for us kids, and my father's cigarettes. That was number one. Make sure I get cigarettes. And he did. A pack at a time, Camels. So that went on until the town emptied. I don't remember when that was. I don't have a clue, but I would say that lasted a good full year. We were busy, we were busy washing and ironing, and my brother being a tailor and he did the ironing of the shirts and uniforms, huh? And, of course, the GI's want their uniforms back in good shape. No wrinkles, no nothing, and my brother got most of the stuff.. than the others, you know, so we were good at that. So we did that for a year. I'm sure it was a good year.

Question: So during the war, you probably never saw much sugar.

Answer: Everything was rationed. Like I said, Sugar, sugar wasn't that necessary, I don't think to my mother. I mean, you can do without sweets. How she managed, whatever sugar she had, she managed it if she had the flour to put a cake together. My mother's concern was the dinner. Never mind in between. We can skip a meal, no big deal. Ok. You can go out in the yard and get an apple. It was the meat, the potatoes, the cabbage, to make the gravy to put something substantial in your stomach to get my father to work. He had to swing this hammer all day long. The guy was skinny as a rail from not having what it takes to put a little fat on the body. That was my mother's concern.

Question: Were you worried about your father?

Answer: No, because I was as skinny as he was! What I ate, he ate, what he ate, I ate with him. We shared things.

Question: You must have, in your trips with your father in the country,

Answer: On the bicycle?

Question: You must have had a real special relationship with him because you had all that time to talk to him…

Answer: Well, uh, you can't really talk while you bicycle. He would be up front leading me, so he would say, probably, you gotta stop to go potty, or are you tired, you want to take a break, but you cannot carry a conversation. You cannot bicycle side-by-side. I mean, you know, besides there is the street with cars or horse and carriage, horse and what, wagon? No, we just talked when we got home, or in the ditch eating a sandwich. Like that.

Question: Now, tobacco was hard to find. Was your father able to get cigarettes?

Answer: Uh, good thing. Good question. My father's father owned cigar shop in Mainz, Well known. If there are any Mainzs' around out here in the United States, his cigar shop was Wolf, W-o-l-f, and it was near the Hauptbahnhof in Mainz Hauptbahnhof is the main terminal for the railroad, outside of that, that was his cigar store. And through his father, he smoked, my grandfather smoked nothing but cigars. Both of them, matter of fact. Both grandfathers on both sides, and my father was supplied through his father. So my father did have smokes, but we could not always get to Mainz to get them or grandfather to bring them, ok? And so when the brothers, my brothers knew from my father wherever you are, if I have cigarettes or not, if you see a butt, pick it up, bring it home. I decide if I can roll it into paper and make me a cigarette, and that was just something you did without havin' bein' told to do. My father needed cigarettes.

Question: In the fire, when you house was burned, was there something that was really dear to you that you lost?

Answer: What did I lose?

Question: When the fire…

Answer: That burned the house?

Question: Was there something that was special to you that you lost?

Answer: Well, of course, the beds and the bedding. The featherbeds, you call them down comforters or something like that? Our featherbeds are better than down comforters…. no comparison. Of course, they were gone. Of course they were missed. Who's going to replace that? The rectors helped us out with pillows and blankets, but it wasn't what we had, you know. This hurt my mother more than us kids. We didn't care what we slept on as long as we were warm and had a bed. It was Mom felt bad, father felt bad, you know. And my father had, we had geese, so we always had feathers. But it was to get the material again to make a pillow to stuff the feathers in and then you had to have a pillowcase to put over it. That was none to have, so, yeah it was, but we managed. We were not particular. To this day, I'm particular about nothin'. I don't think.

Question: So your Mom, she actually made those comforters.

Answer: Oh, yeah, my mother, she had her master's in sewing, so she knew how to do everything. She knew how to sew. It's to get the material to do what you need, huh?

Question: I have a girlfriend from the past, and her mother grew up in Germany with 4 brothers, and they spent most of the war running from the Russians, and my girlfriend had this very nice down comforter, very thick. And she told me one day that that was her grandmother that had given it to her.

Answer: Oh, I'm pretty sure it is.

Question: And that comforter, her grandmother carried all through Europe with her.

Answer: Oh, yeah. This is what kept you alive is warmth

Question: I thought it was real special that she still…

Answer: Yeah. You know, when these comforters, when you say like you just did is from her grandmother, now picture the feathers inside. They're old, so what do you do? I tell you how you do it. You open it up, and you take some of the feathers out, or all of it, and if you have your own geese and ducks to pluck the feathers like I did with my mother, you fill it up. It can still be your grandmother's comforter, but you renewed the old feathers. You can't wash it. Dry cleaning, in Germany, in those days? What is that? We hang them out to air, and then we have a thing out of wicker. It's got a long handle, and it's got a head…I don't know how to describe it in English, and you hit it to get whatever dust if any. I'm sure there is, and to freshen it. To liven it again. You leave it out all day, bring it in the evening, you got a fresh bed, and it's smells refreshing. Oh, you sleep like a baby. And we do the same thing what rugs, you know. Hang it over a line and just beat the dust out of it. I done that too.

Question: I can see why that would be such a big loss to you then. To lose your featherbed.

Answer: Oh, yeah, good heavens yeah. Who wants to sleep with a blanket when you're used to all this cuddly feather stuff.

Question: So you didn't have….did you have um, you said you weren't the daughter your mother wanted. Did, you weren't really a person for frilly dresses and dolls, were you?

Answer: Well, uh, there was no occasion. I had just one dress, period, anyway. I had one dress to go to Sunday….uh, to church on Sundays. We had week clothes and we had Sunday clothes, and my children to this day, I brought that up sometime ago, and they don't know what I'm talking about. Well, we had school clothes, but that wasn't Sunday clothes. They were clean, no holes, nothing was missing, no button, none of that, but when you got home, you took it off, you wore your scrubbies, because that outfit, if it's not dirty, you wore to school again the next day and the next day and the next day and the next day, then it gets washed and that's all you had. There are 6 kids to dress, right? But Sundays, we had Sunday clothes. Everybody had either a suit, a dress, my mother – hat, gloves, the whole bit. That was Sunday clothes. That was strictly Sundays.

Question: So all through that period of, Sundays was a special kind of…

Answer: Oh, yes, nobody worked on Sundays. Father made it a point from the beginning. We work all week. Sundays my father was Protestant, my mother was Catholic, and therefore her children were. And father stayed home, whatever he did, and mother and I, we trotted off to church twice a day, morning and evenings. That was nice.

Question: You like, was church fun?

Answer: uh, I liked singing. I like the hymns, and I brought with me in 1953 my hymnbook, and when I have time, think about it, I pick it up and I sing. I lost some of the melodies, you know, from so long ago.

Question: What is the um, what is the hymn that you remember singing, could you sing along…

Answer: Ave Maria, in German. Oh, there are so many, the Braham's Lullabies.

Question: Can you sing a little bit of Ave Maria?

Answer: Oh, my God, no.

Question: Just like the first line, just so I can hear it.

Answer: I'm not a singer, for heaven sakes.

Question: Oh, you don't have to worry about it.

Answer: How does it go? A v e M a r I a. Oh, I can't sing. Ave Maria I can't sing. How about, um, how does that song go? Gu…um, oh, I wish you would have told me you was gonna ask me to…..I could have brought the book, and kind of rehearsed how it goes.

Question: Let me ask you about another piece.

Answer: um, I can't do it without the words.

Question: ok, let me ask you about another piece. We ask a lot of people about music. In fact, it just comes up in conversations. In most interviews, it comes up, music. 'Cause I think back, I think that time of period, music was more important, almost, than it is today, because we have so much input? But a song that comes up constantly, and it comes up from everybody we've interviewed, from Dr. Wehner Who was a German, to we interviewed a man named Franz Gable?, who's Austrian, and to Americans, an American who was in the Army in World War II, is Lili Marlene? Do you know what that is?

Answer: Oh, I have heard it played on records, of course. Uh, I have heard her sing that song when you watch a World War II movie. On the German side, and yeah, Lili Marlene, yeah.

Question: Do you remember that from back then? Do you remember hearing it?

Answer: Oh, yes, of course.

Question: 'Cause it was most recorded in English.

Answer: How does that song go?

Question: It's a…standing under a lamplight by the guardhouse door…

Answer: Yah, now you're using English words. La, la, la , la, la, (singing in German) blah, blah, blah. Oh, I wish I knew the words to it now, but yeah, I have known the whole song, but I've forgotten it. I didn't know you was gonna ask me. Yeah, it's a beautiful song. It's about Marlena under a street lamppost.

Question: It's sort of a romantic song. I mean, it's like a love lost song.

Answer: Uh, it is a love song, yah.

Question: And who was the, do you remember who sang it? I can't remember her name. Lale Anderson, was that the woman who sang it in Germany, do you know? No, it's not Lale, it's Lale, um, it was Marlena Dietrich who sang it.

Answer: Well, she did it in her American version. Oh, I have her record at home. What's her name again. She's got a fabulous low voice. Zarah Leander, her name was Zarah Leander. She sang that song…. recorded on a German record. I have one record of her at my house today. I brought it over in '53. Zarah Leander, ja.

Question: Now that's another question. Is…Marlena Dietrich, because I have, I have many copies of Marlena that I collected, and, Marlena Dietrich, of course, sang it, but you know, I spoke to this friend of mine who's 70 years old, she's German, and she was sort of, you know, when I first heard it I asked about it. I said Marlena Dietrich sang that, and she was sort of upset that I was saying that, 'cause Marlena Dietrich really did not make it famous. She, it was famous before, then Marlena Dietrich recorded it, and I think that she also. Well, she talked a little bit about Marlena Dietrich, and things…do you know much about Marlena Dietrich?

Answer: Not when I was a young kid, no. I learned about her being over here in the United States. Movies, who she is, and yes, I liked her, and I know she got away from Germany on account of that Hitler stuff, and I don't blame her. She was what, 20, 25 when she took off? Well, then she had knowledge and understood what was going on. I sure didn't.

Question: She was here at that time.

Answer: Yah, yah, yah.

Question: Yeah, I was just wondering, 'cause I had a couple people say no, no. In fact, this one American GI, he actually met the woman in Germany who sang it. He showed me her autograph. What was her name?

Answer: Zarah Leander

Question: Yeah, he met her in Germany.

Answer: Wow!!!

Question: And he heard her singing on stage, and…

Answer: Wow! Yeah.

Question: The woman who really made it famous was Vera Lynn, from England. Oh, that was the English version, yeah. I have that copy also.

Answer: Yeah, it was mostly played in the movies, of course, made in Hollywood, the World War II movies were the German, you saw some German version where the German soldiers sitting around daydreaming, thinking of home, listening to that Lilly Marlene song, yeah. It's a tearjerker, I suppose.

Question: So did you sing in the choir in church?

Answer: No. no, no, no, no, no. Just German Catholic Sunday school songs.

Question: Was it a big church?

Answer: oh, yeah. Good heavens, yeah. It's still there today, both of them, really. Umhmmm.

Question: Does the, your father being Protestant, staying home, did your father, he wasn't a religious, he didn't go to church.

Answer: No, my father didn't go at all. Not even to his own, hmmmm,mmm. No, he had work to do. He wasn't going to go to church. He didn't mind Mama going, of course.

Question: So you say you went twice on Sunday?

Answer: Mornings and evenings. The early Mass and then, I think about 5, thereabouts in the evening hours. Oh, we had to go. It was a must. I even had to go to church before going to school. They were side-by-side. Still are today, if were to go home. Go buy a airplane ticket. Go home, you can see it and photograph it. We had to go to church first, didn't, no preaching, none of that. The priest would just greet us for another day, and we ought to be good and we ought to listen what the teacher says, blah, blah, blah. He would bless us and that was it. But that had to be first. Next door was the school.

Question: So did, what was Christmas like during the war? Was it….

Answer: Oh, that was fun. Oh, God, that was fun. Now, um, try to remember that we didn't know who Kris Kringle was, ok? I just found that out later. Christmas Eve, in the afternoon, first we get bathed. We don't bathe every day like you do today, you know. Sometimes in the shower twice a day, depends. Christmas Eve in the morning it starts in the kitchen. The cold stove, as to heat the water, the vat in the basement, that's full. That's being heated, and in the kitchen floor is that monstrous, galvanized vat, the ones we used to scrub the clothes, it serves for our bathtub. It gets hauled on the kitchen floor, all the windows closed, and the cleanest of us 6 gets to bathe first. That was never me. It doesn't matter who gets picked first. I don't remember that, but I do remember it was Heinz and me the last. We were the dirtiest. The one that's 10 years younger than I am. I don't know how he gets so dirty. I know how I get dirty, from working. But you bathed in that same water till all 6 of you have been washed. And there is no rinsing off, none of that. Maybe mother when she, oh, yeah, our head gets rinsed off with clean water, but that's about it, but you do not get out of this water where 6 of them have been in and hop into a shower. That don't exist, ok. We were happy to have that. And what else did you want to know? Oh, Christmas. Yah. Ok, we get bathed first. Mother had laid out the clothes for us to wear. And as soon as it got dark, our mother was nowhere to be seen. Where my mom, our Mutti go? My father would say, OH, she went to church. She went to confession. Confession. Ok, we all believed it. And the Christmas tree. You don't see a Christmas tree in those days, in my father's house as you do today a week before. Uh, uh. And besides, the tree was always in my father's bedroom because it's cold in there, you know. First we bathed, then we

get dressed. Mother disappears. We were told where she is, ok. And then you heard a chain, and a bell. A chain like somebody's dragging a chain up and downstairs that makes noises, right? Ah, father says. Ok. Line up. Here comes Kris Kringle. She's knocking on the door. I'm gonna have to let her in. And you be good now, and by 8, we stood in line, in front of the Christmas tree. The bedroom door was open, and there in the corner on my father's nightstand, everything he had on it away, and the Christmas tree's there, with real candles burning, lit, and stuff underneath, ok, toys and stuff. So here opens my father the door, and here comes this creature all dressed in white, and, um, everything is hidden. A veil on the face, even if you would do like this you couldn't see who it was, and gloves and everything. Feet and everything was covered up. And she dragged this chain and a bell, and a voice is disguised now, you know. She would come in and my father would say, gutten aben, Kris Kenchun. And she would say, gutten aben Herr Wolf, and my father would introduce us to her. Now you have to, you know, that's all pretending on the parents' part, ok, but we little ones, we ate it up, and we were scared. Sometimes you got whipped, ok? When we were bad, and so father would say, This is my oldest daughter, Theresia, and then Kris Kringle would say, Gutten Aben Theresia you know everything disguised, and she would ask me if I was good today and all sort of things like that on down the line. And when she was finished with us, she insisted we say the Lord's Prayer, which we did. We prayed all together, and a song, and we could pick. Was it Silent Night, was it any other German Christmas song. We did that, and so before she left, she said, Now I have brought you some gifts, and they're under the tree, and your father will give them to you, ok? So she left, and my father behind her, but he stayed gone a little while, ok? And so he came back and says, ok, kids, this is yours, this is yours, this is yours, and then he was gone again. So we at least started to whatever we….I get to that in a minute. And then was gone again. And so here's Christmases later on, the brother next to me with the polio, Herbert, he comes to us and he pushes me and he says, Don't you know who that is? And I said, It's Chriskindchen. Ahh, Sie sind dumm, it's our mother! Nein, mother's in church. Believe it, this is our mother, and I said, No, it's not. He is the one who figured it out, the disappearance of our mother. Father says….he's gone, and then doggone it, here he comes, days later. Here comes Herbert and he had all that stuff. And he pushed me aside wherever it was, and he says, Here! Here's your proof. Isn't that what that Chriskindchen had on? This is my bed sheet. This is this, this is that, this is that. And I said, Herbert You gotta be kidding. No! You watch next year. And doggon it, by next year we willy, and we were no more afraid, you know, because it was our mother, and some of us even started to giggle, you know, kind of let our mother and father know, Hey, you two. We're not that dumb no more. We know it's Mom, and this is how Christmas was, but the stuff on the table during the war was all stuff we'd seen before. It was just repainted. For instance, all girls in Germany in my time. We had doll buggies. Pretty ones. They were lined inside with pink taffeta, and nice handmade pillows and a doll, whatever, huh? And of course, we played with it during the year. And it gets dirty, maybe damaged. Maybe the wheel needs fixin', ok? So around September, all of our toys disappeared, if you could call them toys. Couldn't figure out where they went. And when we asked my mother, Mother, Mareda's so and so is missing. Where is it? And she would say, Oh, it's kaput. Your father's gotta repair that one. She'll get it back, and then you forget about it, you know. You get sidetracked, you do something else. Doggon it, and Christmastime, I mean the stuff looks all good and looks all new, but then you had to think, Mama, that looks like the one I had, and then the other sibling would say, Well, yeah, don't you remember? That used to have this color, and this was like this and my doll buggy was pink all summer long. Now it's white. My father and my mother, way

before Christmas, start taking things away from all of us, and father did this in the nighttime. Oh, we heard him down there at night, but who cares what father does, you know. We had whatever we did, but it was he who repaired, who repainted. Mother on the sewing machine. New dresses for the dolls, new pillow, new something, and that was year after year. Our same stuff, just a different face. And you bet your bippy it was fun! We were together and it was even more fun as we grew older, as all of us had our own families and me and my family being stationed over there fore 3 years, seeing all of them. It had been 9, 10 years since we saw them and then us going home. Christmas always at my father's and mother's. We were 26 in the living room. Great big Christmas tree, and the nativity set, and my sister and her family, and all down the line, all standing around this tree, singing, praying, my mother then being the grandmother of her children's children, she had presents for the grandchildren, but not for the grown-ups. Hells bells, it cost a fortune! Children AND parents, ok? So mother had to make a limit, and tell the grown-ups. Hey, you know. I just want you to know this Christmas I can't afford all 26 of you. It's too, whatever reason. Just the kids, and that was fine. But when they came, her children had presents for mother and father. You see what I'm saying? Was fun. Darned right it was fun. My father took the dining room and the living room. Took all the furniture aside and put tables together and all 26 of us ate and drank and had fun. And that's what my children miss, too. This growing up, this Kris Kringle bit. Whether you believe it, whether it's phony, whether, whatever reason. As a young kid you believe it. Kris Kringle comes from heaven.

Question: So that was pretty ingenious of your Mom…

Answer: Ah, it was. Hey, my mother wasn't the only one. I'm pretty sure there's women out there who recall the same thing that, the same thing went on in their house like that. That was a Catholic belief. We were told Kris Kringle comes on Christmas, and St. Nicholas comes on the 6th of December. It's Nicholas Day. On Nicholas Day it's vice versa, for crying out loud. It's gotta be a guy, right? Nicholas? Well, here comes, it was never my father. He hired somebody else. Why, here comes this guy, not like in America this red and white bit, but dressed in disguise and stuff, and he had a sack, and he had a chain, but instead of a bell, he had something to spank with. And I tell you what it is, and you put a name to it. Go out on any tree without leaves and cut branches, and make a handle that fits in your hand, and on the bottom you tie it up.

Question: A switch.

Answer: Yah, a switch is only one.

Question: I don't know what you call a bunch of them.

Answer: It had enough to fit your hand, ok? Not too much, not too little. And with that you get spanked. Because, you know, just like reversed, sort of, from Kris Kringle, the Nicholas would ask or ask the father, mother, who was bad this year, and my father and mother had lots of them, you know. Oh, Thesesia did this, Herbert Did this, and this. We didn't like what he did, and then he would take, switch you call it, don't do that no more. You mind what your Mama saying, ok? And don't think I won't see. I come back next year. I see what you do, and you try to believe this. And live with it all year. You cannot be bad. They're out there watching. Darn right it was fun.

Question: Yeah, I just thought that was, the way that your parents handled taking your toys and then …

Answer: Yeah, and redid it all.

Question: I thought, boy, that's pretty smart.

Answer: And, well, if they had money to buy a toy, it went for other necessary things first. Not toys. Who in the heck needs a toy. Think of clothes and food first. This was my upbringing.

Question: But I think what they did, though, I mean, it just seems like your father was real hard to …

Answer: My father? No, there is not a, well, I don't know about that. But my father was the best man that……(crying). I almost died when he died. When my late husband died I, I cried. I miss him, but my father was, I cannot put, like your whole world died. When he went, I went. It was hard.

Question: It sounded like he was

Answer: It was hard.

Question: an exceptional person.

Answer: You know how he repaid me. Of course, I never. Ok, let me say this. My late husband and I bought a brand new double wide with our own piece of land on it in 1979, here in town in Hawk's Prairie. And, of course, I write to my folks. I write, I answer, blah, blah, blah. Go to my mother. They were thinking of doing this, because we live in Tacoma in Royal Oaks for two years, ok? And wrote to my mother. Father never wrote, but of course, if I write to mother I write to all of them. And I wrote to my mother that we were going to think of buying our own something. I don't know yet what. And then I remember writing, I said, Mom, so and so has happened, we're moving, we bought so and so, this is where it's going to be, and then I wrote and that was the one that opened up everything. Then I wrote and I said that, We're here and oh, we got lots of work to do. I described everything as a jungle, trees gotta be taken out, blah, blah, blah, the skirting on the house, we need a fence, we want a fence, so and so and this needs doin'. That was in August. First of October, 1979, go to Sea-Tac and pick them up. They were there for 10 months! They came over for 10 months and worked, 6 days a week. Not 7. 6. In our weather. I had to show my German mother how to operate our American appliances, especially the dryer. Father would work. He gets wet. He comes in to change clothes, of course, he had it, but the others had to get dried and washed. My late husband and I, we both had jobs. We were in Tacoma, him at Ft. Lewis. We were working all day long, and my German parents, all alone for 10 months, putting up a cedar fence, making this place livable, for 10 months! And my neighbors are still my neighbors today, and I got pictures and times and dates. They can tell you. And in hindsight, my father did that for me because I helped him. Because if our father, if my father hadn't come, it would have taken us YEARS to finish, and I tell you something else, it would not have been as good as my father did it.

Question: What was your, this is a question we ask quite a few people. What was your best day during that period, 1939 – 1945?

Answer: Coming to the United States. As much as I loved my father, but I lived under his roof and under his command for 22 years. And no daughter or son in any family in those days talks back, no matter how old you are, to your parents. Whether you like it or not, you do not talk back to your parents. I had enough. I wanted out. I had enough of all this, 22 years. Well, the years in diapers I spent, you know what I mean. It was time to be, get outta there. I've had it. And I came over here. Not a bed of roses, but better than Germany.

Question: So do you miss Germany sometimes?

Answer: I do as I grow older. In the first years, heck no! Some ? , sure, you know, stuff you grew up with. You miss your family, your immediate family, but Germany itself, forget it! I mean, to me it's nice to visit, but being an Americanized after 49 years, you know, how can you pull me away from here. There's no way. No. I'm here to stay.

Question: So when you're talkin' to people and people kid you and give you the Nazi salute and stuff like that, does that, are you proud of your heritage?

Answer: Oh, of course I am. I just don't like the Hitler years, because when I first came over here in 1953, uh, my brother-in-laws, if you will, they worry. They wanted to ask me all sorts of things about the war. I couldn't tell them anything. I didn't know nothing about the war. I think you know more today than they at that time, but keep in mind, today I can talk to you about it. At that time, I just knew, yes, ok, and hand signs. And what Hitler did, of course, I'm not proud it. I wish it never happened. But it did, but it wasn't my fault. It's never the children's fault. It's just a time that it happened and you lived through it, survived it. That's it.

Question: For all the deprivation of those years, it sounds like your mother and father, for all the deprivation and the lack of things, it sounds like that you had a good family life and there were moments that there's a happy childhood.

Answer: uh, my parents were good parents. They were lovable parents. They just had too many kids so fast. In a bad time. I'm sure when they married the didn't picture anything that came along, you know. When they married in 1930, who knew there was gonna be a war and the house was gonna be bombed 15 years later. I mean, you know.

Question: Do you, did you ever have any anger toward the bombers?

Answer: No, because I didn't understand it.

Question: they were just something to fear, huh?

Answer: It just happened. And look, in hindsight, what the heck. Hitler was a guy that needed to be rid of, and every country fought for their country. I didn't fight for my country. I was a girl, and a kid. My father, that one year he was missing, if it was a year. He did it because he had to, and it was for his country. The British did all this bombing and doing. They fought to save their lives and country. Come on, it's just a little common sense.

Answer: What I mean, though, it's just on a personal level, was it just something that just, was it just fear, scary, when you heard planes come over.

Answer: Of course we were scared. Of course we didn't like it, but it was there. You accept it. You have no other choice.

Question: Afterward, a lot of people we talked to, their lives have been changed in little ways, and when you heard, after the war, when you heard planes come over, what was your first thought. Did you associate it with what had happened before?

Answer: What do you mean after the war the planes came over?

Question: Oh, I'm saying, we talked to a veteran yesterday who, to this day, will not sit with his back to a door because of his experiences during the war that he always sits with his back to a wall so he can see who's ever coming in. And people that respond, some people that respond to noises that, like one man, when he hears

(The tape ended here)