Yes, ma'am. I'm going to record all the audio.

Oh, really? You're a nosy one.

[LAUGHS]

He does the picture. I do the listening.

OK.

Yes, ma'am.

All right, Katie, we're rolling.

You all ready? All right, Miss Flores, you ready?

Pardon?

You ready?

Yes. Ready.

OK, so I'll do the introduction, and then I'll do questions. This is a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Miss Elizabeth Flores on December 27, 2015 in Katy, Texas. Miss Flores, I just want to say, thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed. We really, really appreciate it. So thank you.

OK.

OK so like we talked about before, we're going to start with a little biographical information, learn about your family. And then we'll go chronologically. So we'll do prewar, the war years, and then post-war. So we'll move like that.

OK. So what I'd like to do is start at the very beginning. So if you could tell us your date of birth, your place of birth, and your name at birth if it's different.

My name is Elizabeth Flores. I was born in 9/18/29 in Heydebreck, Ober Schlesien. What else?

And what was your name at birth?

My name my birth was Thomas, T-H-O-M-A-S.

OK. So Elizabeth Thomas?

Thomas.

Thomas. Yeah. And that was-- could you spell Heydebreck for us?

A little bit louder.

Could you spell Heydebreck for us?

Heydebreck?

Yes, ma'am.

H-E-Y-D-E-B-R-E-C-K.

OK. And Oberschlesien?

Oberschlesien-- two words. O-B-E-R S-C-H-L-E-S-I-E-N, Schlesien.

So Upper Silesia. OK. Did you have any nicknames growing up?

Any what?

Any nicknames?

Liesel.

Liesel?

Uh-huh. L-I-E-S-E-L.

So instead of Elizabeth, they would call you Liesel.

Liesel. Mm-hmm.

OK. So Oberschlesien, or Upper Silesia, was then part of Germany. Is it still part of Germany?

It's not part of Germany no more. After the war, it became Polish.

OK. So were you a German citizen?

I have a-- yes. Now I am an American citizen since 1952.

OK. And your parents were German citizens as well?

My parents-- German.

OK. And was the name of the town-- was there a different name besides Heydebreck? Was there a Polish name?

Yes. Polish now is Kedzierzyn. And I don't know how to spell it.

That's OK. But at the time, it was Heydebreck.

Time we left in 1945, it was Heydebreck.

Great. OK. So was this a village, a town, or a city size-wise?

What?

How big was it? Was it a village or a town or a city?

Not a big town.

So it was a small town?

It was a very small town, yes. So the only reason it was big-- known on a landmark, on a map, is because it had a huge

train exchange. I don't know how to say that. But the train station was huge.

OK.

And every train THAT came into from Schlesien went in there, and then you transferred to another train. That's the only reason it was well known.

OK. And so you were born and grew up there?

I do have a thing, just one more thing.

Oh.

As you say "uh-huh, mm-hmm," you are stepping on her audio, because it's picking it up.

Oh, OK.

There's two microphones, and you're-- it's picking you up. So I don't know. Typically we don't want to hear that part of it. So you might want to just nod your hand.

Yeah, I'll try. OK, yeah, I'll try not to. Yeah, of course. Yeah, thank you.

Erase it.

[LAUGHS]

You might just talk louder.

OK.

A little louder. Thank you.

OK.

You can scream at me.

I won't scream. I'm normally quiet. But is this good? This level?

That's better. That's better. Yes.

So tell me if I need to crank it up a little bit. So were you born and you also grew up in Heydebreck?

Yes. Yes, ma'am.

OK. And how long had your family lived there?

I can't tell you that. All I know is my father was a postman and been there ever since I remember. You know, since 1929, that's all I knew that--

OK.

I never lived anywhere else. Let's put it that way. We just moved one time from one house to another house, but in the same town.

OK.

So we did--

So let's move on to your family. If you remember your parents' date or year of birth, where they were born.

A little bit louder.

If you remember your parents, where they were born, when they were born, and their names.

That is more guesswork on mine, because, like I said, all the papers that we ever had were left behind. We just picked up what we had and left. And so therefore, it took me a long time to come over here because I couldn't get a birth certificate. It was all burned up and destroyed.

And my parents-- I know my mother was born in 1892. And my dad was born in 1893-- in '91. I'm sorry. And they also were born in Germany as far as-- I mean in Heydebreck as far as I know. We never talked about it. Let's put it that way.

I didn't join interests till after the war, and it was too late. Anyway, I don't know what you want me to say now.

[LAUGHS]

How about their names?

My father's name was Johann Thomas, J-O-H-A-N-N. My mother's name was Franziska Margela. It's Polish, but she was German as far as I know. Because we lived so close to the Polish border, you know, some people got their names kind of mixed up I guess.

Yes, ma'am.

And all my sisters and brothers were born there too in Heydebreck. But at that time, it was Kedzierzyn. Because once before, that part of Germany belonged to Poland. And the Germans took it over. And in the post, Poland got it back again.

OK. Had your father been a soldier in World War I?

World War I. Yes. Uh-huh.

And what were his experiences?

He wasn't in there very long because he got shot in the arm kind of in the elbow, and he couldn't use his arm very well. He could bring it up like that, but he couldn't bring it down. And so they turned him loose after that, you know, after a while. And any way, he lived to be a pretty good old age, not really old for a man. I think he was 58, something like that. He died right after I came to America.

Hold on one moment. All right, we're rolling.

OK, rolling. We're rolling.

Yes, ma'am. So your father was a soldier in World War I. When did your parents meet, and when did they get married?

That I don't know. They never talked about it. You know, it's different now. People relate to one another, you know. I met so-and-so, and-- you know, at that place and all that. Over there, it was real private. I never knew how my mother met my father. Only thing I know is I was the last one in my family, and he thought-- he was a mailman. And he said he found me in the woods, and he brought me home.

And for years, I thought that was it, because I told my teacher that, my first grade teacher. And she went home to the house and asked my father. And he said, we just told her that. But he said, really and truly I was their child, but the last one.

[LAUGHS]

Yes, ma'am. So were your parents close? Did they--

Yes. Uh-huh. Very seldom did they fight that I know of. But when they did, they didn't talk to one another for days. It wasn't like fistfight or verbal or anything like that. They just quit talking to one another until one of them couldn't take it no more, and they started talking. I thought it was nice.

So what were they like? What were their personalities like? Maybe what did they look like?

My mother was always kind of-- like not happy. Not like me. But my dad, he was a happy guy, especially if you give him a bottle of beer. Then he was really happy. You know? But he was not an alcoholic. He didn't do that as a habit. Let's put it that way. But my mother was kind of laid back.

OK. And were you close with both of your parents?

What?

Were you close with both of your parents?

Oh, yes. Uh-huh. My dad whipped me twice, and I had it coming both times.

[LAUGHS]

My mother never laid a hand on me. And every time I talked about my dad, I'd say, I hate him. You know how kids do that. She says, you don't hate your dad. You love him. I said, OK. What can you say, you know? You're little.

But my mother died when I was eight. And that was kind of a sad moment, because she was buried on my birthday. But I have never forgotten her. My other mother, my stepmother, she was a very nice woman. He married two years later, because every one of my family was gone already-- marriage, in the army. And he didn't have-- and I was still at home. And he had nobody to take care of me, because he traveled quite a bit.

And so he married this other woman. And she was very nice. I have to say that. I was the bad one. I didn't want to accept it. But I did.

Last time I saw her was in 1961. She passed away too. My dad passed away by that time too. So when I left in '48, I never saw my dad's alive. But anyway, I don't know what else to say.

OK. What about your grandparents?

My grandpa-- I just knew my grandfather. He was 85, and he died in '45. He was running from the Russians. And it was so much snow, and it was so cold. He couldn't make it. So he went back home again, got pneumonia, and died. He was a very nice man too. That was my dad's father.

And that was the only grandparent you knew?

That's the only one I knew.

OK. What about any aunts and uncles who lived nearby?

Oh, god, we had a slew of them. Oh, my goodness. I had a picture of when my sister got married, and all of them were on there. He must have had at least 10 brothers and sisters. It was a big family.

What about your mom?

My mom is a mystery really. Come to think of it now, you know, I never knew any of them, especially after she passed away. You lose contact then, you know? But otherwise, the other ones, my uncles and aunts from my dad's side, we visited all the time, because we lived close by-- walking distance, let's put it this way. When I say walking distance, from here to Bellaire-- a long ways.

Had any of your uncles been in World War I as well?

Not that I know of. But I know that one uncle disappeared because he was a locomotive engineer. And he was listening to Churchill. And he went out and got a couple of beers. And he repeated what he said. And we never heard from him again. He was just disappeared. What happened to him, nobody knows.

But his wife passed away. She never found out either. That's the way they worked then, you know-- secretive.

What about any siblings?

Siblings?

Yes, ma'am.

Like mine?

Yes, ma'am. Yeah. How many siblings did you have?

No, just what-- what you see. Well, I have another son. He's going to be 63 next month.

Oh, yes, ma'am. But your siblings.

Huh?

Your siblings growing up.

Oh, my brothers and sisters?

Yes, ma'am.

Oh, OK. Well, I had three sisters and two brothers. And well, they're all dead. But my youngest brother was eight years older than me. He got killed during the war. He was a courier on a motorcycle and hit a mine, a landmine, and died like that.

My other brother, he was in a tank division. And he was caught as an English prisoner. He stayed in England till I guess '45, until '46, something like that. And then he came back home again.

Now, my sisters-- my older sister got caught by the Russians. But she escaped. My other sister was in the French zone. She got out of it in '45 too. And then my other sister was also in '45, she left Germany. I mean she left Heydebreck and went to-- closer to the West and got caught in a bombing at Dresden and got killed there too.

And her little boy also-- she had a little boy then. Both of them got killed. The only reason they found any of her was an arm with a wedding ring on it and the initials in it. And that's how we found out in '45 through the Red Cross what

happened to her and my brother, my little brother. Otherwise-- we were a happy family at one time. But the war messed it all up.

Yes, ma'am. And what were your siblings' names?

OK. My older sister was Maria, Angela, Helena. My brother's name was Paul and Franz, F-R-A-N-Z.

And that was the birth order?

Mm-hmm.

I'm gonna need that again. I got horns on that.

What?

If you want it clean.

OK, that should be fine. And were these all full siblings?

All my brothers and sisters. Right.

And so you said you were all very close or--

Oh, very close. Uh-huh. Except for me, because I was so-- I came so late, you know? When I remember, I was already-- they were all gone except for my two brothers. They were still at home and my youngest sister Helena.

And then the war broke out, but my oldest brother went first in the war. And then right after that, my other one. And that left only me and Leni. Leni we called her, you know. And that's the one that kept that little Jewish girl.

Yes, ma'am. We'll definitely-- we'll talk about that a little bit later. But what were their personalities like?

Great. We had good times together, you know. In the house that we lived in, it had a little garden and a little gazebo, you know, not fancy. But we used to sit there at night in the summertime and sing and laugh and talk and play dominoes and things like that, you know? We had a great time.

Never fought with them except for my brother. Now, me and him didn't get along. After eight years, I guess he thought I came along and stole him. Stole them from him.

This is Franz?

Franz. Uh-huh.

So the ones who were not living at home, did they live close by?

My older sister went to work for a furrier. You know what a furrier is?

Yes, ma'am.

OK. And she kept the household for him, for his parents. And she finally married him. And my other sister, she stayed at home. I was six years old when she got married. And she was gone from home.

Leni stayed at home with me till 19-- oh, let me see. '45 we left there. I would say '40, '41, something like that. Then she got married. And she's the one that got killed in Dresden.

And my brothers-- both of them went in the army. And my oldest brother, the one that came home, he passed away in '97. And the other one, God only knows when. We never found out the date. We found out that he did get killed on a hidden mine on a motorcycle. At that time, they had mostly motorcycles really. Come to think of it, even in the movies you see, they were always running on motorcycles.

And he worked for-- before the war, he worked for-- I don't know whether you remember that. Max Baer-- he used to be a boxer. Him and his brother had a motorcycle shop, bicycle, not even automotive, because I don't remember seeing that many cars then. So he worked there as a motorcycle repair man or bicycle repair man until he went into the army.

But he was at home until he left for the army. He was 18 when he left. So that made me 10. And then the war broke out.

And what language did you speak at home and outside of the house?

German only.

Only German?

It was a must. If you got caught talking any other language, you were fined or you'd never be heard of again. Everywhere you went, you had the sign up, "German spoken only," you know.

So there were signs--

Signs.

--that said "German only"? And these were official signs from the town, or--

What?

Were these official signs from the town or--

There were signs everywhere. I mean, as a child, you know, we have shops for everything-- bakery, meat, groceries, and all that. And each one of them had a sign in the window before you go in, "German spoken only."

Was this rule from the government or just the shop owners?

Yeah, it had to be. It had to be. Because I remember times before that, it wasn't there. Then when the war broke out, that's when the signs came up.

OK. But before the war, was it still German mostly?

German, yeah, but you heard Polish quite a bit. In fact, my mom and my dad spoke that, but not after the war.

After the war started, they didn't speak it anymore.

Cut it out.

OK. Was your family middle class, or how--

Well, I would say middle class. I mean, we never had much. You know, we had a roof over our head. We had food. So I think we were middle class. Rich we were not. And what little he had accumulated, my dad, we lost to the war, because when we left, everything stayed behind. And it was not ours anymore.

That little piece of paper I showed you, it said-- so if we would have stayed in '45, they would have evicted us, more or less, because we were Germans. And everything that was in there would have been theirs.

Had your family been affected by the Depression at all?

He talked about it. They talked about it. And then that was about, I think, in 1929 when I was born, because he said many times that he had to stand in the soup line. He didn't have nothing, you know? They were very lucky to have a roof over their head. And so especially when it was eating time, they had a big kettle. And you go over there with a little tray or whatever, plate, and you got your food there. And you go back home and ate it.

But when Hitler started to take over, they got jobs, and they were doing better. Because he saw to it that the Depression was over with. He opened up factories and give everybody a job. That's a good thing about that man. But what he had in mind later on, nobody knew. He turned out to be a devil.

But so at first, was the general reaction very positive because he helped to bring jobs--

Right. Everybody followed him. Everybody followed him because of it. He said something, that was it, you know? He was the main character. He was taking care of the people, see to that they weren't hungry or they had to go begging or anything. And everybody followed him. But didn't turn out to be so good.

So both the general and within your family, the reaction was pretty positive because of these changes he was bringing.

Right. It changed. Yes. It changed after-- it started changing before the war really, because they had the burning of the books and so many other things that came up. I can't remember some of it. But it was-- at 10, I thought it was great. And like I said, at 10, the minute I turned 10, I was Hitler's girl, more or less. You had to belong to that. From 10 to 14, you were Hitler Youth. And from 14 to 18 was a different group, but also Hitler Youth.

Yes, ma'am.

But I never made that part. It was just to 14.

Yeah. We'll come back to that. But I want to learn a little bit more about your family first.

Oh, OK.

So was your family religious?

Yes. Catholic.

Catholic. OK. Did you go to church every Sunday? Were you baptized, first communion, all of that?

All of it. Uh-huh.

OK.

All were baptized. All of them went to church on Sundays. We went-- that's religion days. We went every day. But the church was open, and you could go in anytime you wanted to. I mean, you know, in the daytime.

And had your family always been very religious, or--

Not over-religious, but just moderate, you know. I haven't been to church in a while.

I haven't either. So that's OK. Did your family have any kind of traditions like holiday--

Any what?

Any traditions, like holiday traditions or--

No. No. Not that I know of.

And you said you had a garden with a little gazebo. But what was your house like? Or was it a house?

My house?

Yeah.

It was a two-family house. We lived downstairs. The other family lived upstairs. And it belonged to the post office. And as long as my father was alive, we could live there. It was, I guess, cheaper rent. I really don't know. I mean, you know, I would be lying to you, and I don't want to lie.

Oh, no, ma'am. That's great.

But anyway, it belonged to the post office. And when we left, it was still.

OK. And we already talked a little bit about this. And you were born in 1929. But did your older siblings or your parents ever talk about the interwar years?

No. When they did, I had to go to bed. Anything to do religion or was-- at that time, it was already Hitler coming on. He was always, girl, go to bed. Well, I went to bed. I was brought up to obey.

[LAUGHS]

So whenever religion or politics came up, you were told to go to bed.

I was-- yeah.

OK. OK. Is there anything about your family that you'd like to add before we move on?

No. Like I said, some-- still do. I mean, after all these years, you sit back and remember. And you said, you know, what would it be like now? But my sisters really lived to be a ripe old age except for the one that got killed. Two others were over 90.

Maria and Angela?

My brother was 10 years younger than me-- older than me. So '96, he was-- no, he died 17 years ago. So he was pretty old. He had prostate cancer. That's what he had. I saw him-- the last time I saw him in '97, and he was sick already. Then he died in '97 in December. And I saw him in November. I went to see him.

I don't know. But he was a very, very fine man. He used to come and see me every other year. I went one year, and he came the next year, him and his family. We got to spend a little time together. You can ask that one over there how crazy he is about my brother.

[LAUGHTER]

My dad kind of looked like Hitler. No kidding.

Really?

When he combed his hair, you know, like Hitler does. He had a little mustache like that. He looked just like him.

And dark hair as well?

Dark hair. And when I met my husband, the first time he saw me, he says, are you sure that's not Hitler?

[LAUGHTER]

I said, I don't think so. I just know him as Johann. It was a nice life. Even during the war, I can't complain too much, because, well, for one thing, I was young. I accepted everything, you know? And I had fine parents. They saw to it that I was kind of more or less kept out of it. Anyway, I don't know what else you want me to tell you.

Oh, well, we can move on to prewar then.

Do what?

We'll move on to the prewar years then. So could you tell us a little bit more about the town?

The town?

How many people? Were there lots of Germans, Poles, Jews?

Well, as far as I know, there were all Germans. And the town was very small. It was like a farm-- a little farm town. Horse and buggies-- that's all I saw for a long time.

Really?

Yes. My hobby-- I had a hobby. I'd sit on the steps at the pharmacy with a pencil and paper. And if a car came by, I wrote down their license number. They were about this long anyway, you know, the license number. That was my hobby if I had some time. I sat there.

And horse and wagon, that's the main thing, the transportation. They had buses if you wanted to go to another town. But cars-- no. They had very few cars there.

And the town was very small, but nice and clean. Farmers mostly. Few shops. And before the war, I remember they were full of stuff, you know, that you want to buy. And after the war, it was all gone. It was empty windows.

So about how big was the Jewish population?

That I don't know. I really don't know. All I know is that I had that little girlfriend. She was the same age as I was. And her father had a pharmacy. And we played a lot upstairs. They lived upstairs over the pharmacy. And you know how they had nice bottles and stuff like that? We played with that.

One day, I went by there, and she was gone. Everything was tore up. People were out there shouting obscene stuff, you know. I didn't even know what a Jew was up to then. And that's when my dad told me, you don't talk about it no more. He says, forget about that girl. How can you forget about somebody that you played with for five, six years, you know?

But I found out about it in 1960-some-- the first time I went back, when my sister told me that all that time, she was down in the basement. My sister got her or she went to my sister's. I don't know. But she took care of her. I thought that was great. I wish I could see her, you know?

In '61, I wish I could have seen her. But it was a short time that I was there. It was only three weeks of vacation. And you know how quick time passes. Before you know it, you're back on a plane to come over here.

So at the time, you didn't understand what the difference was? A Jewish person-- you didn't know what that was?

Nothing.

You just happened to have a friend who was Jewish.

Little louder, baby.

You just happened to have a friend who was Jewish.

That's it. Uh-huh. In fact, she was half Jewish. Her mother was German, and her dad was a Jew. And that made her half Jew. And that made her a Jew period over there at that time.

To me, it didn't make any difference. She was a very fine person. We had fun together. We went to school together. We went home together, you know?

But like I said, after '39, just disappeared. It was a little later than '39. I would say maybe close to 1940 when they really start talking against Jews.

So even though you might not have realized it, there was marriages between Germans and Jews, maybe business partnerships? Not sure?

I don't know. It was '39 when they come up that sign, the Jewish sign on a bag or an arm. Then that's when you start to kind of thinking, why? I don't have one. Why she has to wear it? To let people know that she was Jew.

So what was the general relationship between Germans and Jews before the war?

Yeah, I don't know. I mean, as far as I know, we all got along in that little town. There was very few fights of any kind that I remember. None. And like I said, we treated one another like you're supposed to treat another person. You know, be kind to them. And you don't have to love them or anything like that. But you still have to be civil. And that's what we were over there.

I mean, it's not like over here you have friends-- a pile of friends. Over there, you didn't have that many friends. Just a few, mostly related. If they weren't closely related, they were distant relatives.

Were there any-- was there a synagogue?

Any what?

Was there a synagogue in town?

Not in the town that we were, but on the other side of the river, they had one. And that was burned out in no time.

And how many churches were in town?

How many what?

Churches?

We had two. One was Catholic in the town that I lived-- Catholic and evangelish.

Evangelical.

That's it.

Yes, ma'am.

[LAUGHS]

Yes. And so your friend's father owned the pharmacy? Did you know--

Pharmacy.

Did you know any other shops that were owned by Jewish people?

No.

And it was the pharmacy. So your parents went there, and the town went there?

There was two pharmacists in the town. One of them was close to where I lived, and the other one was where that little girl lived. And I had to go by there every day to go to school. That's why we would always walk together and played there too. And the pharmacy was downstairs, and they lived upstairs. When they got through with the place, it was a mess-- scary.

Yes, ma'am.

I mean, even for a 10-year-old, you know? Scary.

So before the war, you've, you know, been around town. Did you like the town that you grew up in?

The what?

Did you like the town that you grew up in?

Oh, I loved it. I still do. If I could go back to 1945-- I don't know what it is like now. On Google, I see where they had-- it has grown quite a bit. We had a lot of woods around us. And most of it is gone. I mean, from here to the next door across the street, the woods started. In the woods, I mean, you could walk for hours.

And the first thing you hit was a factory. And that's in 1945-- '44 when I saw my first Holocaust people. Saddest thing I had ever seen in my whole life.

Yes, ma'am. We'll come back to that.

OK.

Yes, ma'am. So growing up, how did your family receive news?

Any what?

How did your family receive news?

News.

Was there a newspaper?

No. No. Newspaper, I can't say that. But we had a small radio. And mostly we had it on almost all day long for the simple reason when there was an air raid, we had a warning on the radio-- cuckoo. It was-- if real far away, the planes, it's this slowly cuckoo, cuckoo. When they got closer, it was faster. And then people knew they had to go to the bunker or the basement because there was an air raid coming, you know?

Yes, ma'am.

And it was before the war really broke out. What pointed us to the war was blimps. You know what a blimp is.

Yes, ma'am.

And they had all over-- all over town, especially around the train station that I told you about.

Mm-hmm.

They had blimps everywhere because they didn't want that part to get wiped out. And it did done a pretty good job. I saw that in 1945 before we left, because we were between a factory, ammunition factory, whatever they done for the war and the train station. So we got-- we were right in the middle of it. So we got pretty well wiped out.

But I was at that time-- see, the first part of the war, 1939, we got full blast of it, because it was on the Polish side. And then we didn't have-- until 1944, the first part of 1944, they took over North America. I mean North Africa. From there, we got air raids again. But from '39 to '40, I would say we were pretty well OK.

But then after that, it was almost an air raid every night or every day. Anyway, it was just-- it's a sad time, but-- and I wasn't home from '44 September till '45 January. And that's when I had to do a year of house school. I got out of school. And in order to continue school, you had to do a year of house school.

And that was live with other people and learn how to run a household, except for cooking. They didn't let you do no cooking. And then you could continue schooling if you could afford it. And we didn't make it.

In '45, a lady told me, she said, get your stuff together, because the Russians are just about outside the city limits, you know? And I got last bus. I got it out to take me to my dad's house. And I stayed there two or three days when the Russians come closer.

And what woke me up was the shooting of the rifle. They were that close already. So I told my dad, I said, how come you didn't wake me up? And he says, why should I wake you up and you have to worry about anything? He says, go back to sleep. I said, no, I've got to find out what's going on. So I went into town.

Well, let's go back to before the war right now.

Oh, OK.

We'll definitely come back to that, because I want to hear more about that. But let's go back to the radio. Do you remember hearing about anything specific before the war? Did you hear any Party members speaking? Or what kind of things did you hear on the radio?

I don't know. All I know is I got up in the morning. My mother fixed me something to eat, and I went to school. And we went to school from 8:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon then come home. Before the war, I got to play a little. But we only spoke German.

Yes, ma'am.

I never learned a word of Polish. From what I understand is my brothers and sisters knew how to speak Polish, but I didn't.

OK. Do you remember hearing about the 1936 Olympics in Berlin?

I heard about it, but there was no TV at that time. And we got to see-- we had only movie once a week-- well, twice a week, Saturday and Sunday. And little newsreels come on, and that's all I know about that.

But my brother was real active, the oldest one that was still alive in '97. He used to be in sports all the time. He used to play soccer, ski in the wintertime. And he had-- you know what a [NON-ENGLISH] is?

Oh, it's-- I can't think of it off the top of my head.

It's this big wheel. It's two wheels on each side, wheels on the side and some bars across. And he sits inside and go through the whole town like that.

Oh, wow.

It was really cool. He had pictures, but like I said, they are all over there. And he also-- what do you call it? They're not planes with the motor, but they're gliders. He used to glide with the planes and all that. He was pretty active. The other one-- I didn't know him that well.

So you listened to the radio, and you went to the movies? Is this where you saw these film reels?

In the movies, yeah. That's another deal. At the movies, you had to be a certain age. It was-- before you were 10, you could see certain movies. Then after, from 10 to 12, they were a little bit more aggressive or whatever. You had to have a pass shown you were that old or else you couldn't go in. And I was waiting until I was 14 and 15, and I was on the run then.

[LAUGHS]

So there was a system kind of like we have now where you have G, PG, PG-13.

Over there, it was only-- it's so-and-so movie, from 10 to 12 years old could go in. And my brother, that youngest brother, before he went in the army, he was a-- what do you call it? A projector-- run the projector in the movies. And he got me every year-- every month-- or every day-- every weekend, let's put it that way. Shine my shoes, and I'll get you into the movies. I never got in it.

[LAUGHTER]

He got me. I shined his shoes, and then I'd go to my dad, and I says, he didn't give me the money for my movies. He says, here. I got it from him. But he said, one day you're going to realize that he's doing that on purpose.

So did you have any favorite movies that you saw?

No. Not really. But I remember Heidi.

Heidi.

That was a real famous one then at that time. I saw that. And there was another one, but I don't remember the name. I don't remember the name. But like I said, you don't go to movies-- like over here, you go every day or even in the daytime. Over there, it was a certain time of night and twice a week, Saturday and Sunday. And if it snows first session or whatever you call it or second, you just go once a day, one time.

And there was people lined up everywhere to go and see a movie, because it was-- that was the only fun we had except for going walking. And like I said, we had a lot of woods there. So you could go walking every day for hours. Picking berries was my favorite. My mother said, go to the woods and pick some blueberries for supper tonight. We got a piece of bread and a little bowl of blueberries with a little, tiny bit of sugar and milk. That was our supper. Or go in there and pick some mushrooms. Had some good eating.

And at this time, were there any expectations of you, or were you supposed to act a certain way? Just go to school?

No. Like I said, after the war broke out, there was rules. I mean, you go to school. You go to the Hitler Youth meeting. And that's it. There wasn't much free time to play. We were occupied at all times. If it wasn't sports or meetings in-- we had a little house there. We had meetings in there or go to the hospital for the soldiers, write little letters for them or sing or talk to-- that was it. There was no-- from 10 to 15, there was no fun time for us. But I mean, we accepted it. You know? That's what you were supposed to do.

But before the war, it was much more relaxed.

Before the war, we were kids.

OK.

I played in the sandbox. I remember that too.

So what were your friends like before the war?

I had very few friends. One of them, her parents had a milk store. And after school, she had to do a lot of work in there. So after school was nothing for me. That's where the Jewish girl came in, because she didn't have to do any kind of work at home or anything.

I didn't either because, I mean, my mom was at home at all times. She never worked. This was my real mom, you know. She never worked. So I had time to play. But after the war, it was just a different life.

And I know you said you didn't realize that your one friend was Jewish.

No.

Did other kids realize this or treat her different?

Probably, but I don't know. That's the only one I knew because she was on my way that I went by everyday. So the other ones-- like I said, we were-- just a different time. It just doesn't seem-- to think about it, you say you lived in 100 BC, you know? Long time ago. There was nothing that you could do.

Me, I sit there on iron-- not iron-- stone steps with a pencil and pen, looking for a car to come by. But the other ones, God knows what they were doing, you know? Because some of it was already-- like me, I was from 10 on Hitler Youth. There's some of them were before that already. Mostly young boys. They took them in earlier. There was no time to play.

It was just not-- I don't know. There really were where I could say that me and a bunch of kids played together. We didn't do that. Once school was out, they went their way, and I went mine, which was home.

OK. And so before the Jungmadelbund, did you belong to any kind of clubs outside of school or--

No. Mm-mm.

OK. Did you play sports or play any instruments?

Sports even at school was high. We had gym or there was-- I don't know how you say it in German. Gymnastic.

Gymnastic, yeah.

Gymnastic.

Mm-hmm.

We had that once a week. And that was a real old, like a burned-out place. Belonged to the train association. It was empty, so they put-- what do you call it, bars in it. You do some gym. We could use that any time. If nobody else used it, where you could go in there and do your little thing. I was good at that one time.

Mm-hmm.

But you know, you grow up, and you get stiff.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm a stiff old woman.

So you said your mom stayed home.

My mom stayed home.

But your mom-- or your father was a mailman?

My father worked, as far as I know, always for the post office. But it's different. Like, over here, brieftrager. It was a mailman.

Mm-hmm.

OK. He was a mailman at one time. But then he was working on a train sorting mails in different holes to different towns. And that's why he was on the road quite a bit, you know, because worked from one town to another town on the train doing that. And he was in a train wreck, and they had to retire him, because he almost got killed in that train wreck. He was young. He was a young man.

He got hit-- one of those shelves, the corners hit him right in here. He almost bled to death, but they saved him, you know, retired him because high blood pressure set in for him.

So he-- because of this, he had to retire at a young age.

He had to-- uh-huh. So then I had both parents at home.

OK.

And really-- I don't remember him doing anything. My brothers, they were real handy just fixing things. And my father was too really. He could take a radio apart and put it back together again. He was really good at that. But he didn't do too much of that.

But he did have a-- in the floor, we had a space where we kept our radio. If we didn't play it, it goes down there, because he wasn't allowed to have a radio. So when we left there in the gazebo I was telling you, we had swords and stuff like that, you know, weapons. And they found them. That meant that you couldn't go back there again.

But that doesn't mean anything. They would have sent us away anyway because we were Germans. At one time, I was really proud to be a German. (WHISPERING) But not so much anymore.

Not anymore?

After I saw that, I changed my mind. That's why when I came over here, I became an American citizen.

Yes, ma'am.

What nationality-- I'm an American now.

[LAUGHS]

So your father is retired. Was money tight because he had retired, or--

He had to retire on account of that train wreck he was in. And like I said, he almost got killed there. But the war was already on, because it was my stepmom that went to visit him.

Oh, so this was after the war started then.

After. Uh-huh.

OK. So what did your older siblings do for work?

That I don't know.

That's OK.

Like I said, you know, when you're a kid, you don't really think about things like that, that this was going to be important later on in life that you should know about it. You just live from day to day. And like I said, you just didn't have the-- you had the time, but you didn't have the-- how you say it? The opportunity of doing things like that. You couldn't go to the store and say, would a nickel buy you a piece of bread or some more, a piece of cake or-- that was out after the war.

Before the war, my mother couldn't keep enough change in her purse, because it was there. But otherwise, I sat there and watched trains go by. That was my deal-- train, buses, looking for cars.

And then afterwards, when the war really got into it, we-- like we're out of school. Like over here, you're two months out of school or something. Over there, you get six weeks, and you have to work for a farmer. That was at the time when the harvest was potatoes and all that and hay and all. We had to do all of that. That was really not a vacation. It was--

Really?

--work.

So every year in the fall, there would be the six weeks where you had to go work?

Uh-huh.

Interesting.

We worked for the farmer for nothing. You didn't get paid for it. If you were lucky and you got a very generous farmer, they'd give you a little piece of bread or potatoes. Potatoes were kind of free over there because there's a lot of farm. But otherwise, you work for nothing.

I worked for-- this was after the war. I worked from '46-- first part of '46 till I met my husband in June of '46. I worked for a loaf of bread a week. And I had to take care of four kids and do all the work that needs to be done except she done the cooking, because we lived on stamps then-- still on stamps, food stamps. And I considered it-- it was tough, but it was-- from what I say is tough, I wouldn't mind living it over again. Let's put it that way, because it was an experience that you'll never-- what people tell you is one thing. What you experience is another thing.

And my experiences were all really good except for air raids. You have to get up, and you go to bed at night with your clothes on, because you never know when you had to go down in the basement. And in the basement-- everybody had a basement. And then as the war got worse, they start building bunkers. A lot of people got into those bunkers. But they made them so strong that if a bomb hit it full blast on top, didn't even-- the people inside didn't even feel it.

Wow.

Cement and iron or whatever you called it. Mm-hmm.

So let's go back to before the war. And I want to know a little bit more about school.

School?

Yes. So an elementary school is a grundschule?

The what?

The grundschule? Elementary school?

School?

Mm-hmm. Well, you went to school from when you're six years old till you were 14. Then you went out for one year of home school. That's what happened to me. That's why I'm not educated like most people are.

And we had reading, writing, arithmetic, music, house-- how do you-- we learned how to cook for little--

Like home economics.

That's it. And gym and religion. We did have religion.

Yeah. I was going to ask you.

And they say that Hitler discontinued that, but he didn't. We had religion once and catechism or whatever you call it. I was baptized when I was a baby, but I went to first communion when I was 10. And then there was another thing that I had to-- heiliger geist. Then [INAUDIBLE] heiliger geist, can you--

After first communion? Confirmation?

That's it. Thank you. Oh, god, you're smart.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm just having a good day.

Yeah. See, I couldn't remember that.

That's OK.

Yeah, what can I say? You're getting old.

So was this a private or a public school?

It's a public.

Public. OK.

Of all the names, Adolf Hitler Schule That was the name of it.

Even before the war? Adolf Hitler Schule?

Was it '39? I was 10. Yeah. He was in there already.

Yeah.

He was taking care of it or most of it. Adolf Hitler Schule, that's all I remember.

And the language of the school was German?

German.

German.

Only.

Was this the same school that your siblings had attended?

The what?

Was this the same school that your siblings had attended?

That I don't think so, because it was a newer building when I went in. And where they went, I don't know. I know that from what I remember about my sisters, my oldest sister went to a convent. But it was not to be a nun, to learn how to keep a household. That's why she got a household job. You take care of a household. She learned how to cook, sew, everything.

And I was going to go there too. But the war came in between it. That's all right. I didn't want to sew anyway.

[LAUGHS]

So were boys and girls in the same class?

Yes. We had 75 kids in my class.

Oh, wow.

A lot of kids.

And you were all in different classrooms? We had-- let's see. 1, 2, 3, 4, about 5 classrooms. And from 1:00 till-- was it 2:00? They had all the kids from first grade to the second or third grade, they were all together.

Then the one that I was in that I remember so well is last maybe three years. We had our own classroom. And the teacher was very old, because he couldn't go to the war. He was too old. And the other teacher was-- whatever is that again? Evangelish?

Evangelical.

Evan-- no wonder I can't remember that.

[LAUGHS]

He had his own class. That's why we had five for the Catholic and one for the evangelist, whatever. And he had all of it, kids from the first grade to the eighth grade in there.

But in the last year, they combined it. They had a separate entrance. They had separate everything. They couldn't associate with us because we were Catholic. Why? I don't know.

Oh, so the Catholic and evangelical, they had completely separate--

We were separate. Yeah. The evangelists went with that teacher. And then the Catholic were with us. But it wasn't because of teaching us Catholic. It's just that's the way it was. You know, what's your religion? Catholic. So you go to that class.

What about the Jewish students, your Jewish friend?

She went to the same place as I did till she disappeared.

So she had to attend the Catholic religious classes?

She-- like I said, we were in the same class till she left.

Yes, ma'am. Let's see. What did your classroom look like?

My classroom?

Yeah, or what a typical--

Oh, very simple. It was just four walls and the benches there with a little desk in front of us, you know? And a big-- what do you call it? Blackboard. And a teacher-- my teacher was so old that when he spoke, you know how sometimes they spit a little bit?

[LAUGHS]

I got it every time. I was in the very first row. But he was a nice teacher. He was good. He taught us simple ways, you know? And faster ways. My arithmetic is pretty good still at my age, because I handle money every day.

Mm-hmm. Oh, at work. Yes. Did you learn any foreign languages?

Did I what?

Did you learn any foreign Languages

No. None.

What was your favorite subject?

My-- Geschichte. How do you say? History or something like-- I loved that, because I always wanted to travel, go places, see something, you know? So at night when the lights went out, you know, there was no lights in the streets or anything. I stood outside and dreamed about America. Never dreamed that I would really make it one day till I finally set foot on it.

And that last teacher is the one that was always talking about America. And he said, when you get off the boat, he said,

the money is paved-- I mean, the streets are paved with money. And he had a smirk on his face. He said, you'll believe it if you see it.

Well, I looked. I got off the plane, and I looked. There wasn't no money.

[LAUGHTER]

Then I remembered that smirk, you know?

Mm-hmm. So this older teacher was the most memorable teacher?

The what?

This older gentleman was your most memorable teacher? Was he your favorite teacher?

Not really the favorite. He was my last-- last teacher. I had three teachers-- a woman teacher from the first, second, third, and I didn't like her, because I said something, and she-- you know, at that time, they had that little mini kind of switch.

Oh, the ruler?

Yeah. And but she didn't have to use it on me but one time. And then I had that older man. He was good. He knew about everything. And then the last teacher, he was good too. So really, I had two good teachers that I was crazy about him.

Did these teachers ever bring their political views into the classroom?

Any what?

Any of their political views?

No. No, no, no. That was against everything. You talked about religion, but I guess they more or less told them what they could say and what they couldn't say. And politics was definitely out. We never heard about it.

Every once in a while, when the war was on, and there was something-- the Germans took over something or won something, whatever you want to call it, that's when they said, today-- yesterday we had ein sieg. You know what ein sieg is?

Um--

Victory. Victory. We had a victory. So-and-so was-- we took over this town or something like that. They told us about that, but that was it.

Just kind of a fact.

Yeah.

Here's what happened.

Mm-hmm.

OK. Did you ever listen to radio programs at school?

Radio-- only music and news that didn't have anything to do with the war. You know, like somebody got hurt or something like that. Very little news. Or bombing, maybe bombing-- they bombed Poland, or they bombed Russia or

something like that. But otherwise, when it came to somebody speaking, you go to bed. And I did.

So at school, do you remember any specific lessons or projects that stand out, just anything very memorable from school?

No. Like I said, it just-- it's just hard for-- if you didn't know what you-- you know what you're looking for. Me, I just looked for the next day and if you have enough food, because after the war broke out, there was very little food-- food stamps. And since I was under 18, I got a little bit more. They took care of the kids. But the grown-ups, they got shafted.

They got no milk. They got-- what do you call it? Skim milk, and it was like colored water. That's why up to this day, I cannot eat-- drink skim milk. I'll drink water before I drink skim milk.

Really?

And same thing with a lot of food that you could eat now. You don't even appreciate some of the things that you have now that you dreamed about. Bananas, for one thing-- when the war broke out, there were no bananas. I remember going to a kiosk. You know what a kiosk is.

Yes, ma'am.

OK. I went to the kiosk with a nickel. Got me a banana. You could have all the nickels in the world. The kiosks were empty. And candy the same thing. So when I first came over-- eggs. You don't buy eggs by the dozen over there. You buy eggs by the egg-- one egg, two eggs, what you're going to use today.

And when I said, when I get to America, I want to eat eggs and bananas. Well, I got tired of that pretty fast. But it was good.

Mm-hmm.

It was very good.

So politics-- you said whenever that came up at home, your parents would say, you know, go to bed. Did you ever overhear them talking about?

No, because he shut the door.

Mm-hmm.

We had doors, you know, from the kitchen into the little hall.

Mm-hmm.

There was a door from my bedroom to the hall. Those doors were shut. He made sure. My dad made sure that I didn't hear him.

So you really have no idea what they thought about the Party--

No.

--about Germany in general?

The only time I overheard him is when Churchill was talking, and he was saying something. My uncle is missing. And he says he heard the speech last night. He was talking to my mother. And he repeated it. And he's gone. And he says, that's why I don't want you or the girl-- he called me the girl-- ever listen to any of that. Am I moving too much? No.

OK.

OK. So did you ever get a sense were your parents' views affected by their experiences during World War I and the Weimar Republic?

No. The only time that my dad talked about it was when I asked him why he couldn't straighten up his arm. And he said he got shot right in here, and they were going to take his arm off. But he refused to let it go, you know. My grandfather was working in a mill where they make flour, you know? And his arm got caught in between the stones, whatever. I don't remember how that was. And his arm was gone.

So he had only one arm. But he was a good drawer. With a pencil and pen, he could draw you anything you wanted him to draw. He was really good.

But he was an old man already. But he was a good man. He was one of the kind that had a bottle next to his bed with about this much garlic in it and some fluid. Every day, he drinked a little bit of it. He was a healthy man.

So it was to stay healthy?

He was really-- I mean, he had those cheeks, you know, like they looked painted on. His weren't painted.

[LAUGHTER]

So did you or your family know anyone in town who is a member of the Party? Or as a child, did you realize this?

No. The only thing, when the SS came out, they told us, when you see one of them, go on the other side of the street. That was my dad. He said, you don't want to get mixed up with that.

And this was after the war?

Mm-hmm.

Or after the war started?

I take it back. My sister-in-law, my oldest brother who survived, her son-- her brother was a SS.

Oh. So your-- sorry, could you repeat the-- your oldest sister's--

No. Like I said, when the war was in full blown, they more or less protected-- he protected me. My dad did, because he already knew what was going on in the war, you know? Killing, rape, and all that kind of stuff. My sister, the oldest sister, she got caught by the Russians. She all but got killed.

After they got through with her, they threw her on a misthaufen. It was a manure pile-- to let her die. Well, she didn't die. She crawled under the barbed wire. For days, she crawled to the West side. And got her leg caught on the barbed wire. And she all but lost her leg. She didn't lose it though. She had a big scar there. But she made it out. And that was a lucky day for her.

And you know, the odd thing about it is her husband was caught by the Russians, and he was in Siberia for a long time. He came back home again. He's still-- probably still alive for all I know.

Wow.

And my sister that got during the war in an air raid, her husband came home from the war too. He didn't get killed. And then we knew about 14 years old at the end of the war, and you were a young boy, you were out there on the front with a rifle. You were doing your man's job already.

And as for the girls, we'd just done it once. When the war was coming to an end, you had to go out and dig foxholes and trenches for the soldiers for their retreat. And we ate out of big kettles with a little cup.

Was anybody in your family a member of the Party?

No.

No. OK. Did your parents have any Jewish or Polish friends?

That I don't know. I really don't know. I know of-- they never talked about it. Let's put it that way. They didn't want to talk about it. But as far as I know, we had to have a-- how do you say that? A paper saying who was born, when he was born, and what his religion was, all of that, and when they're dead, what they died of. Well, we had that. And I looked at it several times. But I didn't even know I was going to need it one day. So--

Did you ever witness any anti-Semitism?

Any what?

Any anti-Semitism in the town?

No.

Any forms of discrimination? OK. So before the war, was there any censorship?

Any what?

Any censorship of the news or anything?

Every once in a while, my dad let me listen to it. But it was mostly, like, this soldier is stationed so-and-so. His wife had a baby. And you heard a baby crying. Or somebody had an anniversary. But when it came to the war there, I'm out. I was out.

Were there images of Hitler anywhere?

Anywhere?

Like, was there a photo of Hitler in your classroom?

Oh, heck yeah. Everywhere you looked.

Really?

Not in my house though. I had-- over my mom's and dad's bedroom was a religious picture of Mary and Jesus. In my room, my grandfather painted-- drawed a picture of me when I was a little baby. That was hanging there. And-- but we did have the flag. You had to have a flag, because when it came to one of those holidays, you had to fly your flag or else something is wrong.

But we didn't have a Hitler picture in there, come to think of it. Sure didn't. That's a new one. Really is.

But it was in the classroom. Where else did you see this?

What?

Where else did you see photos of Hitler or--

Everywhere. I mean, you go to-- you go-- in school we had one, for one thing-- several of them. Each classroom had one. And you go to the movies-- big thing. First thing, you saw him. You go-- I mean, if you had some kind of a party going up, there had to be a flag there, and there had to be Hitler there like he was God, more or less. You know? And a lot of people looked at him at that.

But I didn't, because I was too young really. Because at 10, I remember what God was supposed to be like. And he didn't have a mustache and that crazy hairdo.

So now I want to ask you about something that'll be a little bit difficult. But you mentioned that your mother died.

My mother died. Well, she had colon cancer I think. [GERMAN] darmkrebs.

Krebs is cancer.

I would say colon cancer. I don't know.

That's OK.

And she was sick for a long, long time. She was in and out of the hospital several times until finally she passed away. And over there, they don't embalm you. So if you die today, you get buried tomorrow, right away.

And you said she was sick for a long time. Did you understand what was happening--

No.

--as a 7, 8-year-old?

No. The only thing that I remember about her being sick-- every once in a a while, she came up missing. She was in the hospital, you know, not very long. The last time she was there, we had no electric stove or anything. We had a built-in stove. We had to put the wood in, coal, to cook and everything, you know? She was on her knees trying to light the fire. And she threw up blood. And they rushed her to the hospital, and she never came back home from that.

And so what was it like seeing that, seeing your mother--

Well, at that time, I didn't think of anything but she was sick, you know? That's all. But when she never did come home, then it hit me. And on top of that, she was buried on my birthday. So she died on September the 17th and was buried on the 18th. That I remember.

So how was your family life affected on you, your dad, your older siblings? Did you come to rely a lot more on your older sisters?

No. Like I said, the war was more or less kept away from me. And politics definitely. I mean, they didn't keep me informed on none of that. Go to bed. That was my motto.

And usually, when Churchill spoke, it was pretty late at night. So I had to be in bed. And I'm glad now. Who knows. You know how kids are. When you hear something, you repeat it. But you don't think nothing of it. You don't think it's bad.

Why would that man be on TV-- I mean, not on TV, on radio-- if he says something bad? So you repeat that. That would be the wrong thing for us to do to repeat anything you hear.

Yes, ma'am. And so you said two years later, your father remarried.

Yes.

Did your family know this woman while your mother was still alive?

No.

No? OK.

No, that came as a shock to all of us I think that she passed away. But like I said, she never talked about it. You know? Like, when you're sick, you say, oh, I'm sick. She never did. She just went ahead and done what she was supposed to do, cooked breakfast, supper, dinner, whatever, you know. And until one day, she wasn't there no more. And my sister took over, the youngest one.

So that's Leni?

Pardon?

Leni?

Laney. Uh-huh.

And so what--

I haven't that said that name in such a long time, I forgot. Really.

Yeah.

And the only Polish word I know, my brother's name is Paul. In Polish, it's Pawelek.

Paulek?

And Maria was Marika.

Marika?

This is the only things that I have ever learned, because, Marika, you know? And I said, what? Maria, Marika, same thing, you know. Just go ahead and go along with the flow, you know?

Mm-hmm. So what was your stepmother's name?

Szarlote.

Szarlote?

Don't ask me about her maiden name, because I don't know.

That's OK. Do you know when and where she was born?

No. All I know is I was very bad with dates. I always either was one day too early or too late.

That's OK.

For her birthday, my dad's birthday, the same thing for years. And I never did learn when my dad was born. All I know

is he was born in 1892. I remember that. 1892 or 1891. In fact, him and Hitler were born the same year.

Oh, wow.

But not the same month. Hitler was born in April. See? Remember dates-- April the 20th, 1892. That was Hitler. And my dad was born in June or July, something like that in 1892.

OK.

So--

And was Charlotte German as well?

What?

Was Charlotte German as well? Your stepmother?

Yes.

OK.

I know that much. Her parents or her father had a restaurant in a small town close to us, walking distance. Might be a 30-minute walk, you know? But I've never been there. I've been to that place, but for some reason or others, we were not close.

And how did you and your siblings feel about the remarriage?

Oh, at first, I was a total bitch.

[LAUGHS]

You were bad?

I was so bad, it was not even funny. I wouldn't call her Mom. I wouldn't call her Charlotte. I wouldn't call her nothing. I would say, hey, give me or something like that until my dad finally got tired of it. He says, you either call her Mom or Charlotte or you're not getting nothing to eat. Well, you know, food was scarce then, so I called her Mom. And it turned out to be a pretty good woman. Better than I deserved really.

What about your older siblings? What did they--

They were all gone. You see, the brothers were already-- I know every once in a while, when my two brothers had a furlough, they come home. They stayed with us. They got along all right. She was a good woman and a good cook too.

Did she stay at home?

She stayed home until, say, '44 sometime. And that's when they had her-- I don't remember what she done, but she had to go every day and do some kind of work somewhere. But I don't know what, because I remember the day I came home from that lady's house where I was learning house school. And my dad was still in bed. And he says, what are you doing here? And I says, well, the war is getting closer to us. The Russians are coming. I says, and I don't want to be caught by the Russians. So the lady sent me home.

He says, not going to happen, you know. Not going to happen. It happened three days later. We were on the run and in the snow. The worst winter we ever had, 1945.

And did your father and your stepmother have any children together?

Have what?

Did your father and your stepmother have any children together?

No, no. No. My dad was old already-- 52.

[LAUGHS]

Or whatever.

OK. So I have a last few questions before we move into the war years. So how did you learn about Kristallnacht?

What?

How did you learn about Kristallnacht?

Kristallnacht? Oh, everybody knew about that. Kristallnacht-- is that when they were burning the-- you know where my books went? I didn't burn my books. They went under the floor. We had a place. Because I loved to read then already.

Mm-hmm.

And I told my dad, I said, I don't see why I have to burn that book when there's nothing in it that's, you know, bad. So we took out some planks and put them underneath there. And I hid the books. But I remember that. He wouldn't let me out that night because of all that hollering and screaming. And you know how people are. It's like a riot. And then throwing their books in the fire. But I didn't see that.

So you heard screaming and all of that? And your dad--

Yeah.

OK.

And "Heil Hitler"-- what the heck? I mean, you know, who is Heil Hitler? Hail Caesar, I can see that. Heil Hitler?

And you couldn't even tell if you meet a nun on a street, it was gruss Gott, greet God. The priests, the same way. When Hitler started taking over, it was "Heil Hitler" to everybody. And don't even say it like that, you know. Like, just throw up your hands. You had to really-- I can't even lift my arm that high. Had to really be careful how you do it.

Was your friend's father's pharmacy-- was that-- did anything happen to that during Kristallnacht?

To him?

During Kristallnacht?

The house, they took over. I mean, you know, someone just moved in, and, you know, straightened it up a little bit. But otherwise-- once you leave, it was like you stepped out of that house. Somebody else steps in. That's it.

The only thing is if you ever look for somebody that moved, you had to check out that town and tell them where you're going to move to and check in at the other town. So if you want to look for somebody, you had to go to city hall and get all the information from there. You can always be found then. I don't know how it is now. And but what happened to them, I don't know. All I know is all their belongings were in that house still.

But by November of 1938, they had already left?

Yes.

OK. OK.

'38 or '39, one of them.

OK. So you said books were burned. Were any-- did anything else happen in town?

Not that I know of.

OK. So is there anything else you'd like to add about prewar--

Prewar?

--these years leading up to the war?

No. It was more or less normal life, I thought. You know, you get up in the morning. You do your thing. You go to school, whatever. And come home at night, and most of the time you stayed at home after dark, because there was no movies or dances or whatever. When you had-- like my sister-- I can't find a picture of it-- got married. I was six years old. My mother was still alive. And had flags already hanging up in the big-- oh, what do you call it-- gym class deal, you know.

And I don't know. It just seems like the war really messed up everybody. And like I said, you had to be careful what you say. They even tried to take over what you're thinking, you know. But nobody can get in somebody else's head. But you just had to be really careful.

But as a kid, there was no playing. In the afternoon, you went to the Hitler Youth meeting. And you had your-- they tell you what to say or think about everything. 10-- I was a little soldier and wore my uniform. I've been wearing a uniform ever since. I went to work for printers and wore a uniform there too every day.

So, Miss Flores, before we start talking about the war years, would you like to take a break?

I have what?

Would you like to take a break before we start talking about the war years?

It's all right with me unless you need a drink of water.

No, I'm OK. You want to keep going?

Yeah. I'll keep going.

All right. Let's go.

While I'm on the go.

Yes, ma'am. All right, so we'll move on to the war years.

OK. And so Poland is invaded on September 1, 1939.

On September 1, 1939.

So you're almost 10. Were you in the fourth grade or the fourth class?

In '39? Let me see. All I remember about that is I had measles. And that was my first day back to school. And when I got to the main street, you couldn't cross it because there was soldiers going in tanks and cars and whatever and soldiers toward Poland. And I mean, I had a break where I'll run across and were sent home again because the war was broke out. Said to go home, but you come back tomorrow.

All right. And that was our first air raid too. You had those blimps everywhere. I told you. And when they start going up, you know, at a certain height-- you could see a plane, but when they were going up, this means that the planes were coming. So we kind of kept an eye on that.

And then at night, we went to bed dressed. In other words, you never know when you had to go. We had to go for 18 days down in the basement at night.

Yes, ma'am.

Yeah, it was pretty bad the first time. But then it quit. And then he decided to, I guess, go what, to Holland, France, out that way, Denmark. I don't know which he invaded first, Denmark of France. Whatever.

And so what was it like seeing all of these soldiers coming through?

Oh, it was awesome. I mean, we were waving at them. And wished them all the luck in the world, you know, because in a war, you never know whether you're going to come back or not. Anyway, it was awesome. I mean, you don't see a tank up close. It's an awesome sight to see all those working deals, parts of the-- it's awesome.

And I was always curious about things like that. How to make a locomotive with all those nuts and bolts-- you had this right close by. And like I said, that first day, all the soldiers were happy, you know, waving and shouting and all that, you know. And you do the same thing.

So you, all of your classmates, and the teachers-- no, it was just me. My classmates were on the other side. I couldn't get across.

Oh, OK, but you were-- you and everyone were outside. You, your classmates, the teachers, everyone was outside.

Mm-hmm.

And everyone was just waving and--

Waving and shouting and, you know, having little flags, swastikas and all that. I didn't have one because I just went back to school and was sent back home again.

Oh, but the other students had--

Had it. Uh-huh.

--little flags?

Yeah, because school was-- well, I was on this side of the street. And the school was on the other side. And I couldn't get across because it was just, like, bumper-to-bumper people. But the tanks are awesome. I mean, you don't see one that close.

Now, I mean, now you probably can go to the museum. You see it, you know. But at that time, it was new to me. I didn't even know they had one.

So after seeing this, you go home. And what were your dad and your stepmom-- had they been out there too and seen everything?

My parents?

Yes, ma'am.

They were at home.

They were home. So did you go home and tell them about what you had seen?

I told them. I know, he said. You know, my dad just said, I know. He says, forget it, you know? That was his favorite-- [GERMAN]. Forget it.

Yes, ma'am. At that point, was there any talk about, you know, we're going to war? Were there any comparisons to the First World War at this time?

No. Not that I know of. No.

OK. All right. So I think in October 1939, upper Silesia-- I'm sorry. Misread that. So what aspects changed with the start of the war? Were there any changes at school?

In school? No. We just done the same thing. The only changes were from then on, at 3 o'clock, you go home, you put your uniform on, and you go to a meeting. That was our playtime.

Taught about the war. They taught you about the war-- how to march, how to, you know-- how to act like a soldier in other words. But you were a girl. And I don't know. It just seems like it-- at that time, it was exciting. It was exciting to me because I run home, and I said, oh--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

And it was that the war started.

And he says, don't be so happy about it, you know? Well, I was happy because I didn't know what a war was. I mean, this was new to me. And you know, 18 days later, it was over with.

And he said-- I told him. I said--

[SPEAKING GERMAN]

In other words, the war is over. His says, yeah, you think that. You know, because he already-- I don't know whether he-- you know, sometimes I wonder if he had some kind of information that I didn't know anything about it, because he knew things. Later on, it dawned on me. You see, he already told me about it, you know?

Like I get on Facebook now, and I see pictures on it. I said, I done seen that. Where? I don't know. But I've seen it. You know? And that was him. He was the same way. He kept saying, just sent that, you know? And sure enough, little bit later, they invaded either Denmark or Holland, Belgium.

This was your father?

My father. Uh-huh.

OK.

What did they invade after Poland, handsome? He's ignoring me. Handsome! Yeah, him. What did they invade in '39 after the Polish war was over. Was it Denmark?

I don't know.

You don't know? You're not that old, are you?

I'm old.

Dadgummit.

[LAUGHS]

And I'm drawing a blank too. But sure enough, your father says, you know, it's not over. And then things start happening.

Yeah.

OK. At this time, was your Jewish friends still in school with you?

Friends-- there was no more, like-- when you think about it, there was no more friends. We went to the school like strangers, you know? Like, it changed the whole outlook on life.

You went to school. You said hi and played within the school yard. But once you left that school yard, you never seen them no more. They-- that was it. No more friends.

Did--

I have one more.

Yes.

Poland.

Poland.

First one they went to in '39.

What?

Poland was the first one. Yes.

Poland was the first one. Right. But after Poland, it was either Denmark or--

We're Googling. We're Googling.

Really?

We're checking.

They'll let us know.

You better get on that Facebook and figure it out. They're just ignoring me too.

But--

When you get old, you know, people ignore you.

No, he's looking.

Who?

Yeah. He's figuring it out.

Oh, is he?

Yeah. While he's looking it up, did anything change, like, within the town, with church?

Well, like I said, they say that Hitler banished church more or less. But it didn't change for me, because every Sunday, I went to church. Afterwards to meetings, you know? And on Sundays, we didn't have to go to afternoon meetings.

OK. Did the--

We have the answer. OK, it went Poland in '39, Denmark in '40, Norway in '40, Netherlands in '40. So it went, Poland, Denmark, Norway--

Denmark. I knew it was Denmark.

Yes, ma'am.

Then from Denmark they went to--

Norway.

Norway.

Then Netherlands, Belgium--

Belgium, Netherlands.

--Luxembourg, and France.

Luxembourg. No, Luxembourg was-- what do you call it? Neutral. They never went into Luxembourg.

They said they first annexed Austria--

Austria.

--and then went into Poland and Denmark.

Well, yeah. Yeah. He took over when they had-- what do you call it? Sudetenland.

Mm-hmm.

You know what that is?

Yes, ma'am.

They took that over. It's just Slovakia right now, isn't it?

Yes, ma'am.

OK, then they took over Austria. That's why when we were in Austria after the war, they kicked us out, the Austrians. German, out. And we were enemies, you know? And it was no fault to us.

So you said church didn't change.

Change, no.

What about the Party? Did more people join the Party? Did the images of Hitler-- were they, you know, more prevalent?

I would say they all changed to the Party, you know, because they were afraid. They already-- what I didn't find out till after I came to the United States-- they already knew because they kept it from the kids, in other words. And the Jews were disappearing little by little, you know? And so therefore, they all joined the Party. And if SS came by, you know you-- if even get near you, people get paranoid.

So most people at this point, if they weren't already a member, they joined.

Right.

OK.

Did your parents?

No.

No? OK. So most people joined.

I don't know why. Maybe he was-- well, he wasn't useful anymore, retired. But my mother, she didn't care about none of that anyway-- my stepmom. She didn't care about that anyway. And my dad, he closed mouth. He never--

OK. So how did you receive news about what was going on elsewhere in Germany? Was it still the film reels?

The only TV we had then was the movie, and there was a newsreel before the movie started, and the news on the radio if you were lucky enough to listen to it, you know?

And your parents followed this closely, but might send you to bed.

Yes.

OK.

I remember that mostly my dad let me listen to the radio on a Sunday. It was music mostly and a bulletin saying that Sergeant So-and-So's wife had a baby boy, you know? And then, yay. Everybody was clapping and all of that. But I didn't know the man, so I didn't clap. But Sundays was the main thing. And my father played the violin. He played a lot of violin.

OK. Was there an increased police or military presence after the start of the war?

Not-- they were too busy going to the Polish border. And then afterwards, they were coming back. But until I would say '44-- I told you about the woods we had close to the house were full of soldiers. Why? Well, for one thing, they were camouflage, you know? They didn't see anything in there.

But there was a lot of them there for a while. That's where we got our food. You know the big kettles they had? You would go over there with a little plate. If there was leftover, you got some food there.

And these were German soldiers.

German soldiers, uh-huh.

But up until that point, your town was kind of like a-- kind of a through station almost. People would just pass through.

Right. Just like everyday life, you know? They come, and they go. And just go along what they done every day. For a while, it was like, if you didn't listen to the news, there was no war at that part of town-- I mean that part of the country from '39 after the Polish War-- I mean after the [INAUDIBLE] till they took over Africa. When they got Rommel out of Africa, that's when we started getting bombarded again-- you know, bombed again till we left. That was almost-- not every day, but quite often.

In the daytime, sometimes you'd be going to the store. We'd have to run for a bunker because a siren went off. And me, instead of running to the bunker, I'd run into the woods, and I stood under the tree watching the planes come, shot down or drop the bomb. I saw all of that. To me, it was fascinating.

I saw the planes explode, guys jump out of it in parachute. Damn Germans came along and shot him. He was still alive. I saw all that.

Did you go by yourself?

By myself. Yeah. The lady that I lived with lived in a forest house in the middle of a forest. And to get to the bunker, we had about maybe 10-minute run.

Oh, this was later?

Yeah. That was in '44. You know. But before-- yeah. Before that, I didn't see hardly anything. But when you did see the planes go over there, it was a scary sight. It wasn't just one or two planes. It was dozens of them.

And then you see the plane-- I mean the bombs coming down. Oh, scary. It's going to hit us or not.

Yes, ma'am. So with all these soldiers passing through town, in and out, were you or anyone else afraid of all of these soldiers?

Not really, because like I said, I'm still too young. I wasn't comprehending all of that. To me, it was everyday life.

OK.

They kept the bad stuff away from me.

Mm-hmm. So these were just kind of guys coming through to you.

Yeah.

OK.

So besides your brothers, which we'll talk about again a little bit later, did you or anyone else you knew have interactions with soldiers or the police or anyone?

No. But-- no. I know you think I'm crazy, but my dad kept me away from all of that.

I don't think you're crazy.

He says, you have no business there. Stay at home. And you do what you're supposed to do. You don't need to be there. So when you belong to the Hitler Youth, every once in a while, we had, like, water or cookies or something like that. We went to the train station. And when the trains were going through with soldiers while we [INAUDIBLE], stuff like that, believe me, my dad was somewhere around there. He was watching over me.

Why at that time I didn't know. But I know now. You know, I'd probably be the same way with my girl if I had one. I mean, I have one, but she's old enough to know better.

So yeah, let's talk a little bit more about your dad. He says, you know, you don't see anything, hear anything, or repeat anything.

And don't repeat anything.

Yes, ma'am. So when does he start saying this to you?

He started right after Poland, because when I started coming home and telling him what they told me in school, which I don't remember no more. I come home, and I tell him. I said, Dad, this was so-and-so and so. He says, you know nothing.

I said, but I did hear it, you know? And he says, you don't know nothing. You don't see nothing. And one thing I want you to remember, not to repeat anything that you hear.

I said, can I come home and tell you? He says, no. I don't want to know. He said, because-- he says, what's happening to this country is father against father, mother against mother, brother against sisters and all of that. You have no friends. You have no friends. And--

So this was to protect you. This was to protect you?

Yeah. More or less, I would say so. Now I see it differently, you know. But at that time, I thought it was terrible for him to be like that.

You didn't really understand why, and-- and so at first, was it very easy to do this, or did you have some trouble really-- OK, I really can't repeat anything. Did it take you a while to get used to that?

No, because I was running home, and I wanted to tell him. You know, I wanted to tell somebody. And he says, you don't-- he just shook his head. He says, you don't-- I don't want to know.

And did he ever change his mind about that?

He never did.

OK. So with the start of the war, were there any new rules or laws that the people in town had to follow?

Any what?

Any new rules or laws that were put into place?

No. The only thing is-- I'm moving too much, huh?

No.

You had your day planned ahead already by-- now I see it by the government, because you go to school, you go to meetings, and you stay at home at night, for one thing. You don't do any of that. What you used to do, you would never-- not that I ever went out at night.

But I mean, you had street lights. It was what you call blackout every night. We had black window shades, the kind that you pull down. And when my mother turned it on-- my deal was I go outside, and if there was any kind of light, I had to tell her, and she had to cover it up.

So that was kind of like a chore that you had to do?

Right. Yeah.

OK.

That was the main one every night. I mean, she let me go outside and stand in the outside and do my dreaming, you know, because I did-- I was a pretty good dreamer. I dreamed myself all the way to this country.

So how did you learn about this new requirement? Were there signs posted, or was it announced on the radio?

Oh, on the radio for one thing. That's why my father know about it and the school-- they told you in school what's going on.

Were there any consequences for not blacking out your windows?

I just went ahead from day to day, done what they told me to do, you know?

Did everyone follow the blackout rules?

The what?

Did everybody follow the rule to black out your windows?

Oh, god, everybody. That was a must. When they said that-- I mean, I couldn't understand then that you could see a sliver of light way up in the plane. I mean, that is unreal for me. And I still can't comprehend that. But every night, we had to go out there and see that there was no light coming out.

And we had-- remember those little gas lights with those little stocking deals hanging?

Yes.

Well, you don't remember that. But you read about it.

I know of them.

They were all out. I mean, at night, there was nobody turning no lights on, no nothing. And you could see the stars. I want you to know there's millions up there. I haven't seen them since I left there.

Yeah, you can't see them very well around here. Was there somebody, like an official from town, who would walk the streets to make sure?

Oh, they do. Yes. That's like-- do you remember when they say 9 o'clock and all is well?

Mm-hmm.

They used to go by that. Or 8 o'clock and all is well, you know. You don't go to hell.

[LAUGHTER]

So if this person saw light coming from a house, what would happen?

Oh, they'd knock on the door and turn the light out.

OK. What about you mentioned a ration card?

Ration cards?

Yes, ma'am. So, like, what could you get with it? How often were you given these cards?

Once a month you got your ration card. And on the card, it's little pieces of it that says for meat and so many-- well, pounds-- a quarter of a pound. And if you want more, then you have to get two of the stamps. Well, we bought a quarter of a pound, because it had to last us a whole month.

But I got-- since I was under 18, I got a little bit more. I got sugar once a month. I got full milk every day. And once in a while if you were lucky you get there in time, you got butter instead of margarine. And my mother, like I said, she was very good at it. She saved all that stuff. Every once in a while, she baked a cake. She used my sugar. My sugar, which I never got.

My sweet stuff, I used to take-- when my mother wasn't at home, I'd take a little butter and melt it and put a little sugar in it. And that was my candy. And then I had to wash my pot too.

[LAUGHS]

So you said if you were under 18, you got a little bit more?

Yeah.

Once you hit 18, were all ration cards the same for all people?

No, except for, like I said, under 18 they were different-- a little bit more. Like, for instance, a quarter of-- so many ounces of-- you know, they eat a lot of meat over there-- sausage over there. And [GERMAN], quarter of a pound. Well, maybe I got a little bit more. And when you had your mother, your father, so if you were really smart about it, you could make it. But if you're greedy, then you lost out.

I mean, you know what? I was really good, because I'd always go down the street with my head down. I found some of those little cards.

Really?

And I took them home. I says, look what I found. Oh, we're going to have some meat tonight. Can you imagine going into a store and buying a quarter of a pound of roast and cook it for a meal and have leftover? I mean, my mother was a good gravy maker. That's why I like gravy. And she always had a little bit-- on Sundays when we had meat, a little left over for that night. Over there, bread and butter is the main meal over there. Bread, butter, sausage, cheese-- that's the main thing.

So at this time, were there still Jewish people in town? Like, was your friend still--

No. I lost track of them-- I think right after the Polish-- that war with Poland was over with.

OK. So you said a quarter pound of meat, and then you'd have leftovers. So were you hungry a lot?

We were hungry then, yes. But you know, your stomach adjusts to it. And the less you eat, the less you want. And like I said, you get up in the morning. You get one slice of bread. Maybe if you're lucky, you get a little butter on it. And if not, you get dry bread with, if you're lucky again, sausage or cheese.

They have that cheese that you could get any time, and it smells to high heaven. Have you smelled that cheese?

No.

Oh, my god. I mean, if you forget about it a couple of days, you want to move. It's like somebody died, you know? But if you eat it, that stuff is good. Maybe because you were hungry, I don't know. But we ate that. They call it stinkender kase.

Stinkender kase.

You got that--

Yes, ma'am.

Tell him what it is.

Stinky cheese.

Smelly cheese.

Yep. Stinky cheese.

That stuff can smell you out of house and home. But that stuff is good when you eat it. You know, another cheese that's good is that brie. It looks like hell, but when you eat it, it's just like eating butter. It melts in your mouth.

That is pretty good.

It is.

So were you all able to stock up any kind of canned goods in case there was a food shortage, or was it pretty much just going day by day?

Well, I didn't quite get it.

Were you all able to save any food in case there was--

Oh, no. We went to the store every day. Like a little milk or whatever or an egg or some-- if you heard that meat-- not meat market. That milchgeschaft.

Mm-hmm.

Dairy.

Yeah.

Had eggs when you were there, you know, you got one or two eggs, but you had stamps for it. But like over here we eat breakfast for eggs and bacon. Well, over there, you cook with it. My mother said, oh, run over there and get two eggs. I run over there, and I got my two eggs. You know? Sometimes I fell down, and there were no eggs.

Were there any items that were particularly hard to get?

Everything was hard to get-- everything. I mean, I stood in line on a weekend-- all the stores are closed on Sundays and half a day on Saturdays. You stood in line for hours sometimes. Then when you get to the counter and you say I want a quarter of pound of meat-- no, I'm sorry, we're out. You stood there and wasted time. You didn't get nothing that weekend.

There was a lot of times I went home with no food. I mean, but she always managed something. Bread was the same thing. You got a loaf of bread or half a loaf of bread. Cake was out of the question, you know. Cookies-- you couldn't buy that over the counter.

But we always had bread for the simple reason my mother baked it. You bake the bread at home, then take it to the bakery. They bake it for you. And then after school, I pick it up and take it home.

Oh, wow. Interesting.

You didn't know that?

No, I didn't.

Many times I'd go to school with a big, round thing, you know, under my arm. My school books were here. And I'd go over there, and I'd say, I'll pick it up at 3 o'clock. 3 o'clock come, I picked up my loaf.

And you know, every time you make bread, you save a little bunch, and you use it in the next deal. I don't know why, because I guess it got yeast in it or whatever. But it's good. That was good bread.

Yes, ma'am.

I wish I had some here sometimes. Hard, but good.

Yes, ma'am. Was there any kind of black market for goods since things were so hard to get?

At that time, yes, but we didn't have nothing to black market with. When I met my husband, then I was pretty well active then.

[LAUGHS]

Even though you might not have participated at the time, did you know that it was going on?

No.

No? It was only after that you found out that-- OK.

We always thought it was going to be better one day, you know?

Yeah. Were the authorities aware that a black market was going on?

I'm sure they did, but I didn't. If you had gold or silver, whatever, you know, but my dad didn't have nothing but a wedding ring. My mother had the same thing. I never had anything. That's why right now I don't care for jewelry. I don't care for it.

But I'm not going to move no more.

[LAUGHS]

You're OK. You're OK. So were the authorities still your local policeman?

Oh, yeah. We had our policeman. Mm-hmm. They were for that small town. You know, you didn't need a car. You got on foot anywhere you wanted to go.

Do if there were any consequences for trading in the black market or--

No, we didn't have to participate in the black market for the simple reason-- we always had bread. And the woods were right there, and it was full of blackberries and mushrooms. Not after I got through with them, but still. Every once in a while, she gave me a little bucket. And she said, girl, go and get us some blackberries, you know, or get us some mushrooms.

And those are the best tasting mushrooms. Mmm. I can taste them now. She would fry them, you know? With a little bit of bacon grease-- not bacon, but [GERMAN].

Pork. Pork fat.

Pork fat. That's it. And you might buy that on a stand with [INAUDIBLE]. And then they cut it in real fine little cubes and melt it. And they used the grease and the little crumbs. And to put a little bit of that in there with the mushrooms with salt and pepper and Maggi. You know what Maggi is, don't you? Maggi? It's like spices in a little bottle.

Yes. Yeah.

Good stuff. You must make your wife cook some of that for you.

We'll all go home and try it. So let's talk about your family a little bit during the war. So what was your family doing during the war? Like your dad-- what was he doing?

I was always busy, you know? I'm not moving. You're going to have to tie me down.

No, you're fine. You're fine. So your dad was retired. So what's he doing?

You know, every time I remember and look back at it, he was sitting next to the radio. We had a little bench over on the stove, you know, and he was right in the corner with a radio going low, not very loud. He had it real low, so-- that's probably where he got his news from, you know?

And why did he keep it so low?

Maybe he was listening to a station that he wasn't supposed to. I don't know. But he was always real close to it. His ear was close to the radio. I remember that.

So he really followed very closely what was going on.

Right. Yeah.

OK. What about your stepmom?

She just went about cooking and washing dishes and washing clothes. You know you don't wash your clothes but once a month over there. You take-- now you're going to say I'm related to a skunk, but you didn't take a bath but once a month over there too. Really. And you have a tub like what the cattle drink out of now in the field.

Yes, ma'am.

And it's down in the basement. You have a big kettle in there that you boil your water in and put it in there. And so your dad takes a bath. Your mom takes a bath. And then I was coming in the same dadgum water. That's how-- you know. That's why I don't like to waste anything. People think I'm a little bit off my rocker. But I mean, you know, it kind of sticks with you.

Yes, ma'am.

Don't say ma'am. I'm not that old yet.

I'm sorry. I'm from here. Ma'am comes out automatically. So I remember reading in your questionnaire that your stepmother used to mend soldiers' uniforms?

What?

Your stepmother used to mend soldiers' uniforms? She would sew?

Uniforms? My uniform was always-- that's the only one we had in the house was my black skirt, white shirt with a swastika.

OK, I thought your stepmother had sewn soldiers' uniforms.

No, no. No.

OK.

No. She just worked on the last part of the war. And I don't know what she did.

That's OK.

I really don't.

We'll talk more about Leni later. But what were Maria and Angela doing?

The were away from home already. Maria was been gone from the house as far back as I can remember, working for the same family that she married into. And Angela was-- I was six years old when she got married. And she was gone from home. Her husband was something in the army. In fact, he was stationed in Norway.

Oh, OK.

Uh-huh.

Were your sisters or your stepmother part of the Frauenschaft, the Women's League?

Not that I know of.

OK.

I know that if you had a lot of kids-- I remember that-- that you got a medal for that. And you got also money for that. And even now, they honor the mother a lot more than they did before the war.

Did your sisters receive any of these medals?

I don't know. Like I said, the first time I really got-- you know, that I remembered that is when that woman gave me

those things.

OK.

And I saw that. Then it comes back.

So let's talk about Paul and Franz a little bit. So they were soldiers you said. Did they volunteer, or were they drafted?

They were drafted.

Drafted. OK.

As soon as she turned 18, he was gone.

As soon as both--

He was gone. I think he came home only twice on a furlough. He was stationed against the Russians. Because I had a picture of him where he was sitting in front of a tent, wrapping his feet up in cloth. It was that cold.

And this was Paul or Franz?

Franz.

On the Eastern Front.

The other one was a soldier in the tank division. And I think he was against France on the west side.

Western. OK.

And he was on the east side.

So did they receive a letter in the mail telling them that they had to report, or how did that work?

The what? The mail?

How did they find out that they had been drafted?

Oh, they'd knock on your door, and you're going. You know, it's not like you sign up for it now. You're going.

They said, pack your things, come with us?

Pack? There was nothing to pack, because you got uniforms. What you had on is what you had. And then they took you. They had, like, a little truck on the outside. Put you on the back, and they collected the people just like animals.

And this was the Wehrmacht?

The what?

This was the Wehrmacht?

The Wehrmacht, yeah.

OK.

Yeah, I hadn't heard that in a long time. You know more than me.

Oh, I don't know about that.

[LAUGHTER]

I had time to prepare. So Paul was in the tank division. Franz was a courier. Do you know, what did they think about the war?

I don't know. I didn't see them but very short time. Vacation-- you know, furlough was short. They just barely made their appearance. And Paul already had a girlfriend. So he was gone most of the time. And the other one-- we were never close. We were never close.

Can I have a drink of water?

Yes, ma'am. Of course. So how often did you receive news from them? Did you regularly get letters, or--

The what?

How often did you hear from them? Did they send letters home?

Well, they wrote to-- Paul wrote to his girlfriend, and she let us know what was going on where he was stationed at and all of that. Franz wrote to my sister Angela. And from her, we found out about him. And then after the war, in '45 maybe, '46 when my father found out that my sister got killed in it, Franz got killed from the Red Cross.

Do you know if these letters, were they censored at all by the government?

That I don't know.

OK. They were a lot older, but what did you think about them being soldiers?

Oh, I was proud of them. I thought they were doing something great, you know? I talk too much.

That's OK. Would you like to take a break?

Pardon?

Would you like to take a break? Or you want to--

It won't quit coughing. Anyway-- while I can do it, let's do it.

Keep going? OK. Can we do one thing?

Yes, sir.

OK.

Why don't we start there? Do you want to do that?

Yeah.

We're gonna start--

We are rolling, audio [INAUDIBLE].

All right. So this is part two of our interview with Elizabeth Flores on December 27, 2015. So we ended with in the last part, you said you were very proud of your brothers being soldiers and what they were doing. So let's talk a little bit about what you were doing outside of school during the war, which, as you said, was the Jungmadelbund, the Hitler Youth. So what was it like?

I was 11 then, right? 11 years old?

Yes, ma'am. Right in there. So what was-- like, how old did you have to be to join?

To join the Hitler Youth?

Yes, ma'am.

10 years.

10 years old?

It was 10 years old just like the-- in school, today is your birthday. Tomorrow you get-- how you say it-- sworn in, more or less.

Mm-hmm.

And every day your life belongs to Hitler.

Were there any prerequisites to join?

They just told you what to do. They said, you're in. That's it. You're 10 years old. You're in.

You didn't have to--

Have no objections, no nothing. You just--

You didn't have to do any tests or anything like that?

No tests, no nothing. You're in.

OK.

Just like a soldier, you know? They get physicals and all of that, I'm sure. But this, just 10 years old, you're Hitler Youth. Now you belong to Hitler. You do what we want you to do.

And what they wanted us to do is really just be there after school. They kept you busy at all times. So you had no idea of what-- get no funny ideas, you know, like wanting to play or anything like that. That was out. My shooting marbles and playing with a knife went out at 10. So--

So at school, they would just say, you're 10 years old now.

Right. You go home, and you put your uniform on. When it was gym time, we had a black pair of gym shorts, a t-shirt with a swastika naturally on it, you know. And you're out there. Always, at all times, you were dressed alike. They had the same thing. It's not like you had jeans on and all of that. You had a uniform on.

So all the girls looked the same.

The same. And the boys was naturally too, but they had a little bit different uniform.

Besides the swastika, was there any kind of insignias or badges on the clothes?

When you had sport, you won little, bitty, tiny medals. And then you can put them on your jacket or whatever. And they were like real lightweight. So they couldn't have been metal. So they must have been tin-- not tin, but what do you call that light metal that bends really easy?

Like tin bends.

Maybe some kind of a metal. But, anyway, you got that. I didn't get but one.

And so you would earn these little medals?

What?

You would earn these medals?

Yeah, you have to earn that. Like, for instance, that school went to a different town, but all of us from that class marched to a different town. And then there we competed to different girls. And, whoever got the best, that's the one.

But the nicest thing about all of that was we all slept in the schoolhouse in the biggest room on straw. And, at night, we all sat there and sang. That was really nice. And it wasn't Hitler songs or marching songs. It was like lullabies and something like that. That was awesome. I'll never forget that.

This was on your trip to the other town?

That's when we were on the trip, right. Now, when you were in meetings every day, there were marching songs that you had to learn. And, what they wanted you to know about the war, they told you there too.

And there's some things that are really not bad. I think they would-- if they would have it here and now, there would be less crime because I don't remember any kind of crime that we had there at that time. Maybe people were too busy trying to hide or do something, you know?

And so what was your medal for?

The what?

What was your medal for?

I have no idea, but I'm moving. I'm back again. We had high jumping, fore jumping, 50-yard dash. We had 100-yard dash. We had all of that we had to do. Or, that relay running, we had to do that. We had discus throwing. We had to do all of that.

And then whoever-- I don't know whoever decided who was the best. They got that little medal. So I must have been good at one thing. I don't know what it was.

So you'd wear these uniforms. Were you allowed to wear makeup at all?

No, we didn't have makeup.

Oh, you didn't have any.

No makeup.

Let's see. So you're told that you're 10 years old, and you have to join. Was there some kind of ceremony to initiate you?

Maybe we all would get together, and somebody was talking. What they said, I don't know, but they were talking. And we were singing and then the parents mingled a little bit.

But never did we get to go back home with the parents. We had to watch back home-- walk. I had blisters on my feet sometimes something terrible. No wonder now I'm giving up toe after toe.

So were you required to join? Or was there just a lot of pressure to join?

A lot of pressure, yes. I mean, they expected a lot from you.

And so was this pressure coming from the town?

No, from, more or less, the leader of the group. It was an older person, not 10 years old. It was an older one, and they were trying to teach us the good life, I guess, what they thought was a good life.

So the older girls would--

Older girls.

--come in, say you're 10 years old. You should join.

We were 10 years old, yeah. And they were I would say 18 and older.

OK, had your older sisters participated?

They were too old already for that.

Even for Bund Deutscher Madel?

No.

No, OK. How did your parents and your siblings feel about you being part of this group?

on a trip?

Oh, just what did they-- how did they feel about you being a member of this group?

They had no say so. They had no say. I was old enough. Like, in other words, it's I come in and say, hey, you belong to me. You have your parents, but you belong to me. That's the way it was. But I still had a nice remembrance of my teenage days. So I had good parents.

But other parents didn't care maybe. I don't know. They went off. They went to overnight trips. We went to I think it was two overnight trips, and that was competing against another school.

And my sister lived in one town. So she kept an eye on me there. And, the other one, nothing happened. So everything was fine.

But, otherwise, my dad wasn't for me being gone all night, all weekend, or something like that. You belong to the house. You stay here with us, but, in the all over deal, when Hitler took over, you belonged to him.

That's why he was-- you heard them say that he wanted to raise a super race, blue eyes and blond. I'm already messed

up, brown eyes, and he wanted blue eyes and blond hair. And I was the opposite of. So really there was no pressure on me, but, on the other girls that had that deal, they were treated special.

So the pressure was so great that most girls joined, but girls who looked Aryan were treated differently?

But, like me, there was no pressure on my part. Like I said, I could come and go as I wanted to, but they kept an eye on you at all times. But I was lucky, brown eyed-- brown eyes and brown hair.

So did you have any friends or classmates that joined as well?

The what?

Did you have friends or classmates that also joined?

No, your-- what do you call it-- personal life didn't exist anymore. In other words, today, I'm going to go to a movie. Tomorrow, I'm going to go there. It's all evened out for you. You go to school. You go to meetings. And you stay at home.

And the ones that had the blue eyes the and blond hair, well, they got a little bit better treatment. Maybe we were just average. And I was treated like an average person, which was all right. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't-- you couldn't say anything, period.

So it's pretty much everyone started keeping it themselves very much.

Right.

But you didn't know if your classmates joined? Or you don't know anyone who-- I guess boys were Deutsches Jungvolk?

That all didn't exist anymore. When you got out of school, we didn't see them no more until the next day. They had-- they had their part.

So, even girls you might have gone to school with, they weren't in your group?

They were not in the our. I don't know why, now that you mention it, but they did separate us. But it could be-- I don't know what the girls looked like. Maybe they had blue eyes and blond hair, and they were-- in a separate group.

But, at the time when you were with the kids, you laugh, and you talk. And you joke around. But, once you're gone, you go straight home. There was no I'll meet you on a corner, you know? That wasn't like that, no.

So you were just assigned. Here you're with this group. Go with--

Right.

Was there any hierarchy within there?

Any what?

Any hierarchy? Like were there ranks within the group?

New groups? We never got together with any group, but what they put you in.

Yes, ma'am. But you had a group leader, and then, below the leader, were you all treated the same? Or was there like kind of ranks within there?

I don't know. I mean, it just, more or less, you've done what they wanted you to do. You didn't mingle. There was no mingling afterwards or before that or during it.

They taught you about history. They taught you about the war. And they said what they expected out of you. They wanted you to grow up to be a follower of Hitler. Like, at home, there wasn't that. They said you don't follow him, no way.

So did this cause tension at home?

No.

OK, even though you were learning one thing here, another here.

No, I was raised to obey my dad. So I went over there. I listened. And then I come home. I was my dad's girl in other words more or less.

So almost kind of like two separate--

Right.

--lives.

Two separate lives, you're right.

So I know you mentioned sports, competitions. And I think you mentioned earlier too that you would help. You would go to a hospital.

It's right. We would on days-- I'm moving again. I'm moving again. On bad days, rain, where you couldn't do anything like sports, we went to the hospital to entertain the soldiers, like write little letters for them, for their parents that they couldn't write, sing, get together in a big hall and the sing for them and make them feel wanted again because some of them were no arms, no legs, or whatever, make them feel good about themselves again. And you'd give out a little coffee and wait on them hand and food, more or less.

Or, when there wasn't that many soldiers there, we had to roll the bandages. They wiped-- they washed the bandages that they didn't use. And then we had to go and separate them and roll them, make rolls out of it. So it's easier for the nurses to bandage them up again. We'd done that a lot.

So, since both of your brothers were in the military, how did you feel helping these soldiers?

Oh, I felt good about that because I was also glad it wasn't them that I had to help and, if they did get hurt, that somebody else would be there to make them feel good about themselves again.

To do the same thing.

Mhm.

OK. So you said they were raising-- or they were trying to get you in the group to be a follower of Hitler. And they talked about history.

Have what?

They taught you about history?

Oh, yes. What about was there any racial instruction? Did they talk about the differences between Aryans and Jews?

No, they talked, more or less, about the rulers before the war, but that were, in a sense, more or less like Hitler. In other words, most of all, they talked about Hitler being in a prison and wrote that book Mein Kampf and what he's accomplished so far, give people work. And they never said the bad things about him, naturally, but I don't know. Sometimes, I don't know how to express myself when I come out with that.

That's OK.

It's just hard. They wanted you to be a true believer in him and that he was as good as God if not better. And I wasn't brought up like that.

And, anyway, during the War, it's just a different life in a war. Even if it doesn't touch you directly, you had to live by the way he thought that you should think. And then it's just difficult for me to say. It's just a messed up life really, but I still had a nice like childhood. I still had a little bit that I could save.

Yes, ma'am. But never any talk of Aryans versus Jews? Just about pretty much--

Oh, no. That was the enemy. That was your enemy, the Jew, because he was not full-blooded German.

And so how did you learn this?

That was his job. Me, I didn't see no difference. It was [INAUDIBLE] like me.

Oh yes, ma'am.

And, to me, it was a human being. You treat them nice.

But where did you learn this idea that Jews were the enemy? At school? Or--

They started coming out with the-- what do you call it? The star, the Jewish star. They had it on their clothes sewed on, on their hat, and on their arm like the [INAUDIBLE]. They had one like that. They had to-- they couldn't say I'm a German. When you walk in, you know he was a Jew. He had to be.

So when they start wearing these is when you become aware?

Right.

OK. So you said you would travel to other parts of Silesia to meet other groups?

Groups, no. I mean, for the Hitler Youth, you mean?

Yes, ma'am.

The older ones, from 10 to 14, they taught us in one part, and, from 14 to 18, it was something else. And I missed out on the 14 to 18 because I got out of the school in September. I was 15. And they would have got me then, but I had to do that one year of how school. And I was saved there.

What were your group leaders like?

The what?

What were the group leaders like?

They were ordinary people like me, you know? They just knew a little bit more than I did, and they were trying to teach me.

Did you ever want to become a leader?

No, I liked my freedom.

Did you ever watch or maybe even participate in ceremonies or parades, anything like that?

Parades, we had every so often, yes. We went through the whole town, which is a little town, but we had parades with all dressed up nice and neatly and all look alike just about.

So you all would, as a group, march through town?

Mhm.

Were there any joint activities with the boys?

No.

Always separate?

We were downstairs, and the boys were upstairs.

OK, so, with all this time spent together with your group, was there a sense of camaraderie?

Something like that, yeah.

Like you felt very close?

Right.

OK.

I mean, in a way, it was fun, and it occupied your mind more or time. You had no time to think about mischief. You thought about this is a serious time. There's a war going on, and you're supposed to be like that, you know?

And so, overall, you liked it?

I liked it.

Were there any things you didn't like?

Well, there's times when I wanted to play a little bit, but no playing.

OK, so, after the Jungmadelbund, girls would go on to Bund Deutscher Madel, right? So what were these older girls doing?

I don't know. They kept us apart.

So you don't know if it was similar?

They had the same uniforms or everything like that, but they were doing different things. And they had us apart. So what were-- what were they doing?

I have no idea, no idea. I mean, they didn't even let us go into the part of the house that we had. We had a house for that only. They didn't even let us go in there.

Oh, so there was a house that you would go to for meetings?

Right, it was just for them. It wasn't a house for all people would live in. I mean, they lived in it, yes, but ours was a meeting place, more or less, the girls and then the older girls and the boys, always separated. The older boys were separated too.

So, while all this is going on and as you're getting older, you see that the Jews start wearing markings. What did they look like?

On what?

When Jews started to wear a marking to identify themselves as Jewish, what did it look like?

They had the ordinary people, but they had the marking on it, a Jewish star.

OK, so what--

They had--

Yeah, yeah, but what color was it?

Oh, the star was yellow. And everything they had-- well, it had to be sewed on or by a band on the arm.

And do you remember when this started, when they started wearing them?

I think it started right after the Polish War, after the '39--

So '39.

--I would say.

OK.

That's when I came aware of it.

When you first started noticing?

Yeah.

So, once they start wearing these markings, does any discrimination against Jews start?

Right, because they had-- you couldn't be caught talking to them because that, more or less, makes you one of them. So, when you saw them, you either just went your way or just ignored them. And, like I said, they had synagogues there, but not in my town. But, where my sister lived, they burned them out bad.

Were Poles targeted at all?

Poles?

Polish people, were they targeted?

There was-- no, it was supposedly be only Germans. And, if they were Polish descendants, I don't know. They kept all of that hush hush. You just didn't talk about it. Just like, for instance, you don't go around saying, hey, I'm Catholic. They didn't care whether you were a Catholic or not, but they didn't want you to brag about it.

You didn't just go around saying--

Yeah, I don't know why, but it's just the way it was.

Were any other groups-- did they have to wear markings? Or--

No, not-- all I ever saw was the Jewish star.

OK, so what was your reaction, if you remember, the first time seeing somebody?

Horrified. I couldn't figure out why people have to be marked like that. It just didn't make any sense.

Did you see your Jewish friend wearing this? Or had she already disappeared?

No, I didn't see her at all anymore. When they found out-- when they found out she was Jewish, I didn't see her at all anymore. I went by there in the morning to go and pick her up for school, and, like I said, they had messed up the house. The store was torn. And people were over there destroying it with rocks and whatever they could find to break the windows.

And I asked one of the people there, and they said we don't know what happened to them. The people were gone. So I don't know whether they escaped for a while or they got them right there and then because I don't know.

If you know, what did your parents and maybe what was the general feeling in town about the Jews being marked?

Never said-- they never said a word. He said that the best thing to do is just ignore it.

Just pretend?

Yeah.

OK, so your Jewish friend disappears around 1940, somewhere in there, and you just have no idea what happened.

No, no idea what happened.

She's gone. Her family's gone. The store is being destroyed.

Yeah.

Did you understand at that point why they had disappeared?

No, I didn't know what the heck was going on. I mean, this part of the war, I still don't understand.

Yes, ma'am. And you said people just came in and moved in. Where?

Oh, they just took over.

So took over all the belongings, the apartment? OK, and I also remember, in your questionnaire, you mentioned that a shop owned by the family of a Jewish friend was vandalized. Is this the pharmacy?

That was the pharmacy, yeah.

The same friend? OK. And did you actually see it being vandalized?

Yes, yes, because that's when I went to pick her up on our way to school. And that's what they were doing it. Then they boarded it up. The next day, it was all boarded up. And nobody ever mentioned. You even know a Jew-- I'm not talking about your wife over there. He's so mad at me.

What?

I'm not talking about your wife. I like her. But I mean, if you knew a Jew, you didn't say it because that, more or less, makes you part of it.

Yes, ma'am.

That's how I see it now because, I mean, when I came home, and I told my dad about it, he says forget about the girl. He says you'll find other friends. But I don't want other friends, you know? I'd known her for six, seven years. I mean, we played together.

And all he [? said, ?] forget about it. Just remember, forget about it. You don't know nobody. I said OK. What the hell? I mean, you know, what can you say? He was older than me, and he knew more than me. And he was trying to teach me not to.

So what exactly-- and I'm sorry if I'm asking you to repeat yourself. But what exactly did you see when you go to pick her up to walk to school?

There was people outside throwing rocks at the windows. They had big windows there. And sticks, they were beating on-- they were trying to tear up everything that was could be torn up. Upstairs, downstairs, it didn't make any difference. And they didn't burn it, but they threw paint at them, put that big Jewish star on it. In other words, stay away from there.

And was it just people from town?

From town. People like you and me, they turned violent.

Did you know any of the people who were doing it?

Probably did, but I was too scared. I took off and went to school. And then the first thing the teacher said-- Ruth was her name. She's not going to be with us anymore. That's all.

And then just never mentioned again?

Never mentioned anymore.

And she was the--

But it's just like I said. My sister had her in the basement for so many years, and not even she told me about it. That's because they said that you cannot even trust your own brother, your own sister. You can trust nobody at that point.

There was no trust in the people anymore. Nobody was trusting nobody. They kept it for themselves. And, like I said, my sister didn't even tell me about it.

Yes, ma'am. So, before we start talking about Leni and her hiding your friend, I want to ask a little-- or a few general questions about resistance activities. Did you ever witness any acts of resistance in town against the Nazis?

No. There must have been very few Jewish people in that town because, I mean, that's the only incident I've known that they really turned violent. All the rest of it, I mean, was intact, was not messed with or anything.

That's probably why we never had a Jewish church in there. It was in another town. It was a 30- or 45-minute walk, but that's where it was at. We didn't have it. It was small. It was a very small town.

But was there any-- did anyone not like the Nazi rule? Did anyone resist against it? Or did everyone pretty much just go along with it?

They all went along. I guess, they knew what was good for them, you know?

I guess your father-- well, your father was listening to the radio. Were there any rumors of resistance elsewhere or any reports?

He didn't-- I mean, he was very-- what do you call it-- a private man. He didn't hang out with anybody like the next door. He very seldom would talk to the man that lived upstairs with his family, very seldom. He stayed to himself more or less.

OK, and so, even if he had heard about something maybe on the radio-- you said he was listening to Churchill.

Could be.

Maybe he heard something. He would have kept it to himself.

Yeah.

OK, all right, so Leni hid your friend for you said three or four years?

The what?

Leni hid your Jewish friend for three or four years?

Yeah.

OK, and this is the same friend that disappeared in 1940?

OK, do you know-- and I know you learned about this later. But do you know was she the only Jew that--

That she had, my sister had. She was only one.

So Leni was hiding just your friend.

Yeah, I don't know why she got with her. I really don't know anything about that except, like I said, in 1961, when my other sister told me that, she said do you know whatever happened to Ruth, your friend. And I says no. I says I've been wondering about that. And she said Leni had her in the basement for all that time.

And she had-- there was only her and her little boy. There wasn't much to eat. That's why she said don't bring any lunch. And she'd throw me an apple and a sandwich. And it'd wind up in her yard, but I couldn't reach it.

She went down there to pick it up and took it down in the basement. So it wouldn't look-- there was six families living in that house. And they shouldn't have been aware of it, you know?

Yes, and did it-- did it seem weird that Leni would throw something down, but, every time, she would miss?

To me, it was weird.

It seemed weird, but you didn't really--

Yeah, you know, I got smart then after that. I told my mother to fix me a sandwich anyway, you know?

Just in case.

I said, every time she throws it down, and she said-- I said it winds up in her yard. She says, well, I don't know why. She's a good thrower, you know? And, from the third floor, easy. And I said I didn't get anything today either. And she said I'll make you a sandwich anyway. So I got my sandwich.

So it seemed weird that she was missing the throw every time, but you had no idea--

Every time.

--what was going on.

I mean, you wonder after a while. I mean, even at 10, 11, 12 years old, I said what the hell? I mean, what happened? How come she can't come down here and meet me down there and give it to me over the fence?

Did you ever ask her?

No, I never did.

And you said Leni had a little boy. And so she was married and living in this apartment?

She had a boy. That's the only thing that I could think of. He was small, and she lived on the third floor. And there was no elevator. You had to walk the steps, and they were hard steps to walk. And that's why she threw it, you know? But, I mean, I would have been skin and bones if I waited for her to throw it far enough.

So, while she's actually doing this, hiding your friend, did anybody else know what she was doing?

Nobody knew. They just laughed because I didn't get any lunch again, you know?

So her husband, your other sisters, your parents?

Nobody.

At the time--

Nobody knew.

OK, so she was acting totally alone?

Mhm.

OK, and you found out in 1961. When did your other sister find out about this?

After the war, after the war when I guess somebody had to go down there and let her out. And they had friends in there, you know? I'll tell you that's something I don't really know. The only thing I can figure is somebody let her out, and then that girl must have talked to--

Must have told somebody.

--them, saying that she's been down here all this time.

So, once you-- so your sister tells you what had happened and then what Leni was doing. How did you feel when you found out?

I was relieved to know that she's still alive. But, at that time, we didn't know he killed all those Jews. You see, that was kept from the public that they burned them or gassed them, whatever it was. They didn't tell that to the public.

And so I just thought maybe she was alive somewhere in another country, like Poland or somewhere. But, when I found out that she was there all the time, it was a relief to know that she was alive, and she was taken care of, you know?

So you were relieved to know that, during these years, somebody had been looking out for her? OK, so why do you think Leni did this?

I have no idea. That is something of a mystery to me. But it's not that she liked the girl or anything. Maybe she ran across her while she was running from the maniacs that were tearing up her home, and she just took her in, felt bad about it, you know? That's the only thing I can figure out.

Yeah, to risk her own safety and her family's.

She sure did, come to think of it, yeah, because, if they were to ever find out about it, she would have vanished.

Yeah, do you know-- did you find out later were there any close calls of her getting caught?

No, I never did.

You don't know if there were? Or--

I don't know that, no. Like I said, my sister was dead. And, my other sister, she told me all she thought I should know.

And, if she had been caught, she would have disappeared?

She would have disappeared, right.

OK, so what happened to Ruth? What happened to Ruth after?

I don't know. No, after the war, she just vanished, I guess, more or less from my sister's because they were all separated anyway. She lived in Oberschlesien, Leni. The other one lived-- already left Oberschlesien and went to-- where did she go? To the Black Forest somewhere. She wound up there.

We were all separated. I mean, we didn't know anything about my sister until, the ones that were alive-- May '44 was the last time I saw my sisters. I saw them again in 1946. And that was just my dad found out where they were at.

And he let her-- no, '48, he said that I was going to move to America. And they came and saw me. That was the last time I saw them in '48. And, before that, it was at least two or three years before I saw them, the last time I saw them. Families got just torn apart.

Yes, ma'am. Did you later learn of anyone else in town who had hidden Jews?

No.

No?

I didn't even know that there were any Jews. I mean, to me, they were people like you and me, you know?

Yes, ma'am.

So, while this is going on, you're going to Jungmadelbund, all of that. At this point, had you heard-- did you know about or had heard anything about ghettoization?

What?

Ghettoization, the Jews being put into ghettos and maybe in other parts of Germany.

Yes, that we heard, but we never heard about them getting killed.

So you did you know that?

I didn't know that.

But you knew that Jews in other cities were being put into ghettos.

And, in the news reel, they didn't even show you how they herded them into boxcars and took them off, you know?

Yeah, what about deportations?

Deportation?

Yeah, same thing, you knew about them, but--

No, to me, it was every day of life, but not the Jewish way. The Jewish way was different. They tried to make the Jew look like a bad person. Why, I don't know.

They can make something out of themselves, you know? They're a good businessman, I think, business people, because you very seldom hear about a poor Jew, very seldom, because they are very business minded or whatever. And maybe the Germans were jealous of it. That's all I can figure out that it was some kind of a jealousy there that he wanted to get rid of them.

So you knew that they were being put into ghettos, but not that they were being deported?

I went by Auschwitz I don't know how many times and never once suspected that they were mistreated.

So you knew about concentration camps, but not killing centers?

Yeah, no. And it was not-- I can't remember what it was, but it wasn't called a concentration camp. It wasn't called that for us.

Konzentrationslager?

What?

Konzentrationslager? It was something--

That's it. You know more than I do.

I don't. So you knew about these. And then you had-- you walked by.

I walked by when I went to the train station. And I worked for that old lady. And, sometimes, when she didn't-- she said go home. Well, the bus ran over there and the train. The train was a little farther, but it went to the woods right next to the factory that I was telling you about.

And I saw them. And I kept thinking why are they so skinny, and why are they so bald? None of them had hair, and they were all still young people, you know? And I went home, and I asked my dad. And, again, I got the lecture. You know, you don't see. You don't know nothing.

But they reached through the barbed wire with those little, bitty, tiny arms. And it hardly covered. And then they would do help, you know? Help. How can I help? I'm going to the bus station. I didn't have nothing but my bus fare on it, you know?

So, just so that I understand, you were walking through the woods to go to the bus station. And then did you usually walk this path?

The what?

Did you usually walk this path? Or was this--

Yeah, that was my first time and my last time. I never went that way again.

Oh, it was one time.

I couldn't handle that.

And you were by yourself?

By myself. I ran the rest of the way after I saw that.

From that distance, could you tell were they men or women?

They were all men.

All men. And is there anything particular, like a little detail that stands out, from this scene?

From that, yes, I mean, they all were dressed alike in striped suits and had that star on them. And they were all skinny, skin and bones. I don't see how they stood up on their legs and all with the little arms holding out for something. And like, if I would have had food, I would have given it to them, but I wasn't prepared for that.

So your reaction was just totally caught off guard?

Off guard.

OK, and this was one time. And had you heard the word Auschwitz before?

I heard that, yes, because that train that we were on, every station it came to, it called it out. Auschwitz, well, Auschwitz was just another town. And people got off and got on, whatever. And I waited until Heydebreck came up, and then I went off, you know?

And I went to my dad, and I told him. Put that out of your mind, he says, because it's not good. But, when I came to the States, and I saw all that, that really blew my mind.

And did you know was this-- do you know if it was a sub-camp of Auschwitz?

A what?

Did you know if it was a sub-camp of Auschwitz? Or--

Well, no, I would say it was a place that they made them work. There was just-- it was a little camp on the outside.

A labor camp.

Yeah, and where they stayed when they weren't working and so close to the street.

So, just totally caught off guard, and you were surprised that it was right there.

I never went that way again. Let's put it that way. I had a bicycle. I rode a bike down to where my dad lived or the bus, but I never went there again.

So, after you'd had some time to think about what you saw, your dad said to be quiet. Don't tell anybody. But how did you feel after a little time had passed?

Well, it was sad, I mean, sad that people had to-- for one thing, I thought it was the enemy for one thing, but it was the Jewish star that gave it away that they were Jews. But, why they were treated like that, I could not understand, and I still don't understand it because, to me, he was human being. They were human beings treated like animals, dirty, just not right.

And how did you feel, as a German, seeing this?

That's when I start being not so proud of my heritage, being German.

So was this-- so, all this time, you're very proud of your brothers for being in the military. You're very proud, being in the Jungmadelbund. Was this the first time you were not proud to be German?

No, I was still proud of my brothers and all of that, but it just not made me believe everything I heard. In other words, whatever they wanted me to believe, there was something there that told me it's not like that. Because, I mean, how can anybody get that skinny overnight? It had to be a long-term deal. And no hair, no teeth, I mean, they'd even pull their teeth out too because they had gold in it, you know?

And just it wasn't right for me, and it's still not right. I don't feel that way about anybody. What color, whatever they are, it's just not right to treat another human being that way, no matter what they've done. If they were criminals, execute them. But, if they're not criminals, they're just human beings like you and me. And, because somebody higher up than me wanted me away, that doesn't register in my head.

So it started you kind of thinking I need to take things with a grain of salt, not believe everything that I'm being told--

That's it.

--and just stick to what your dad said. Don't repeat anything.

Yeah.

OK, were there any other experiences? Did you witness any other--

No, that's the only one.

--any other camps?

Well, when we were on the run, I saw a lot of stuff that I wish I didn't see when the war was coming to an end. But you don't want that part yet.

Oh, we'll get there. But that was the only thing you ever saw with the camp?

Yeah. Oh, that's cemetery. That was in 1961. They had a cemetery there for Jews, and I wanted to go and see it. My sister wouldn't go there. And, two years later, it disappeared. There was no more cemetery. Everything was gone.

OK, did you ever hear anything more specific about the camps?

No, no, not until I came to the States. When I saw that, I broke down. I mean, I had a lot of friends when I worked for Prince's. They had pictures.

And I said that can't be it. He says that was it. After the war, they were going to the camps. And they saw them dead.

And, sometimes, there was a Polack exterminating somebody, and they had mass graves. But that was on the news. And, when you went to a newsreel in the movies, you saw it. They just threw them in the mass grave. And it was all Jews already because they were skin and bones.

That is amazing. Now it's coming back. They were the Polacks trying to get rid of the Germans that lived in Poland. And they killed them and threw them in there. They put lye over them or whatever you call it and then buried them too.

And you saw?

No, it was Germans. That's what they told us anyway, but I would say they were Jews then already. All those mass graves, if they ever find any in Poland, got to be full of Jews.

Yes, ma'am.

We're hearing that rain pretty good.

That's OK. I think it's supposed to rain off and on. So--

Yeah, it's just her microphone is picking it up really good. That's the unfortunate part.

OK, as long as you can hear us.

Oh, I can.

OK, great. So let's talk again about air raids. You've already told us--

What?

--about it, about air raids.

Air raids, oh god.

You've taught us--

We got it in the first--

--excuse me, told us.

--part of the year from 1939 until September the 18th. We had air raids almost every night. Not too much was damaged

then. They didn't throw too many bombs, but, the air raids we had from '44 to '45, until the war was ended, they messed up pretty bad.

So '44?

Huh?

'44 or '45 is when it got really bad?

[? '44, uh huh. ?] And, before that too, it wasn't in that part where I was at because that was too far away for the planes, you know? But, on the Western part, they tore that up quite a bit because the planes came from England.

And, anyway, the air raids that I went through were bad enough. They came from North Africa. Day or night, it didn't make any difference. They came by.

And did you know at the time who was bombing?

Oh yeah, the Americans, the Americans.

The Americans. I was there standing under the tree watching them.

Well, how did you-- were there symbols on the plane? How did you know it was--

No, not really. Well, I couldn't see it. But, to me, it was like that. If we were fighting against the Americans, it had to be Americans, you know? But it doesn't make me hate them.

So I know you said you would listen to the radio, and there would be the sound that as--

Cuckoo.

--as they got closer, they would speed up.

When they were far away, there was a cuckoo, cuckoo, you know? When they got a little closer, it was cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo. And, when they got real close, it was cuckoo, cuckoo, one after the other one. That means either be gone or hide somewhere.

Well, when I lived with that old lady, we had to go to the castle. There was a castle in the middle of town, and we went there. But, after the first time, I mean, there's so many people running toward there. I said I should just stay in the woods, and that's when I watched them bomb, drop the bombs, and saw planes being shot down.

And the people that jumped out of the plane, the soldiers, got shot down. I saw that. And it's just sad things like that have to happen. He was already out of the plane. Why shoot him, you know? It doesn't make sense. It still doesn't make sense, but that's the way the world thinks about it I guess.

So, after you leave school in '44, you go to this older lady's house to learn kind of home economics, right? So, during that time, you go to the castle during air raids, or you go to the woods. What were your parents doing?

My parents were in another town. They were either in the basement or in a bunker. They had a bunker that's close by to the house. I don't know how many people it held, but, the one time I was in there, it was packed. There was a lot of people.

Oh, so, when you came home, then you had to go to the bunker.

Oh, yeah. When I was home, I had to go to the bunker because my dad would make me. But I was with the old lady. I

stood under a tree and watched it, watched all that, and hoping that they didn't drop a bomb into the-- and they always said that, all the bombing and everything, they were well organized that they wouldn't hit hospitals or churches or anything. They were mainly going for factories or like train stations and stuff like for that to cut down-- what do you call it-- traffic or traffic or whatever.

Well, I was in the woods. I said they're not going to drop a bomb there. So I got to see it all. But I was close to the Adolf Hitler Canal. They dropped a few bombs in there, awesome.

And this was back in-- this was back home?

No, that was with that old lady. That's with that old lady.

So you saw the bombs go into the canal?

But, over there, I saw a lot because, every time there was an air raid, I wasn't going for the bunker. I was going for the woods and under a tree. So I have a good view of everything.

And did anybody else go?

No, just me. All the other ones took off for the bunker or the basement, whatever, you know? Like I said, I was young and nosy. I had to see.

So, when you're back home, and you are in that bunker, what was it like inside the bunker?

Real stuffy for one thing. They had a motor going to get some air in it, but, with all those people, it's kind of hard to keep the air clean and fresh.

Oh, there was a motor for ventilation?

The what?

Like a ventilation system?

Oh yeah, they had a motor going, uh huh.

OK, and there were a lot of people in there?

Oh god, you couldn't even sit down. You had to stand up like a sardine packed right next to one another.

And could you hear what was going on outside?

No, silence. But, that one time, they dropped a bomb right on top of it, and it took about maybe this much cement off of it. The inside, the people, it was just a little, dull sound like somebody cut off all the noise. Then it'd come back again, you know?

Like it was real dead silence, and then it'd come back again. That's the only time that-- they said the Germans were good at building bunkers. Well, heck yeah.

And so I guess, if you were out in the woods watching it, you were--

I had to watch it all.

You were afraid, but you wanted to see what was going on?

I wanted to see, uh huh. Well, really not even afraid because you're so young. You're nosy. I mean, I had to see, and it didn't matter if I get hurt or anything. I just wanted to see.

You didn't think about the consequences?

No, I didn't. Thank you. Your comment, You're good with words. I am not. They didn't have that in a comic book.

OK, so, another topic that might be difficult to talk about, we already talked about Leni hiding your Jewish friend. What did she do after she left town?

After I left town or she?

After she left town.

I don't know. I just lost total-- when I went by the house, and I didn't see her, I didn't see her no more, period, not even today. I never seen her anymore.

Just, one day, she was gone.

Like she was gone, yeah, like I never knew her. The only reason I remember her name, I don't know why. It's Ruth. She was the only girlfriend I had.

And so she, her husband, and her son were all gone? All gone. And it's only later that you learned she was in Dresden?

What?

It's only later that you learned she was in Dresden?

Uh huh.

OK, and so what exactly happened when she died?

Who?

Leni.

Leni.

Like where was she?

My sister?

Yes, ma'am.

OK, that was in '45 when everybody was leaving that town. And she wanted me to go with her to help her with the boy, and she was going to send me back. But my dad says she ain't going nowhere. If you want to go, you have to go on your own with your boy.

And she did. She left. And I stayed with my dad another day in the same house. And then, on a news somehow, my father found out that Dresden was bombed. It was almost bombed off the map. And a lot of people got killed.

He says-- he told my mother. He said, you see? He said I must have had a little insight. He said I didn't let her go because she would be gone. He figured all this time that my sister was gone. And I found out in '48, '47, something like that. I found out that she did get killed during that air raid.

And that was from the Red Cross?

Huh?

From the Red Cross that you learned?

From the Red Cross, right.

OK, so what happened to your other two sisters? They also left Oberschlesien and went, but, where they went, my older sister got caught by the Russians. She didn't run fast enough I guess.

My other sister, Angela, she wound up in Czechoslovakia somewhere. And, from there, she went off to the Black Forest. And she even died there. She's lived there ever since she left there. How my father found out where she was at, I don't know. I guess the Red Cross.

And, anyway, in 1948, in September, when I was coming over here, they came to see me. Then I didn't see them no more until 1961. The same with my brother, I didn't see him no more until 1961. That was 13, 14 years that I didn't see my sisters. I didn't know them.

So let's go back to Maria was your older sister. You such she was caught by the Soviets. And is when they're advancing, and she didn't-- like how was she--

It was a miracle that she survived because she never talked about it, but somebody else told my sister. And she got raped, I guess, and mistreated until they couldn't mistreat her no more. And they figured she was going to die. So they threw her on a manure pile to let her die.

But she got away. She crawled out from her [INAUDIBLE] and went crawling at night to the east-- to the west so she could come into the Americans-- I mean not the American, the German zone, I guess, because the other one was already Russian.

And she stayed there. I think she was in the English zone. So they divided Germany into four zones-- English, American, Russian. And what was the other one? French. I still got it.

And my sister, the one in the Black Forest, wound up in the French zone. And she wound up in English zone, Maria. The other one died. And then, sooner or later, we found out-- we wound up in the American zone in Bavaria. That was almost-- that was after the war.

OK.

You're going to hate me after a while, I know, because I am a mover.

That's OK. You're just fine. So what about Paul? You said he--

Paul, he was caught by the English and was an English prisoner in England. They took him over there. He stayed there for two years I think. And they wanted to keep him there. He worked for a farmer, and he was real handy in fixing things. And that farmer wanted to keep him, but, naturally, he was married then, had no children. So he wanted to go home.

Oh, so, during the war, he had married his girlfriend?

That was-- no, that was after the war already. The war was over with when he came home from England.

OK, so he comes back from England and then marries.

Yeah.

Do you know how he was captured?

No.

OK, and so did you know that he was in England at any point?

Didn't know until he came back home and told us about it.

Wow, OK, so for two--

He was there for I think almost two years.

So, for two years, you didn't know--

Didn't know.

--where he was. Wow.

And we didn't know about his wife nothing either because we got separated.

OK, did he ever talk about his war experiences?

No, the only thing my brother said was that that farmer was a very nice man. And, if he didn't-- if he wouldn't have been married, he would have stayed in England. He said, the first time ever, he got treated like a human being, not a soldier pushed out to, more or less, get killed, you know?

And Paul ends up staying in Germany?

What?

He comes back to Germany, and then he lives there for after the war.

Well, he went to work for the post office too.

Yeah.

And he was over there at a bus company, works for the post office over there, you know? And he worked for them until he died.

In Heidelberg?

No, no, that was in Dusseldorf, Germany. He never went home after the last furlough. He never home.

And, Franz, you mentioned that his motorcycle hit a mine.

Hit a mine. You know, they had those little sand mines buried. Well, he was taking a message from one place to another one, and the motorcycle hit the mine and blew up.

And when did you-- when did your family learn about this?

It was just a little before I came to America. So it's got to be in the first part of '48 I would say, long time.

For years, you didn't-- you didn't know?

No, we didn't even find out about my sister until '48 either when they died.

So, during all this time, did you or anybody in your family keep a diary?

Do what?

Did you or anybody in your family keep a diary?

No.

No?

No, I don't know why. Maybe we're all not writers because they keep telling me to write all that stuff down. And I just don't know how.

Reading was my specialty. Arithmetic is my specialty. But writing was never that great. I guess I didn't have any imagination. I don't know.

I even bought me a tablet to write all that down, and I sat down. I never wrote one word in it. I just can't write. Even letters, you write me a letter. I answer every question in that letter, but, out of my own head, nothing. That's not real, is it?

So, before we move on to the very end of the war and the post-war years, is there anything about the war that we didn't talk about in that?

Well, we left Heydebreck in January of '45 and went to the other side of the river, the Oder River, stayed there maybe five, six, seven days, something like that. The Russians were coming closer. So we got back on the train, and they took us to Austria. That's when I wound up in Austria.

And, my last air raid, we were in Linz at the train station. The train pulled in, and there was an air raid. They were bombing Linz. So we kept on going.

Then we had to get out into the ditches while they done their thing. And we went to-- after the air raid, we got back on the train, went to a little small town close to Tyrol. Do you know where Tyrol is?

Yes, ma'am.

OK, there they separated us and sent us to farmers in the mountains. We stayed there until '45 I would say, maybe November. It was snowing already. And then they put us back on the train again because the Austrians didn't want us. We were the enemies.

And so they took us back to Germany. So we went to Bavaria, a small train station. Hof, H-O-F, was the name of the town where they stopped the train. It's right on board of the Russian and German border where they divided it. And we stayed there until they find out where they were going to send us.

So then they decided to send us to the Russian zone, French zone, American zone, and English zone. And nobody wanted to go to the Russian zone. They start jumping the train, just take off. We stayed. My dad said we're staying. We're going to see what's going to happen.

Well, it just so happened our boxcar was behind the soldiers that were guarding the train. So we went ba-- At 15 years, you move about all the time. That's when I went by the car for the soldiers, and I smelled smoke.

And I opened it up, and there was a soldier there passed out. And his blanket was on fire, and I pulled him out. I got him out.

And he's the one that made sure that we stayed in the American zone. He said that's the only way he could repay me for saving his life by saying that we stay in the American zone. The other ones were divided. That's how we wound up in Bavaria.

And so what caused the fire?

He was drunk, cigarette.

Oh, cigarette. And did you pull him out yourself?

I was pulling hard.

You pulled out a grown man by yourself?

Yeah.

Wow.

The soldier was laying on the-- they had those box-- not boxcars. We were in the boxcars. He was in the passenger car. He was laying on the bench.

Well, getting him off the bench was not hard, but then pulling him out, you know? But we were lucky. He was close to a opening door. And I got him there and then pushed him out.

My dad came along. He said, what are you doing? And I told him. And he says, oh, good girl, you know? And don't know the man's name. Don't know where he came from or anything. All I know is that I'm grateful that he kept us in the American zone.

And so you never saw him again?

No, because, right after that, they divided the train and moved us off.

So was everybody else already out of the car?

In the boxcar?

Yeah, so--

I mean, in the train where the soldier was?

Well, I guess both. So were you the only one who saw him?

We lived in the-- until they moved us, they lived in that boxcar. Oh, well, I forgot to tell you about that. When we left Heydebreck to go to across the river, we had an air raid. And, anything that was moving, the Russians were shooting at. So the last train was packed with people.

So, naturally, when they hit that, dead people, they just opened the door and just chucked them out. There were women crying because their little babies got killed. They put them in a basket, or they just had to throw them out because we were overloaded already.

And it seems like, 30 minutes later when they called for backup on another locomotive because it was such a long train, the Russians already answered. So we barely escaped the Russians.

OK, so, yeah, let's go back to a little bit before you left Heydebreck. So what was life in town like? Was there enough food available? How much news were you getting about the war? What was life like right before you left?

Before the war?

No, before you left to flee the Soviets.

That was the war still going in full bloom. The war wasn't over until May. And we left in January of '45, so ration cards.

So there was still food available as long as you had the cards?

Well, while you were on the train, they had a big kettle go down where you got a little soup or whatever because we couldn't cook. We had to use the-- close to the train station, we had to use the bathroom over there.

But before you left Heydebreck?

Before I left I Heydebreck?

Yes, yeah, so was there food available there?

Ration cards. It was very, very little, and you were lucky to get some even if you had a ration card.

And were you still able to listen to the radio, and your parents got news?

Until we left, my dad did. And then we had to leave everything behind. We left everything. Just like this house, just open the door. Walk out, and all the rest of it's gone.

So I guess, at this point, where are your parents still trying to keep news away from you?

Away from who?

Were they still-- if something were to come on the radio, they would say go to bed.

I never did get to listen. Afterwards, he didn't care because we already lost the war, and we were not in danger of getting hauled off.

So you hadn't heard anything about rumors about the war, the assassination attempts on Hitler. You didn't hear anything?

I heard about-- I was in Austria when I heard that Hitler committed suicide, and then the body was burned. I don't know.

OK, had you heard any rumors about the Soviet soldiers?

The what?

Had you heard any rumors about the Soviet soldiers?

Oh, they were supposed to have been really, really bad. I mean, never I heard my sister, she doesn't talk about it, but she said the Russians are really animals, really.

Y'all had heard this before?

Yeah. [INAUDIBLE] We heard that about the Americans too.

Really?

Really. They said they were animals too. But the very first time I saw a Black man was in 1945 in May before the war was over. I was standing there waving because I thought it was German soldiers.

Black man then I saw. Wow, the enemy, I took off into the woods. Can you imagine? At 15, that's the first time I ever saw one. We didn't have any there, not that I care anything about it. I don't, but it was scary at that time.

A shock. So you go west in January of '45 with your parents. Was it just that you knew the Soviets were coming, and that's why you decided to leave?

Right, they were coming all right. We could hear them shooting again and cannon fire, whatever you call it. And the air raids were closer, more. We were in that little town very few days with a farmer.

And food was getting so scarce that the farmer, when they had potatoes and all of that, their peeling was kind of thick. And they threw them away, and I picked them up, the peelings. My mother made soup out of it. That's why I can't stand no baked potato. I can't eat the peeling.

And then you went to Linz.

The what?

You went to Linz in Austria?

Linz in Austria, yes.

Linz, OK. Was there any reason you went to Austria?

No, that train, we were on the train. And, wherever the train went, we went, and we wound up in Linz. And then, like I said, from Linz, they separated us into different parts of Austria. We wound up in Tyrol or Tyrol, like they say in German.

Yes, ma'am. So what kinds of people were on the train and in Austria? Were there refugees?

All of them.

Were there any survivors, Holocaust survivors?

No, no, there was all Germans. In fact, at the train station, we sat there at the train station for about three or four days, something like that. And a train pulled in with white Russians from the Ukraine.

And that's when that one man kept telling me come over there, and I wouldn't go. And my dad said-- he told him in his language. He said that's my daughter. He said I just want to give her-- she looks hungry. He said I just want to give her some bread.

They were just coming from Russia. They had bread and butter. I got bread and butter. But I don't know what happened to that train. They left before we did.

OK, when and how did you learn that the war in Europe had ended in May '45?

In '45 when it ended?

Yeah, when the war in Europe, in May, were you still in--

I was scared stiff because we didn't know. I mean, you don't ever hear anything about your enemy good. They all said how bad everybody is except yourself. And so we didn't know what to expect until, like I said, we stayed there until November.

And, well, anyway, they sent us back to Austria-- to Bavaria because they didn't want us there. We were the enemy really. And the Americans treated us really nice compared to what we heard because, every time I saw an American soldier, after I saw that convoy going down the mountain, I said, if it's gone, I said I'll run home. I opened up the door, and there's a bunch of soldiers sitting. And you don't know where to go after that. You just don't know.

And I wanted to go out, but, the man that was the farmer, he was also the mayor of that little village. And he said-- he told me in German, he says it's the enemy, he says, but they are good. They're not bad. He says you can come in.

That's the first time, and they left me alone. I mean, I was just a skinny old kid with maybe 90 some pounds. That's why they wanted to give me food because I was so skinny, not tall or anything, but undernourished.

And how did you learn about the atomic bombings in Hiroshima?

[INAUDIBLE]

Well, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Oh, that, on the radio I guess.

Radio, OK.

You know, I didn't even hear about Pearl Harbor until way after it was over with. That's when the Americans joined the--

Joined the war, yeah.

The army, I mean the fight against Germany. That's when they really started joining in. Before that, they stayed out of it that I remember. But then they start coming into Italy and North Africa and Italy.

And so you heard about that on the radio, and this is the end of World War II.

Well, at that time, once we left the house, our home, I worked for a farmer, that mayor. He had a farm, a big farm. And I worked for him. That was for my food, and, also, for what little was left over, I could take to my parents because, at that time, you couldn't even buy it, stamps or no stamps. You couldn't buy anything right before the war ended.

And so I worked for that farmer, and he let me have the leftovers. And that's how I found out when the American soldiers were coming up in that convoy. And I said, what the heck is that? And here I'm waving, and they were throwing stuff at me. And I said I'm going to get it when it's ended. When I saw that-- is he Black?

Sorry?

Is he Black?

Oh.

Oh, good. Anyway, when I saw that Black man, I says that's the enemy. I said I ain't picking up nothing. I didn't never got any candy or gum or whatever they were throwing, never.

OK, so you're in Bavaria now. And this is November '45.

Right.

OK, and what did you-- where in Bavaria?

Bad Kissingen is the name of it. It's a health resort for lung, heart, and something else. And that's all they have in there is hospitals, doctor offices, pensions, hotels. That's all they have in there and big gardens where people can-- sick people can walk. They go and live there, sometimes, for four or five weeks' time. And they were taken care of by specialists.

We stayed there until 1948 until I come over here. And that's where I met my husband in '46.

Yes, and so what did you and your family do there?

Well, my dad and my mom stayed at home. And I went different places. I stayed with my mom and dad. We had one room, and I worked in like a mattress factory, but the mattresses are not like they are made now. You had to stuff them with straw. And then somebody sewed then together.

I worked for that for a while, and then I don't know why my mother worked for a smith, the one that shoes animals, the horses, blacksmith. And there was five kids there, and it was too hard for her. So she said give up that job and go to work there. That's where I worked until I met my husband in '46. And he had-- I took care of the kids for one loaf of bread a week and done the housework.

So this is after the mattress factory? You were--

Yeah, I went to work and let my mother stay at home.

So what was life in general like in immediate postwar Germany? I mean, what kinds of people were there, the availability of food?

It was nice there. I have to say that people were more polite. They could talk to you. If you see somebody, you said hi, and you keep going. But they just had a conversation and all that. And it was getting a little bit back to normal.

And, when I came over here, it was normal. It was very normal. And, when I met my husband, then I got cigarettes. And that's when I joined the black market. Well, I mean, I'd done it just to survive. The woman that owned a meat market, she's the one that I gave the cigarettes to. And she's the one that gave me meat or sausage, whatever you want to call it.

We're going to need to change your cards.

OK, so we'll take a quick break now.

Oh, OK.

We're rolling. Audio speeds.

You ain't got no hook up yet.

We're OK.

Oh, we're going to get it from there.

OK, that's good.

All right, so this is part three of our interview with Elizabeth Flores on December 27, 2015 in Katy, Texas. So, before we ended our last part, you were talking about you met your husband in Germany.

[COUGHS]

Just a minute. If anybody see me do that, they'll say she's an alcoholic.

We know it's a water bottle.

I met him in 1946 in Bad Kissingen.

OK, and what was he doing in Germany?

He was the occupation.

He was in the occupation. And where was he from?

He was from Houston.

OK, so he's an American soldier. And he was in the army.

Yes, Army Air Forces. At that time, they don't even have that branch no more.

Oh, OK, Army Air Force. And so he was based also in--

In Bad Kissingen, uh huh.

Did he arrive just as part of the occupation force? Or had he been in Europe?

No, that was just occupation.

OK, so just occupation. So where exactly did y'all meet?

Pardon? Oh, on a bridge.

On a bridge?

Really, it was that they had demolished the bridge, and there was a wooden bridge, pretty good size for a car to go over it. Anyway, he was sitting on the rail, and I was going to a movie. This was on a Sunday.

And he was different. He had dark eyes and dark hair and white teeth, you know? It was an unusual sight. And I looked at him, I guess, a little bit too long. And he followed me to the movie.

And it just so happened there was a seat next to mine empty. And he said-- he was holding my hand, and I didn't know what was happening, you know? But, anyway, he said something, and I told him no. So, when the movie was over with, I went home, and he went to wherever.

And, next Sunday, the same thing, I went to a movie again with a girlfriend this time. And there he was again. And I was supposed to meet a German boy on the other side of the bridge, but he was sitting on the bridge. And he met me halfway. So forget the German guy. I went with the other one, you know?

And, from there on, it went on. She was mad at me because he was sitting next to me in the movie. She wanted to sit next to him, you know? And I said, well, I didn't have no control over it. I was sitting there, and he sat down next to me. That's it.

And, anyway, from there on, I met him every so often. He came upstairs to the little town. From Bad Kissingen, it's walking distance, maybe 15, 20 minutes. And he met my mom and my dad.

And life was getting good because, instead of me picking up cigarette butts that were half smoked, I got packages of cigarettes now and candy, and you name, whatever he could bring me. And I used it for black market. And so my parents had something to eat, had a good life too.

And everything was fine until 1947. They sent him back to America. And he started his paperwork, and my paperwork took over a year because I didn't have my birth certificate. I didn't have no papers, period. And my dad had to go to a lawyer, saying that I was his daughter, and I was born such and such day. And my mother's name was Franziska.

And they were going to accept it, but my brother went back to the house over there. And he got me my birth certificate, which was in Polish naturally. And we had to have it translated into English. And--

Really? Even though it was then part of Germany, the birth--

Pardon?

Even though it was then part of Germany, your birth certificate was in Polish?

Polish. No, that part was already-- after the war, it went directly back to Poland again. See we lived-- Heydebreck is on the River Oder. On the other side is Kozle, Kedzierzyn-Kozle. You know like Harris County? Well, there it's Kedzierzyn-Kozle. And, as soon as it came-- the war was over with-- and it took a little time-- it became Polish.

And, like I said, all my papers, everything, was burned during the war. Well, however they got my certificate, I know that it was in Polish. In fact, I got it, and I couldn't find it. I was going to bring it to you.

I was going to let you see it and then the translated into English. Oh, take it back, into German. They translated it into German. And I got it. I got both of them, but I don't know where.

That's OK.

You know how that is.

Yeah.

You move around. You lose it.

So, when you met your husband, did he speak German?

No, we still have a translate-- what do you call it, [GERMAN]?

I can't think of it off the top of my head.

It is very hard to translate like that. I could never be an interpreter. Forget it. They'll never find out what they wanted to know.

I can't think of it off the top of my head.

[GERMAN]

[GERMAN]

Well, it's a book where they have English and German.

Oh, the dictionary.

And in another-- huh?

The dictionary, [GERMAN].

Oh, thank you very much. And it was so thick. Half of it was English and German, and the other half was German and English. So, when I wanted to say something, you start looking at the words. He'd done the same thing. And, all they know-- I mean, all I knew, he was an army, not even American, an army.

And, even reading one way, one way in German is [GERMAN]. I went home, and I told my dad. I said I can speak English. And he says how. I said, daddy, you see that? It's [GERMAN], one way.

You know, I'm stupid. There's so many things I still don't know. It's hard to learn the English, but I know a little bit Spanish and a little bit of English and a little bit of German. And I learned my English out of comic books. Would you believe that? But I do pretty good, didn't I?

Yes, ma'am.

See, he agrees with me.

Did you hesitate at all?

Pardon?

Did you hesitate at all speaking to him because he was an American soldier?

In a way, I was a little scared because he was still the enemy, you know? But he was a very nice guy. He treated me nicely. He met my mom and dad, and he brought us all his rations. Once a month, they got rations or once a week, something like that.

And he brought all of it to me, even whiskey. And I didn't even drink then, but he got the whole house drunk because they'd never had any whiskey either. After the war, there was nothing to be had. And, when we did have anything, it was wine.

But we partied over there. And my dad liked him, but the only thing he didn't like me coming over here. It was too far, but he said he never interfered with my sister's marriage. He says so he's not going to interfere with mine. So I come on over.

And did you get married in Germany?

In Germany by an American soldier, the what do you call it, priest. And then I had to get married here again or else I was sent back to Germany. So I got here in September and got married on October the 8th. And I got my fares back. I got that back. And I'm here.

Yes, ma'am. So, the wedding in Germany, did your parents attend?

It was very, very small. It was really not accepted here. It was not accepted here. It wasn't good enough or whatever. That's why I had to get married over here again by a justice of peace.

Yes, ma'am.

But that's why we got married anyway.

But, the ceremony in Germany, did your parents attend even though it was very small?

It was just my parents and an American soldier, the priest, and my husband and me. That was very small, just I do, and I don't, you know?

So you get married in Germany. How much time before you came to the US?

To where?

So you got married in Germany. So how much time between then and when you moved to the US?

OK, I was pregnant when they sent him back to America. They sent him back in August of '47. And the little boy was born into October of '47. And I came over here in September of '48.

Oh, wow. So y'all were separated for a year.

Yeah, he was a year. The little boy was almost a year old when I got here. That's the first time he ever seen him, but he died. He passed away when he was two. But, anyway, it turned out all right. I got four more after that.

What did-- I know you didn't meet them for a while. But what did your husband's parents think about their son?

I never-- when I met his parents, they were Mexicans. And they didn't like me.

They didn't like--

Because I was a white one to them. I don't know what they called themselves, brown or whatever, but I was [SPANISH]. Every time they talked, they said the white one, you know? And so really it was a hard life for the first year or so.

So it wasn't because you were German. It was just because you were white.

No, it was just because I was white. And everybody said I was pretty at one time. I don't know. But they didn't like that either. They said [SPANISH]. And it's not fair, and it's not the ugly one, but they couldn't say that. But, like I said, I was the white one for a long time.

This is '48, September '48 until 1950. When my little boy died in March of '50, I got sick. And the doctor said either live in a hospital or keep occupied. Get a job. And that's when I got a job there.

And I picked up and got better. And then I didn't have to depend on them anymore. We had our own little place, a little apartment, you know? That means a lot not to have to depend on somebody, not have to depend on them.

So how did you get to the US?

The what?

How did you get to the US?

By American Overseas Airlines, I remember that in the propeller deal. We went from Frankfurt, Germany to Shannon, England, Newfoundland, New York, New York to Detroit. We stayed in Detroit maybe 10 days, then a bus, Greyhound bus, to Houston. It took forever.

Wow. So, at the other stops, were you able to get out and see the cities? Or just in Detroit you were there for 10 days?

The other stops?

Yeah.

In Shannon, England, we didn't even get out of the plane. They just refueled. And Newfoundland was the same. And, New York, I got off.

And the stewardess was very nice. I didn't wear no makeup. My hair was stringy. I looked pitiful, but they helped me and took me to another, what do you call it, terminal.

And I got on the plane there and went to New York-- I mean to Detroit because he was stationed there. And he picked me up in Detroit. From Detroit, we went to Houston on the Greyhound bus.

Wow, so you've only lived in Houston, no where else? Wow.

Detroit, I got to see very little of it because I didn't know when he had to be at the base. So I stayed in a little hotel room because I didn't know the language. I didn't know what to do. So I just stayed there.

OK, so, once you arrive in Houston, how do you go about setting up your life?

Let's just say, we stayed with his aunt or his grandmother for about a year and a half or something like that until we got-- I got my own place, a little apartment. But, mostly, we stayed with relatives, one here, one there. You know how that goes. I mean, maybe you don't.

So what did your husband do for work? Did he stay in the military?

For work? He stayed in the Army until April of '49. And then he was never really-- I mean, he was a different person over there, and then he changed over here. He was with his people, you know?

And he was not what I thought a man should be, but he was good to me and my little boy. And he'd done odd jobs, I mean, so many odd job I couldn't even tell you what he did. Dish-washing is the only one that I ever remembered for Kaphan's. And Kaphan's has been out of business for a long time. Anyway, that's about it.

OK, so did you like Texas right from the start?

Oh, yeah.

Were you homesick at all?

I didn't have no problems getting used to the climate or anything like that. Like I said, the people-- the people I did meet, which was very few, were very nice. When I met those people right there, they were awful nice. And I stayed there for 40 years. It's almost unreal, isn't it, 40 years for one company.

Yes, ma'am.

From dishwasher to porter to carhop to owner. And it was given to me I want you to know.

Yes, ma'am.

And I had it for I think four or five-- five years. And then, the lot, I was not given the lot, just the business. And they wanted the lot for improvement of the city. So I had to give it up. So I gave the name to another man because he wanted it so badly. He was my meat man. You know, he sold me good meat.

And, anyway, he got the business. He's still got it, but he's getting gray-headed. Restaurant business is a 24/7 business, no vacation, no nothing, but I took one.

Do you remember any first reactions to Texas, the people or the climate, anything like that?

Oh, first of all, I didn't understand what they were saying, but, anyway, they were all surprised at German. German are understood, you know? A German. And, anyway, they were surprised, but they were nice. People were very nice. They weren't his relatives, but, you know, I had no problem with that.

But he saw to it that I didn't make any friends with anybody. I had no friends. In fact, the oldest girl said-- part of them are dead already, but I never had the telephone number or never knew where they lived.

I just saw them at work. And, from work, I went home. He was, how would you say, domineering or something like that. I didn't have a telephone until god knows when.

Wow. Were there any major similarities to life back home?

Oh, the food was different. You see, over there, you'd get for breakfast bread and butter or something, and then the lunch is big. And then, supper time, you'd get bread and butter again.

And, over here, the main course is supper time. So that was a switch. And then you'd get bacon and eggs. And, over there, you'd get a piece of bread and butter. That was a difference, you know? But you can get used to it quick, especially if you have been hungry for a long time.

So you mentioned that people would say, oh, she's a German. Once you picked up the language, did you tell people that you were German?

Well, no, he told them, you know? Because, if they asked me, I just looked at him, and I smiled, you know? I guess that got away for a long time, but then, finally, he came around, and he said that's my wife. He said she doesn't speak English. She's German. Oh, how nice, you know? I finally picked up some of the words.

Was there any-- because of the war, was there any anti-German feelings?

No, they were real nice except when I found out about the Jews, and then I kind of backed off. I was German descent. I mean, with something like that, when they asked me at work what's that accent, I said it's German. Oh, you're from Germany. Do you want to talk about it?

And I backed off because I didn't-- I was not proud of my German deal because, if you lived through it, and you went through it, you know why. You know why because you work in a museum. You've probably seen pictures that are horrible, right?

Yes, ma'am.

Because I've seen them. This guy at one of the places I worked at, he found out I was German. And he said I was in Germany during the war. And he said I got some war pictures. And I said, oh yeah? And he said I'll bring it to you and let you see them.

Well, the first one he bought me was from a concentration camp. And I said, hey, I don't know nothing about it. You know, I backed off. I said I'm sorry. I just-- he said you can't tell me that you didn't know about it. I said I didn't know about it.

I said, when I came to this country, I saw the pictures in the newspaper. And, in the movies, you saw it. I said I couldn't comprehend that. I said, how come we didn't know anything about it over there?

He said that's just all-- in fact, I thought he was going to be nice to me, show me some pictures. And he showed me that. And I found out that he was, more or less, digging for something.

I told him. I said that's it. I don't want to see it. I don't want to know it, nothing. I said, when I come over here, I found out about it. I said we didn't know before, but he wasn't my friend anyway.

So you pick up German by reading. Or, excuse me, you pick up English by reading comic books.

Comic books.

Did you ever speak German at home?

No, because nobody spoke German over there. And, my husband, the first few months, he was still in the Army. And, when he came home, he'd forgotten most of it, but, little by little, we talked a little bit, but not fluent. And I have a boy three years older than this one, and he speaks pretty good. We talk quite a bit.

Yeah, I was going to ask. Do your kids or any of your grandkids know German?

The what?

Do any of your children or grandchildren speak German?

That one a little bit and the older one quite a bit. And, the youngest one, I send him to school to learn German because he went to Germany quite often. He was crazy about my brother, you know? His name is Paul too. And they went traveling. When my brother was on vacation, he took him traveling, and he saw quite a bit of Germany.

So they all-- what they picked up was the German from talking, not schooling.

Just kind of informal conversations?

Yeah.

After you arrived, did you meet any other German speakers?

No, I was totally in a different world when I got here. I didn't know what people were talking about or anything. I'd just sit there and grin like an opossum, you know, just sit there and grin. And I hoped they talked nice about me or talk nice, period.

But I found out later on, after I picked up-- I picked up a little Spanish too, and you pick up the bad stuff first. Oh, I let them have it. The first time I found out they were talking bad about me, I told them in Spanish too I want you to know.

That old woman, oh, she was about as old as I am now. Oh, I'll have a heart attack. I said you don't have a heart. I told her in Spanish. I said you've got a stone there. Oh, that was the end of my friendship with that woman.

Well, I know that their numbers are very low now. But, in like the Hill Country around Austin--

Oh, it's nice there.

--and New Braunfels and Fredericksburg, they have the Texas German dialect. Have you ever--

We went there one time, and that was just recently really. Well, he has-- him and his partner have a house on the Pedernales, awesome. And I used to go back and forth with him all the time. And I met some of the people there, but, I mean, just briefly. You know, we talked a little bit, but it seemed like they weren't really that interested in it.

In the German?

Mhm.

OK, but they did speak?

They spoke a little bit, yeah, but not really too hot about it. But I don't go there that much anyway. So it's OK. You adapt to a lot of things in life, you know? The longer you live, the more you learn. And the more you-- you better off by staying by yourself really, not always.

So, as your children are growing up, did you tell them about what you had experienced during the war?

I tried to, sometimes, when they asked. And they got that far away look in them, and I'd change the subject. I wanted to forget really because, I mean, when you see people have to throw somebody out of the boxcar because they're dead, and they're screaming and hollering and crying and all of that, you don't forget that. And I wanted to forget, but I haven't. I haven't. Now you're bringing it all back to me again.

So you left school in 1944. Did you ever go back and take anymore courses?

No. Well, for one thing, I didn't know the English. And I didn't want-- I was always kind of wary about people looking at you as what kind of a person since she doesn't even speak our language. Well, there's a lot of people that go to other places and don't speak the language, but I never had not the time, but the money to go back to school here in this country. I didn't.

So the only thing I did take was American history to become an American citizen. You had to take that. I went to-- oh, what's the old soldier's name? Oh god, I can't remember it, this soldier from a long time ago, the American Legion. I got it. They were teaching you about history and all that.

So I was going to be a citizen in January the 21st of 1953. I had my boy that day. So I had to wait another year until '54. They had it only-- what do you call it? They swore you in once a year then. They do it more often now. And it was always on January the 21th.

So, the following year, I had to go one more year to the American Legion every so often. And I finally became an American citizen. I got those papers too.

Well, they say that, if a kid is born in America, he's a citizen automatically. Well, she says, who is your mother. My mother is German. Well, what the heck? You know, you're American. She's a German.

I mean, you know, and I know it's easy. If you were born there, you automatically become an American. So I didn't want them to have to say that. So I became a citizen. Besides, that was going to be my home for the rest of my life.

So your dad, your step mom, Paul, Maria, and Angela all stay in Germany--

Yes.

--after the war. OK, and so you kept in touch through letters?

Well, I didn't get in touch with my sisters. When was it? In 19-- no, it was my brother in 1960. He called every once in a while. At that time, they call from Germany to America was very expensive. But, since he worked for the post office, and it's also connected with the telephone, he could, every once in a while, call me.

And the first conversation was the most horrible one. That woman that called was his wife. She wanted to talk to my mother. I said my mother is dead.

And she says no, no, no, you don't understand. She spoke a little English. She said I want to talk to your mother. I said, man, that woman is really hard of hearing, I said, because I have no mother. You know, my mother is dead.

And so she hung up, called back the next Sunday. And, again, I answered the phone. And she said-- she talked for a while. And I kept saying-- I called my husband, and I said I don't know what this woman wants from me, but she wants to talk to my mother. And I said I-- he said you don't have a mother. I said I know it. You know it. I said she doesn't, and she won't believe me.

So he got on the phone. I don't know what the heck they were saying to one another, but it took another 10, 15 minutes until he says I think she wants to talk to you. I said OK. So I got back on the phone. And she started talking to me in German, and I answered her, and it was my brother's wife.

He took her with her to the post office where he could make a free telephone call. And that's how we got back together again. And we called each other every once in a while, wrote a little bit.

And then I saw Elvis Presley GI Joe. Well, I got to see Frankfurt. And I said I've got to go back. And that's the first time I went back after 13 years.

And, like I said, we stayed in contact then. And my husband died in '74. And, after that, every two years, my brother came over one year. I went over the other year. So we wouldn't lose complete contact anymore.

At least, he said, the feel we are, we all know where we are and stay together like that, which was nice because he paid for one or two my trips over there. And they were high then. The first trip cost me almost $1,200 for him-- he was six years old-- and for me.

And that was fly now. Pay later. They don't have that no more, but, with KLM, I paid it. It was cheap. You know, $1,200 was not cheap.

And I thought I was going to go to Germany. You know, it was $4 for-- for $1, you got 4 marks, 5 marks. I said, man, I'm going back loaded. I was so loaded because, when I got to the store, and I saw the prices on everything, oh my god, out of this world.

All the money, I couldn't buy anything I had over [? there-- ?] they had over there. I wanted a leather coat. If you think about it, I'm glad I didn't get a leather coat from over there because ain't no telling what that was. I mean, you heard them say that they used skin to make shades, lamp shades, and all kinds. I said now I'm glad I didn't get one. But I wanted a camera, a Leica.

A Leica, yeah. So what is your life like now? You said you work.

I work here.

Yeah, so what is your life like now? You work, and what else?

You're talking about Germany?

No, like now.

Oh, right now? I've been working ever since I got here. In 1950 is when I went to work there after the 4th of July because they told me that, after the holiday, you don't make very much money. And you worked for tips only. There was no salary or anything.

And so they said but, if you make $10 a day, that's good. And I made my $10 the hard way, $0.05, $0.10 at a time. You worked eight hours every day and, if you could, a little bit more because you didn't get no salary. I didn't even make-- my first IRS deal, I didn't claim anything because it says, if you don't make no more than $600 a year, you don't have to

claim it. I didn't make it.

At that time, we didn't have to claim the tips, but then, after that, they fixed that too. You had to pay money on-- I mean taxes on tips. But that's how I raised my kids, working seven days a week. And I loved it, but it took a toll on my legs.

And what is your job now?

I mean sitting on my behind and a cashier. It's a pawnshop, and I open the door to let the people in. So I have to be alert at all times and make change. Or, if they want money, give them the money for the loan or for the extensions and all that. I handle money. I still handle it.

And how often do you work?

Every day.

Every day?

Except for Sunday.

We came on the good day then.

No, well, you know that it hadn't been too, too long ago. We worked seven days a week. It's just me and him. We went on Sundays in at 12 o'clock and closed at 5:00. It didn't really pay because most people don't think about having to go make a payment on a Sunday. So we finally closed it on Sundays, but I'm there every day.

If I don't make it at all, I must be deadly sick because I perk up when I get down there, you know? It's just like a different world. You go to a different world, different atmosphere, different everything. You feel good.

Right now, I'm 86. I know how old I am. But, when I'm down there, I'm a young thing. I really am. I mean, we talk together. We joke around together. They talk. Good or bad, I'm one of them. I like that.

Yes, so have you ever visited any Holocaust Museums?

No.

No.

No, my brother wouldn't even hear about it. After they heard about it, they were-- I mean, they were really blown away when they got to see the pictures because they didn't even believe it until when I went over there one time. He asked me.

He says I've seen some pictures of Auschwitz because that's close to where we lived. And I said yeah. And he says, is that true? I said, as far as I know, it's true. I said but, when I was over there, I didn't even know it. I thought it was a little town. That's it.

And he said, when I-- he said, I've seen that. He says, and, in my wildest dreams, I never thought anything like that happened-- would happen to another person. And that's it. See, we were blind following somebody that didn't really mean well for us.

Have you ever met any Holocaust survivors?

What?

Have you ever met any Holocaust survivors?

No, but I know that they tattooed a number on them. I know that, but I've never even seen that in a newspaper or in TV or whatever.

So you said you talked to your children a little bit as they were growing up about your experiences. But when did you start talking about them again?

About what? About the war?

Yes, ma'am.

Every once in a while, one of them comes along and wants to know-- I'm moving again-- comes along and wants to know. But, after a few minutes or let's say maybe 15, 20 minutes, they get that far away look. And I said they're not interested, you know?

And like I feel like I'm boring the hell out of you right here because, after I talk to other people, and they find I'm German, they want to know all about it. I tell them. And they get that look, and they say she's making it up, you know? I'm not making it up. I was there.

I wish it wasn't. I wouldn't have been there, but, then again, I wouldn't have my boy, wouldn't have had nothing, no memories or anything, you know? So I'm kind of glad I was there.

Yes, ma'am. When did you start speaking at schools?

What?

When did you start speaking at schools?

At schools, that was when she went in-- I think she was out of school already, and she was teaching psychology to the kids. Or, not teaching, but she was taking care of some kids that had problems. And she was talking to one of the teachers, and they got into it.

And so, anyway, she made an appointment. And I [? sat ?] down and talked to them about it. Now they were interested. And, once before, I was supposed to talk to a school, but, like I said, I had the experience of them not caring, you know?

And I said, why go through that all again and dig it up, I said, when they don't really care. So I didn't go. I didn't do that. That was '65, '66, something like that. It was a long time ago.

There was a little girl. She went to-- her mother worked for me. And she went to the Medical Center at MD Anderson in that area. And she said, oh, she said I told my teacher about it, and she wants to know all about it.

And I said I ain't going through that again because, even to her, I could see that she was fading out on me. And I let it die, you know? But now I know why I'm living so long. Maybe somebody is going to get a benefit out of it.

Yes, ma'am. So it's only been in the past couple years when your granddaughter, who now works at a school district?

Right.

That's why you're talking? OK, and so it's just been schools in Katy?

Yeah, right here in-- it's not that big school right here, but it's a little bit on the side, which she's still working there now.

And you said you spoke before a big group of people?

Just at school.

But it was a big group of teachers and students?

Yeah, it was a bunch of-- a bunch of teachers, yeah, very nice people. Those are really awesome people. It was all women, but all very nice, very polite. Is it getting dark outside? No? No.

And why did you think it was important to go do this?

It wasn't important to me, but it was important to her because she wanted the world to know that it wasn't always nice, you know? It wasn't always good.

Like we think, right now, the world is great. But there was a time when it wasn't like that. And I guess she wanted-- since she went to school, they must have taught her that you need to pass it on. And that's why I said, do you want me to write a book? But I'm not good at writing.

So your granddaughter is the one who convinced you?

Yeah, she's the one. She's responsible for all this. I've been wondering all this time, 86-- oh, I'm moving again. I hurt my back, I said why am I living so long, you know? And maybe something comes out of that. Maybe she can tell her little boy what I was at one time.

Never had anything-- during the war, you don't have nothing. After the war, we had really nothing. I mean, we lived-- I came to this country with the same suitcase that I was running with, this little, bitty suitcase, a change of clothes. And my underwear must have been made out of rubber because they grew with me, you know? They got bigger and bigger. And [? you'd only ?] have about two or three pair. That's it.

And, to this day, that was the time when we had one pair of shoes, me and my mother. And it was a lucky thing she had the same size as I did. If she went out, I had to stay at home because I had one pair.

And my dad was real handy. And, when it cracked up on top, he took a little, what do you call, a tire and sewed it on there. And that's how I met my husband, with shoes like that.

Really, there was one dress, two dresses. I had two dresses, and they were given to me. So like what do you call it? A charity, something like that. We didn't have nothing. I mean, it just seems strange to you or anybody to say that you have nothing, but I didn't have nothing.

I come over here. I didn't have lipstick, makeup, nothing. That's when the stewardess put makeup on me just like she did. And I still don't wear much makeup. I got it at home, but don't ever wear it no more.

So is it difficult to talk about your experiences at all?

Not that much anymore, no.

And so do you think you'll continue talking to school groups if your granddaughter asks?

Well, if she brings it up again, maybe and if I can make it over there. And I can walk a little bit better, but, right now, if I was sitting a long time, I get like jelly, you know? And I have to hold on to everything, and I walk with a cane at all times. But that's not because I'm an old woman. That's my foot is not whole anymore, and balance is gone.

Yes, ma'am. Is there anything you wish people knew about living in Germany at that time?

Oh, it's a really nice country and nice people. The only thing is just I am ashamed to be a German on kind of what happened due to the Hitler regime.

But, I mean, as far as that goes, I mean, every time I talk to anybody, they tell me how crazy they are about the country. It's beautiful. And the food is good, and people are nice. And I said where the hell was that in '45 when they weren't that nice, you know?

Yes, ma'am.

But I guess that's life. You've got to move on. And I can't move too much. The only place I'm going to move is down.

All right, is there-- so those are the end of my questions. Is there anything that we didn't get a chance to talk about that you'd like to add, anything about your experiences?

Oh, I think we got it all. It's just I had great parents. I know that. Without them, I would probably be-- because, as you know, I talk a lot. And, when I have work, I don't talk much. I don't talk much because I'm in a cubicle.

And he fixed it. It's metal all the way around, and bullets won't go through. So, in other words, I'm locked up in that little hole, but I got all the things that I need in case of a hold up, an alarm and all that.

And so I really don't talk much. I say [? ask for pawn. ?] Hold on a minute, you know? That's it. And so, when they turn me loose, I get diarrhea.

Well, hey, I had a lot of questions. So that worked out perfectly. Do you want to show the pictures that you showed me earlier?

You can if you want to.

Well, it's totally up to you. We don't have to.

I ain't got nothing to hide. My life is an open book.

Well, it's up to you.

[INAUDIBLE] What pictures do you want to show, that one?

So we have--

That one is--

So we had some pictures from the newspaper that was sent to you by one of your teachers.

If you believe it, my last year in school, when I was 14, 15, that teacher wrote all that. Every month, he put a book out-- a deal out like that. And my sister got them, but, when she passed away, they threw most of them away. And these are the only one. That's the only one that's left.

So we have first the picture of the canal if you want to hold it up so that we can-- if you want to hold it?

On Canal.

Yeah, if you want to hold it in front of you, I think we can zoom in. So is this the canal you saw the bombs go into?

Uh huh, it's Adolf Hitler Canal at that time. It's something else now. But it's like, when the ship comes in, the water is high. On the other side, the water is low And they have to wait until the water comes up. I don't know how that works, but I watched that many times.

So how close was this to your house?

Maybe 10 minutes walking. It's mostly walking.

OK, so what other pictures were in there?

Oh, that's my church.

Oh yeah, we have the Catholic church you went to.

Which one?

That's the church, and that's the inside. It's such a small one. To me, it was huge when I was in there. And that's the city hall, [GERMAN].

OK, so flip it around. And so the one on the top right is the outside of the church you went to. And that's the inside on the other one. And then the bottom one is the--

City hall.

--city hall.

Yeah, [GERMAN].

[GERMAN]

And I thought I had another one in here.

Yeah, is there one more?

That's [? after ?] that.

I think that might--

I don't know.

--might be it.

[INAUDIBLE] I thought there was more.

That's OK.

And that's the church again.

OK, do you want to show this picture as well? Oh, back to the beginning.

Which one?

We're back to the beginning.

This one?

Here, so we're done with-- so that's all the pictures in here. Do you want to show this one as well from your work days?

It's up to you if you feel like it. I mean, if it's any, what do you call it, valuable to you, I mean, to your interview. But

that was in 1950 when I went to work. That's the first picture there in my first uniform. And I lived in that uniform.

You can show it. So, if you want to hold it up just like the other ones, and so you are on the far right of the picture?

Right there, my finger.

Here, hold on.

Yeah, just hold real still.

This is at Prince?

Prince's.

Prince's where you worked your way up to own it.

I had got promoted. I'm a carhop there. I was a porter, a dishwasher.

Eventually, up to owner.

Yeah.

Where was that at?

Prince's, that was on-- this picture was taken at Main and Gray in 1960.

So it's in Houston.

I mean 1950. I'm sorry. I'm getting mixed up with the years.

In Houston.

1950, that's a long time ago.

Yes, ma'am. OK, so I'll take that. And then I'll do a quick conclusion. So Ms. Flores, thank you again.

What?

Thank you again--

Oh, you're welcome.

--for the interview, yeah, just for taking the time to talk to us.

It'll take me back home again for a little while.

Well, we really appreciate it. So this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Miss Elizabeth Flores on December 27, 2015.

You're very nice.

Do you want to do that again without rustling the papers so we have it clean.

Oh, sorry.

I don't know. I mean, that is if you want it.

I mean, how bad is it?

Well, I can hear the paper rustling because you're moving it when you're talking.

I mean, it gets loud.

Yeah, there's like a microphone right there.

OK, so this concludes the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum interview with Miss Elizabeth Flores on December 27, 2015.

OK.

Perfect.

All right.

Which was very rainy and windy.

And gross.

And rolling for room tone, speeding.

Shh.

If you don't mind turning the air down, ma'am.

With AC.

[LAUGHTER]

That's good. Thank you.