[INAUDIBLE], talking with Jeannette Noble today, who was a secretary, stenographer, at the IG Farben trial in Nuremberg, after World War II. This is for the Jewish Community Relations Council Anti-Defamation League of Minnesota and the Dakotas Holocaust Oral History Project.

If you would please, I'd like you to tell me about some of your early life that led up to your decision, I think I'll go to Germany and work as a secretary. Where were you born and where did you go to grow up and go to school?

I was born in Minneapolis and went to grade school, junior high, and high school here. And then, after I finished high school, I went to South High, the old South High, which has now been torn down.

But my sister and I, I have a twin sister, and we went to business college. It was the Caton College, Caton College of Scientific Shorthand. It was

How do you spell that?

C-A-T-O-N. And he had developed a system of shorthand. They used to teach it in the schools in Minneapolis. But then Gregg came in and was able to push him out. Gregg was easier to learn, but I think Caton shorthand, once you learned it, it was good. He wanted everybody to be a court reporter, you know? If you knew his system, you could really write.

But anyway, I went there, and then, I was at business college for about a year. And then, it was a small college. And then, the lady came and said, we have a job at the university, and I want you to go over and apply for it.

So I went over there, and I got a job at the university. And I worked as a secretary for a professor over there. And he was the head of industrial education, you know?

Who was that you were working for?

Oh, what was his name? See, it's like a minute ago, I could have told you. No, I can't. But he was just a real super guy. So anyway, I worked for him for a year. And than being on campus, I had a gal that had talked to me she said, I'd like to have you. She said, you should go to school and get a college education.

And I said, well, I said, my folks really can't afford to send me to college. So she said, well, you can get a job and work. So anyway, I went and I told this professor, I said, you know, I'd sort of like to go to school. And he said, well, he said, that's great. I said, well I can't afford to go.

What year was this?

That was in '40. Let's see, no, '30. That was about 1940. So anyway--

Coming out of the Depression.

Yeah, yeah. So anyway, he said, well, he said, there are jobs on campus you could have. So anyway, he said, they've got a job placement place on the campus. And he said, you go over there. And he said, you know, put in your application, and I'm sure there will be a job.

When I got over there, I had a job. He had called ahead. And he had said that, and I have to admit, I was a good secretary. I knew shorthand really well, and I was a fast typist. So he had called ahead and said she should have a job.

So I ended up with a part-time job on the campus. And I worked while I was at school for the four years. And I finished my education in four years. And it was tough, really. You know, you miss a lot when you have to work, and I worked all vacations and all holidays and everything else. But I have never been sorry that I did it.

What did you get your degree in?

I got my degree in home ec education. So I decided after I finished, when I practiced taught that I didn't think I liked to teach. [LAUGHS] So I said, no. So anyway, I graduated.

And one thing, my father-- both my mother and father were immigrants from Norway. And my father had never wanted my sister and me to even go to high school, because he had that old philosophy, where you learn how to do something. It's that you learn a trade. He wanted us to go to vocational instead of going to high school.

And he wasn't really, in fact, I didn't even tell him until I was already enrolled in college that I was going to go to college. But when I graduated, there wasn't anyone in that auditorium that was more proud than he was. So we just thought that was great, really, because he did not have an education.

Now what was your maiden name?

Stengel.

Stengel.

Yeah.

So you were Jeanette Stengel when you graduated from the University of Minnesota?

Yeah, so then I got a job with General Mills, and I was there for a couple years and really enjoyed it. I was in their advertising department. And one day, I came to work, and my boss seemed to be kind of mad at me. And I finally said, I said, what's the problem? I said, why do you seem like you're sort of just angry with me?

He said, have you asked for another job? And I said, well, no, I haven't. I said, why do you ask that? One of the men who was, he was the treasurer of the company, actually, had wanted me to come and work for him. And I couldn't figure out why. I didn't know who he was.

But we had a bowling team, and his secretary was on my bowling team. And she had recommended me. So he had wanted me to come and work for him. She was going into the Red Cross. This was during the war.

So anyway, my boss said, I told him you couldn't come. And at that point, today, I would have gone to Personnel and said, you know, I would like at least to talk to the man and find out if I would like that job. But then, I didn't. I was not an aggressive type person. I was really sort of meek and mild.

So anyway, but I decided as long as I'm here, this is where I was sent. So I got myself another job about three months later and went to this other company, which I didn't like. Because I worked for three men, and I was the only one in their company. They were sales reps, and I didn't like being just in a place like that. I liked people.

So anyway, I saw an ad in the paper, and they were looking for girls for jobs in Japan. So anyway, I went and I applied. And they gave you a test right on the spot.

In a government?

Yeah, the US government, they gave you like an intelligence test and a typing test and a shorthand test. They graded it right on the spot. And when I finished taking it, he said, when can you leave?

And I said, well, I'm not interested in going to Japan. And he looked at me, and he said, what did you come down here for? And I said, I want to go to Germany. And he said, we don't have any jobs in Germany. So I said, well, I said I just don't want to go to Japan.

So anyway, I went home. And when I got home, about a half-hour later, I had a phone call. And it was him, and he said,

I've called Washington, and you can go to Germany.

Now why did you say Germany? Did you know they were sending people to Germany?

No, no. This was just an ad in the paper, and I guess the Orient seemed so far away. And I really didn't know that much about the Orient. And it maybe seemed like it was more strange.

Well, did the ad say that they also were sending to Germany?

No, no, just jobs for girls in Japan. That was what the ad said. And they came to this part of the country because we didn't have a lot of jobs that would take people away from defense and this type of thing. And also, I think they found that people from this part of the country just have a work ethic that is good, rather than maybe on the coasts.

Interesting. But I mean, you could have said England. You could have said Norway. You could have said--

Well, I suppose, but I said, I would like to go to Germany.

Well, I think, of course, there was a focus on Germany at that time because the war had just ended.

So I don't know why I said it and had no reason to, really. So anyway, two weeks later, I was on my way to Germany. So and I went all by myself, you know? I had friends who thought this was kind of, aren't you afraid? And I said, well, no. I'm working for the government, and the government will take care of me, you know, really. I have great faith in the government.

And so we've got a ship. It was actually a boat. It was not a ship. It was a converted liberty ship. You know, they used it for carrying supplies during the war. We had nothing nice whatsoever. We lived in a stateroom, with I think there was room for 12 in it. And you had bunk beds, stacked up.

Three high?

Yeah, yeah, three high. I said, we didn't-- I opened my suitcase to get clean underwear, but you didn't dress up or anything else. You just, you were just there. And it took us 12 days to go across. So it was a long trip, really.

We landed in Bremerhaven, and then we took a train down to Frankfurt. And while we were on the train, they asked us where, in Germany, we would like to go. And there were a whole bunch, when I got on the ship, there were a whole bunch of people who were going, you know?

There was another girl from Minneapolis. I didn't know her, and I didn't meet her until I got on the ship, really. So I didn't even know where I wanted to go in Germany. So all I said was, oh, I'd like to go down in Bavaria. And I think the reason I said Bavaria was because I knew it was pretty, you know, mountains. And I said that's where I'd like to go. And there were others who did the same.

Well, when we got to Frankfurt, then we had a meeting, and they assigned us where we were going. And they sent me and a group of us, I think, there must have been about 40 of us that went to Nuremberg.

And this was what date?

That was in about September of, let's see, it would have been '46.

And you didn't know why you were going to Nuremberg?

We didn't know why we were going or anything else. And it was really, I said kind of grim on that train, because it was not-- it just had wooden seats in the train. It wasn't a fancy train at all.

From Bremerhaven to Frankfurt, we had had kind of a nice train, where you had these little compartments, you know, like they have in European trains. Well, from Frankfurt down to Nuremberg, we had just wooden benches, and it was at night when we were going down with no light. So you really didn't know what you were getting into.

When we got to Nuremberg, we came off the train, and they just called out our names. And you know, this one is going to go here with these people, and these are going to go here with these people. And there were 23 of us that went together, and we lived all together in one house.

But we had a beautiful house. I said, that house is gorgeous. It had belonged, I believe, to a Jewish industrialist who had been, well, probably taken away, you know? His house had been taken away from him. And during the war, or during the Big Trial, what we called the Big Trial, that's when Goring and the rest of those people were tried, that major war criminal trial. The person who lived in that house was the man, the Russian judge, on that trial.

You mean, the person who had owned the house before the war?

No, no, no. The person who lived in the house during the Big Trial, he was the Russian judge. You know, they had a French judge, an English judge, an American judge, and a Russian judge on that big trial, and this was the house that the Russian judge lived in. So you know, it was really a very nice house.

You don't remember the street address?

It was 33 Eichendorf Strasse. E-I-C-H-E-N-D-O-R-F Strasse, S-T-R-A-S-S-E. And it was lovely. I always thought I would love to have seen this house when the family lived there, because when we were there, most of the furniture was gone. They were bedrooms, actually, for us.

We had a great big living room, or I suppose it would have been the living room-type thing. And we had a ping pong table. No furniture. We had a ping pong table. And they had what had been the dining room, but they had a one of these ceramic stoves for fires, ornate, ceramic. Oh, I thought, oh, that's gorgeous.

And then upstairs, they had bedrooms. And then they had a third floor, where, I think, the maids' quarters had been.

But the room I had was lovely. It had, there were two of us who were in that room, and all the rooms there, the bedrooms all had a little wash basin, which was kind of nice, you know? And in ours, we had sort of cabinets that went all around the whole room. They all opened. And then behind it, you had drawers and things. So it had been like a maybe a dressing room or something. I don't know.

But it was lovely, and it had a balcony that went off it. And you could see this gorgeous garden in the back. And I'm sure it had been a gorgeous place. It had marble woodwork, you know, down on the first floor. Just beautiful.

And in the bedrooms, we had silk brocade wallpaper. Not wallpaper, fabric that covered the walls. But it was lovely. It really was.

And we had maids. We had five maids who took care of us I said it was such an unusual life for me.

Yes. Secretaries don't usually have maids.

No. We had five maids. [LAUGHS] They did it.

And a cook?

Well, no. We ate all our meals together. We did not do any eating in where we lived. And we ate our breakfast where we worked. We worked in the place that was called the Palace of Justice, and it was the place where they had the courtrooms and all of these offices. And we ate our lunch there. And then for evening, we ate at the Grand Hotel. And that was nice. We had wonderful food, because they had a real good dietitian who was assigned to our place.

But it was kind of funny when we got there. And we had to talk to this lady in Personnel, and she assigned everybody to the area that they were going to work in. We all worked in that building. It was a great big building.

And so she went over my resume. They didn't call it that then, but anyway, my outline. And she said, oh, she said, I've got just the place for you. And I thought, oh, she's going to put me in the kitchen with my home ec degree. And she said, I'm going to put you in the economics department.

And I said, her name was Miss Pratt. I said, Miss Pratt, that isn't quite the same. And she said, you go and try it. And if you don't like it, you come back and tell me. So I got assigned to a man who had charge of the slave labor count in this indictment. There were two men that I worked for. One man did most of the work. The other man sort of spent all his time on the black market.

And these were Americans?

Yeah, they were Americans. And then we had two people who worked for us. We had two people who were our translators, who were assigned to the man that I worked for. And this one man had gotten out of Germany. He was a Jewish man, and he had gotten out of Germany and lived in New York. And so he was back there.

And the other man was a very interesting person. He was a Romanian. And he had gotten out of Romania, when the Germans were taking over that part of the world. And he had gone to France. And he had this lovely wife. Her name was Nikki, and she was the prettiest gal.

And I was teasing him one time, and I said, you know, I said, I think why don't you have some children, you know? I said, you're both so nice looking, you'd probably have gorgeous children. And he said, oh, he said, we don't want that.

So anyway, my boss said to me later, he said, well, he said, you should know the story of-- his name was Paul. He said he had been a part, really, of the Romanian ruling class and had to leave. And he went to France and was working in France. And he was married.

And he and his wife were going to go up on the ocean for a vacation, which they did. And his wife was going up on the train, and she took the-- and then he was going to come up the day later and take-- no. He went up with the bicycles in the car, and she was taking the train up a day later. And she never came.

So anyway, he went back. The Germans had come, and they had taken her. And he never found her, you know? And she had a little boy. So they took the woman and the little boy. And they never found them.

And then he had, in time, he had married this other girl. But this is why he just wasn't interested in, you know, planning or having any kind of a life. Although, I did get a letter from him later, after I was back here. He sent me a picture, and they had a little boy. So then they were living in Switzerland. So that was nice. So that's how I happened to be there.

And so then you were working in the economics department with slave labor. Was this part of the trials, or was this just sort of a records collection?

No, no, it was part of the trials. What he was doing, he was gathering all of this material to take and make the case, the slave labor case, against Farben. And then they had another person who was working on the spoliation.

Oh, this was already the Farben trial?

Yeah, this was the IG Farben trial. See, they had numerous trials, you know? They had the one against the judges. They were separate trials. And Krupp, you know, he was also on trial. And that was a separate trial. Krupp, himself, was not on trial, the old person. He was too old, but his son was on trial.

But on this trial, and all of the defendants are listed here. We had, I think, 24 defendants who had been the actually the

board of directors and the sort of top management of the Farben company, and they were the ones that were on trial. But the man that I worked for was gathering all of this information, documents and anything that they could find.

And we went to Paris one time, and he interviewed-- what was his name-- a boy who had been taken, and he worked for the Germans. His family was so well known. What's one of our big fabric companies? DuPont. It was a DuPont boy. And he was related to the du Ponts here, but he and his family lived there.

Now he had been taken to Germany to work, but see, he was not really mistreated because of his connection. And also, I think, Farben had a tie-up with DuPont. Farben had a tie-up with American companies, like Kodak. I think they had a tie-up with them. I think, Standard Oil, they had a tie-up with them. They were worldwide. Supposedly, and I don't know how true this is, this was the largest company in the world, and they had ties all over the world.

And were they already in the chemical business, or was this--

Oh, yeah, yeah. No, they did other things. They had a lot of-- it was a very diversified company. And they kept adding, just like companies here, sometimes. They keep adding and adding different things. Like Pillsbury will take a food company and this is the type of thing, really. And they had done the same thing.

Now, you said that when they were questioning the IG Farben officials, you were the secretary who was taking the notes?

Well, some of them. The man who was the head of our trial team, they had one man who sort of was the coordinator of the whole thing. And he came to me, to my boss one day, and he said, can Jeanette come and take some testimony? These people were all, at this point, were all in prison, you know? And the prison was right there in the Palace of Justice, too. They were downstairs

And so my boss said, well, yeah. And I said, well, I can't do that. I said that has to be verbatim, you know? And I said you do have court reporters. I said, can't they do it? Because they did have court reporters on these trials, who took it all down.

And he said, well, he said, no. He said, they don't seem able to do it. I think he had tried. And I found out later that what they did, everything was put on tape. So if they didn't get it, they wouldn't even have to take shorthand. They could just go and listen to the tape and do it that way.

And he said, we need someone who can take this testimony. So I said, well I said, I'm willing to try. So I went down, and I did it, really. I said the shorthand I learned was really very good, and I had done a lot of shorthand when I was working for General Mills and these other places.

So it was, I had good speed, and the shorthand that I wrote was very accurate. So this is what I did. And I took testimony when they interviewed the people who could speak English. There were some who couldn't speak English. But you take this man, Fritz ter Meer, now he was one of the top people and spoke beautiful English, you know, really.

Where is he? See this Fritz ter Meer? He was a member of the central committee, sort of like the board of directors. And I took from him. And this is the man that I liked, this von Schnitzler. He had a little goatee, and he was their super salesman. He traveled all over the world for Farben. But see, he was a member of their central committee, too.

And so I took from them, and I took from, like, Carl Krauch. He was their top man, you would say. He was probably their CEO in today's language. So and I took that testimony and then transcribed it. And then they used that in their trials.

Yeah, I guess I'm-- and did you actually attend the trials?

Yeah. Parts of them, I didn't. I wasn't there every day because we still had our work to do, but we could go.

Yeah. So then you weren't really dealing with the victims. You were dealing with these people. What kind of people did they seem like to you?

Well, you know, I always said the ones that I met, I would have liked to have known them when they were not in this situation. Because they were very nice looking and even in prison. They had on their prison garb, but really well-groomed and really very literate people, extremely intelligent, you know? And really, just what I thought were extremely nice people.

And why, you know, they did what they did. And of course, I think their big excuse was the fact they had to do it. Which, we had one man that they took testimony from, who had been sort of like an accountant, you know? Now, he said, we knew what was going on, but we just sort of closed our mind.

And you know, if they went on trips, like when you got down to near Munich and you know, Dachau camp is down there. And you could tell. They knew that something was different there. You saw that tall chimney. You know those concentration camps had that great big, tall chimney? And I said I think that's when I first realized how bad it was, because we took a trip down to Dachau.

What did it look like at that point before it became a memorial? Did you actually tour through it?

Oh, yeah, yeah.

And do describe it. Do you remember it after all these years?

Oh, yeah. It was just really like just like a great big, a garage building, like this a big thing. And the thing that I think really shook me up, when you came into that, they had this area, probably as wide as this, that people would walk through. And they would take their clothes off, and they would tell the people that they were being deloused.

It's like a passageway, maybe three or four feet wide.

Yeah, and then you'd have rooms. But see, in the ceiling, they had these pipes. And see, this is where the poison gas came down and killed these people. And that's what Farben makes. See, Farben made the gas for that, which was just really, it sort of made you, oh, shivers up your spine, really.

And the thing that really, I think, disturbed me was when the people were taken out of this, and then they were just piled up in this big room. And you could see the marks on the wall, you know, where some of them were not quite dead. And they were just sort of scratching, trying to get out. And you could see that, you know?

And then they had, just across the room, they had all of these ovens, where they'd take and burn them. And then outside, they had a little place that they had sort of actually fixed up, but it was just a common grave, where they had too many people to burn. They ran out of time and space and just threw them all in there. Just really sad that people can treat other people that way, you know?

This was all enclosed, of course, in a wire fence. But then just across there, where you could see was just houses, where the people lived. They were like, oh, those just very plain little things with beds in them, you know? And that's where the people lived, and then of course, when they couldn't do the work, then they'd come over and get eliminated, you know?

And now, when I was there, of course, they did have little signs up that told what happened at different places. But I said it, you know, just to think that people can sink that low that they would take and not have some feeling for what they were doing.

Yeah, how did the Germans seem? I know a Norwegian I know who was in a concentration camp said that we only knew the Germans in DP. We didn't know them as our captors. And how did the Germans seem to you?

Well, I made a couple of friends. This one girl that I got to know, and she and I, really, she invited me to her home. And I said I got to know her probably better than any of the Germans. She was a cousin, I think, of one of the maids in our house, and she was the one that had brought us over.

And they lived, she and her family lived, a whole bunch of people-- they really were so short of living space that they were in sort of like an oh, you might call it a condo or something like that. I don't think they called it that back then. Like an apartment house. But she and her mother and father and two brothers and I think there were a couple of, I don't know if it was a grandmother or what. Because I couldn't talk to them. She, this girl, spoke English. And so there were a number of people there in this small apartment. I think they only had, like, one bedroom.

Because so many other buildings had been bombed out?

Yeah, see, the center of the old part of Nuremberg was just totally wiped out and other parts of it, too. So it was because they were so short of housing, really.

But I went over to her home and visited with her and liked her. And she asked me for dinner, and I tried to bring her things like chocolate, because we could buy things like that. Now we were not allowed to go to the PX. When the wives came, of course, they could go to the PX, you know? But we could not go to the PX. But we did get like chocolate and that kind of stuff. So I would bring them like that type of thing.

But I went there for dinner one time. And they had something where they had gotten a piece of meat, and they had, like, dumplings. I think it's a typical German dish with these dumplings. And we were eating, and they gave me this, you know, this piece of meat that was really kind of nice. And I ate it.

And I looked at one of the her brothers, and he's got these big tears running down his face. And I said to Evie, this friend of mine, I said, what is the matter with Hans? And she said, well, she said, don't pay any attention. And I said, no. I said, I'd like to know what the problem is.

And well, she said, he doesn't think that he got enough to eat. See, this was something special that they got because I had come to visit for dinner. And so he just had this little tiny piece of meat. And I'm sure they didn't have meat very often.

So well, I said, I just don't need this. I have meat every day, you know? We eat all our meals out. We had gorgeous meals. So I said, no, you take my meat. So I gave him what I had left, you know? But so I said they felt the effects of the war and what had happened.

But you didn't talk with them about it.

Well, this woman finally, one day, her father brought out this little box. And you know, I told you, my name was Stengel before I married. Well, Hitler's photographer, his name was Stengel. So anyway, so they bring out this thing. Now, her father, I think, had belonged to one of the Nazi organizations.

That's not really a Norwegian name, as we think of it.

No, it's a German name. My relatives came from, I think, what used to be Holland and then became a part of Germany, that area. And then my great-great-grandfather, I think it was, went up to Norway. He was a doctor, see? And he went up there and sort of as an army type thing. And then he ended up staying up there. So it isn't a Norwegian name. It's more of a German name, really. So and she said, you look German.

So anyway, but he brought out this little box. And there he had, oh, some little, some pictures and also some, oh, little things that they got, little tags and this type of thing. And they were all from the Nazi regime. See, he had to be real sure, before they did that, of me, to know that I was maybe going to be a friend.

What kind of tags?

Well, like little signs.

Insignia?

Yeah, little insignias, things that they would wear probably on their uniforms. He had a uniform, you know, this type of thing. Yeah Had he been in the army or he was--

Well, I think he was I think he was in the army and in some part of the army. He was not, I don't think he was in the SS. And then the kids, of course, had been in the youth organization. So they had been, the smaller one hadn't, because he was really too little at that point. But Evie had been in the youth organization

Did she ever say anything about it?

No, really, I think they were a little leery of talking about it, really. I think they were a little afraid I met one German who said that it was too bad that they had gotten rid of all the Jewish people, because they felt that was a great loss. Because the Jewish people were so intelligent and they sort of, they could keep things going. And they were just intelligent, and they missed that.

So can you describe the trial? What was it like? It sort of went on day after day after day. Did it seem as though it was really an immediate tragedy that they were talking about? Or was it just that this was a business that they had been in and they had been asked to make this product. And they made it.

They all felt that this was something they had to do. If they didn't do it, they would have probably been eliminated themselves. They really felt that. That it was something that they were required.

It was a business decision. If they didn't manufacture it, somebody else might have.

Yeah, yeah, it was a big business, great big business. And the government was there telling them what to do.

Yeah and so they did.

Yeah, and they really turned their backs, sort of, on the things that they were doing that probably, like making poison gas. They'd say, well, we didn't know what it was going to be used for, you know. And like medical experiments that they carried on and this type of thing.

In fact, I was interested. The other day in the paper or on the news or something, and they were talking about some of these experiments, and wondering if they can maybe use them as research and what they gained from them, and use now So I don't know

And Farben was doing those things.

They, I think, were involved to some extent with doctors on doing something, probably just trying to figure out what they could do as far as what they could make for their company. And Farben of course, was big and going into other countries.

See, that's what they called spoliation, where they would go into another country and take over their factories. And then the factories would be making things that would be sent back to Germany for their war effort. Because a lot of the factories in Germany had been bombed, and so they needed that.

And I was looking through this last night. And in Norway, they had taken over some factories. And they took over that one, where they made heavy water. They made a movie out of that. And they wanted them to really get that production going so that they could maybe make a bomb.

So how long did this assignment last? You were there from--

We signed up, when we went, for a year. But the trial, of course, wasn't over. So we stayed another year. So I was there for two years.

From 1946 to 1948. And did it get boring?

No.

Taking the testimony, being there.

No, because, and this had nothing to do with the trials, but the government was so liberal with their vacation policy. I think they've changed that. [LAUGHS] And we really had such a good time. I lived with these 23 women, and I still hear from some of them at Christmastime. I keep in touch.

And we went on lots of trips, you know? And we could ride trains free. All we had to do was show our ID, and we'd go down to Garmisch. That's down in Bavaria. Just absolutely gorgeous, really. I could never really understand how they could be surrounded with such beauty and do some of the things they did.

And we would go there and they had these resort hotels, and we would stay there, a dollar a night. And we'd get breakfast for $0.25, lunch for $0.25, and dinner for $0.50. Really. And just these gorgeous places. If you went there today, it would probably cost you, what, $500 a day. Really.

And like, Berchtesgaden, I went down to Berchtesgaden and went up to the Eagle's Nest. You know, that was Hitler's house up on top of that hill. Yeah. And we went up there. They had an elevator. You went up to a certain point, and then they had an elevator that was inside the mountain that took you up into the house.

And I would look out at the view from up there, you know, these mountains. And I could not understand, really, how he could be what he was when he saw this. I would think that would have had a profound effect on someone just to see that beauty. It was really a beautiful spot, gorgeous spot. I said, you think [INAUDIBLE].

How much did you know about what had happened to the Jews in Germany, in captured, conquered Europe, during the war, before you went?

Nothing. No. I mean, I knew that they were, before the war, and the English, I think, they had a lot of problems, where they could have stopped it but didn't. And all I saw was really what I read in the newspaper and this type of thing. But it didn't really have that much of an effect on me, really.

I remember my mother, she was a Norwegian immigrant, and we had a German lady that lived down the street. And of course, the Germans had gone in and had occupied Norway. And my mother really struggled. She could not watch that lady walk down the street without getting just so upset.

Even in Minneapolis. To her, it was a--

Well, my mother was, really, she was an American, but she had a Norwegian heart. She loved Norway. And she was just really so upset by what they were doing. Of course, she had sisters, brothers in Norway, who were sitting there under this occupation, and I'm sure that made a big difference to her.

Yeah, I think so many of us who were growing up during the war or who were already growing up just, there wasn't that much in the newspapers.

No, no. And when you read about it now and see some things on TV and realize that some of our diplomats, they just sort of turned their back and didn't do anything back when they could have done it.

Did you watch War and Remembrance? [INAUDIBLE]?

Yeah.

All of it?

No, no, I missed some of it. I don't like these things that go night after night. I'm not real fond of them. I watched it when I could.

What kind of memories did that bring back?

Well, it does bring back memories, and just even walking down the street and seeing. I bought a bicycle when I was in Germany. There were two of us who bought a bicycle, and we would just go bicycling around the town.

And I would love to go back today to see Nuremberg, because Nuremberg was probably the best example of medieval architecture in Europe, you know? And of course, the center of the city, which was the old part of the city, it was just piles of rubble, just stacked up piles of rubble. And it had been a gorgeous city.

In fact, this teacher that I told you about, she just, oh, she was just moaning at, oh, this city. Our city. And I said, I finally got annoyed and said, well, it was your own fault?

Ooh, and what did she say?

Well, she didn't like that, you know? But I said, it didn't have to be this way, you know? But so I did. And you know they had a sort of a palace, or not a palace but a castle in Nuremberg. And we would ride up to the castle. They had a moat around it, you know? We couldn't go in, but we would ride up there, and it was fun, really, and we had just walking.

[AUDIO OUT]

--speak German fluently.

And what was he buying?

Well just, he showed me one time, some of the things. I said, what are you getting? But he was buying like beer mugs. He had beautiful things, gorgeous, and art objects, like Meissen figurines, this kind of stuff. That you'd come back here [? in your apartment. ?]

He had a girlfriend, a German girlfriend. And she was sort of working with him or for him. But I said he could speak fluent German. So he had been raised over there and had come to this country. He was a lawyer. Worked for the government, our government, but had gone back home.

So then you took down all the testimony during the trial and they were convicted. How did you feel about that?

Well I said, from taking the testimony of these people, I really got so that I sort of liked them, at least a couple of them. Because when they would have these great big, long German words, particularly, this one man, von Schnitzler, and I said, I thought he was such a, oh, such a doll, really. He would take and he would say it for me slow so that I'd know what he was talking about. Because they were different. Instead of corporation, they have another word that they use, and it means the same thing.

And I said, I really felt kind of bad, because they were not young men at this point. He must have been in his, oh, I'm sure he was in his 60s. I wasn't really that good at judging age. But and then to get put in prison because most of them did get prison terms. They didn't get prison terms like the major war criminals, where they were hung, but they did get put in prison.

So I don't know whatever happened to some of them, if they ever had their sentences commuted or what. But they did.

These were just ordinary people. Were their wives and children coming to be with them?

Yeah, in fact, this von Schnitzler, his wife was at the trial. She's a nice lady. I never talked to her or anything but she was there.

In fact, one day, I don't know, there seemed to be sort of, oh, I don't know. This one soldier, one time told me, he said, I have Goring's watch. And I said, how did you get Goring's watch?

He said, well, when he was in prison, he was one of the guards of those people down there. And he said, oh, he gave it to me. So I said, well, I said, he did kill himself. You know he took poison. That happened the day we left New York.

And I said to him, I said, are you the one who gave him that, you know? He said, oh, no. He said, I wouldn't do that. But I just sort of wondered, really, did he give him something like that.

But in a situation other than what they were in, they were really very charming people, really high-class people, well-educated. But they made wrong decisions. Because they could have left the company and say, well, I don't agree with that, and I won't stand for that. and

Yeah, you wonder what would have happened to him if they had tried to do that.

Well, I think we had that one witness, who, he was not one of the defendants, but he was one of the people in the company. And he said someone else, I think he had quit. Nothing had happened. He said nothing happened, you know? So it was a matter of, I mean, they made choices, and they didn't make the best choices.

So now when this trial then wound up, then what? Was your job then finished? You didn't move on to another trial?

No, no. All the trials really sort of ended about the same time. They sort of all wound down. And one of the friends that I made that I was really very friendly with in Germany, she stayed on. But she went with another agency up in Berlin. She went up there and worked for another year.

So you had that possibility, but after two years, I was ready to come home. So I did go to China after that and worked there for about, I was there, I think, about seven months.

For the US Government?

Yeah. But see here, we worked for the Army, the Army department. We were civilians, but we were under the Army. And we didn't have to wear uniforms or anything like that. We were civilians working for the Army. That was the agency we were in.

And when I went to China. I worked for the State Department, but I worked for what was called the Economic Cooperation Administration. I couldn't get away from that economics. But that was the aid program. You know, it was the old Marshall Plan. When it started, the first thing was the Marshall Plan.

International development.

Well, it was where we supplied the money and the know-how, but the people there did the work, you know? I said, it started out as the Marshall Plan, and then it developed into what they call the Economic Cooperation Administration.

Oh, OK. And where were you stationed?

I was in Shanghai.

Oh, Shanghai.

But the man that I worked for in Germany called me and he said, would you be willing to come to China to work? So I did. I went over there. And I said, I was only there for about seven months, because the communists were coming down from the north.

So we finally got to the point this was in, I think, like May or June, you could hear the guns outside the city. And they were moving. And they called us one night at midnight. We left the next morning. And they flew us to Hong Kong, and we waited there for passage back to New York. But they took us out.

I think the government takes good care of people, even when they had that deal in Germany with the Berlin uprising, you know? Where they were afraid that they were going to block off the passage between so that you couldn't get to Berlin. You know, they told people. And you had a little suitcase packed, ready to move. When they called you, you were ready to go right now.

That wasn't while you were there.

No, no, that was after. That was after I was there. I had a couple friends who were there.

So that's what they did.

Do you think it made you a different person in any way?

I think probably you end up with a little more of a realization that people are really pretty much the same all over, and it doesn't make any difference what color you are, what nationality you are. People are the same. I think you find a lot of people who turn people off because they maybe look a little different or something like that. But you realize that people have the same feelings, you know? I mean, what hurts me, it hurts you, you know?

And we did have a chance, we traveled down to North Africa, when I was in Germany and went down to Algiers and Casablanca and went and saw the place where, oh, Churchill and Roosevelt had their meeting in Casablanca, where they were planning to invade Europe.

And so you saw things like that and got to meet some of those people. But it was interesting. It really was. And I feel very strongly, in fact, I have told people since I've come back. there are so many opportunities for people to go and do something other than just sitting in one spot. And I said, why don't you take advantage of it when you're young? I said, I wasn't married and I could do that.

For whom getting married [INAUDIBLE] do something. But I said, I think it sort of broadens your horizons. Gets you doing different things.

And so when you came back to Minneapolis and you went to--

I came back after China, and my sister got sick. So I stayed home and took care of her for, oh, about six months. And then the minister of the church that I belong to said, oh, he said, would you come and maybe work part-time? Because then I could still take care of her for a half a day and work for him. So I did.

And then finally, I decided, well, I needed a full-time job. So I got a job. And worked for Brown & [PERSONAL NAME]. And I was with them for a long time. But then I became an editor. And I, in fact, I went in there as a secretary, and the man that I worked for, his name was Herman Klein. And he was a very unique person, really, because he came up to me one day, and he said we had a magazine that we did. It was a little homemaking magazine. We did for Hotpoint. And the girl who was doing it was leaving.

And he came, and he said, he said, I want you to do the magazine. And I said, I can't do that. He said, oh, yeah. He said,

you can do it. He said, if you have any questions, you just come and ask me, and I'll help you.

Now how many bosses would do that. They would go outside and find somebody, really, today. So anyway, I did. And then I ended up doing several magazines. In fact, over there, we started these airline magazines that they have on airlines. So I did the Pan Am magazine for five years. And then I went and I did the Northwest magazine when it was first started. We called it Contrails. That was before the one they have now. So I did that.

And then that job ended because someone came to Northwest and said, we will do it for you for nothing. All you have to do is put it on the plane. They were going to get the advertising money. So anyway, this was a group of doctors in Nashville, Tennessee. And so then my job ended because that's the job I was doing. This was for the Bureau of Engraving, down in Minneapolis. So anyway, they never got the first issue done.

You know so then, the man at the bureau called me and said, would you come back and do it? And I was drawing unemployment. So I said yeah, I'll do that, with my fingers crossed, you know? I didn't want to go back and do that, really. So anyway, I took and I stayed home then for, oh, I think I was home for about four years.

You have gotten married somewhere in there.

Oh, yeah, yeah. I got married before that. When I came home from Germany, I got married. I was 37 when I got married and had a child. So I have a daughter. She's 29.

[INAUDIBLE]?

DC. You know, So then I stayed home for just a few years. And then my husband lost his job. So then I thought, oh, I've got to go back to work. So then I went back to work. But I didn't want to go back into editorial work. I found that it was fun, but it was very draining, very stressful.

Because we had this magazine, like the magazine that we did for Pan Am, and we sold ads that were in it. And they had a cut-off. You know, you can't take any ads after this date, but they never went by that.

You know, someone would say, well, we've got this half-page ad. And I could never quite convince them that you put a half-page ad in, it doesn't mean that you drop the other half of the page. You take and do all of this adjusting to make room for that particular ad, see? So I'd wake up in the middle of the night sometimes, you know, what am I going to do? So I thought, no, I didn't want to do that.

So then I went back to work and got a job for, well, a heavy construction company and worked for the man who was the one who was the chairman of the board and also the treasurer of the company. But they lost some of their business because they were competing against union people, this type of thing.

So anyway, they had to let people go, and so I was let go. And I was really very happy, because I did not like that job. I did not like, well, just that financial aspect. I just didn't like that.

And now you're with Federal Express. You've had a number of careers.

Yeah, so then I came with Federal, and it was kind of funny. You know, I'm older. And at that point, we only had one office and that was on the airport. So anyway, I thought, well, I just have to maybe see if I can get a job.

So I went to Job Service. They hired their people through Job Service. They sent me over to the district office, and I talked to the personnel gal. And she was kind of funny. I talked to her, and she read my resume. She said, oh, you've done a lot of things. I'm sure you'd work out real good.

She said, but I have to tell you one thing. She said, the man you will be working for, who is the head of the station, is 28. She said, would that bother you? And I said, I don't think I'm the person to ask. I said, what you have to do is to ask him if it would bother him.

So anyway, she sent me over to talk to him. So I sat there. And a couple of other people were there being interviewed. And he had an office upstairs. You had to go up these stairs. And I saw these couple going up the stairs. I thought, why am I staying? These cute young things, you know?

And I thought, oh, I haven't got a chance, really. I should just leave right now. So I thought, I'm here. I'll stay and talk to him. So he hired me.

That's wonderful.

Yeah. So I've been here about, oh, 6 and 1/2 years. I'm going to call it quits.

Have you known Germans over here, after you came back?

My husband is a German. And you know, my mother, she always said, never marry a German. They're mean to their wives. My mother always said that.

My mother always had two things she said. If you buttered your bread on the wrong side, the small side, you know? I said, these are things I think of people who-- she was from a country area and this type of thing. And they had these little things.

She said if I were going to butter a piece of bread when I was growing up, no. She'd take and she'd turn it over. No, don't butter on that other side. If you butter on that side, you're going to marry a man with children.

Oh, wow. That's interesting.

But she did say, she said never marry a German, never. They're mean to their wives.

And we have some German people who work here. And this one fellow, one day, I really got kind of annoyed at him. And I told him, I said, you, to me, are a typical German. They think they are always right. You really can't tell them anything, you know?

And my husband is like that. My husband is always right. Even when he's wrong, he's still right. And to me, that is a German characteristic, really. They're very proud people, extremely proud people. They think they've got the brains, really.

But I think, like, there's one lady that I met in Germany said, oh, she said, we miss the Jews. She said they were the ones with-- they had the brains. And it is, I mean, I think they show characteristics, really. They're really set in their ways.

Another thing that I noticed when I was in Germany-- they talk about these blonde Germans.

The Nordic.

And you saw a lot of these blonde Germans. But I'll tell you, I would say that a lot of it came out of a bottle. They were not born because that's the way they came. They one guy that had, you could always when you see them.

Yeah?

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think they wanted to fit that pattern of being this blonde super guy, really. So they did. And the women, too, a lot of them dyed their hair

And this was right after the war.

Yeah.

A country of people that I really enjoyed, and we went there for trips, really, quite often were the Czechs, Czechoslovakians. I really made some friends there and really enjoyed the Czechs. And I felt bad after. In fact, when I was still there, the Germans closed that down, too. And they had taken and run over Czechoslovakia, too. But I did, I liked them, and to me, they were sort of more my idea of what the Germans wished they were, these good looking blonde people.

But I said, my mother, of course, she was a Norwegian and she really had very deep feelings about the Germans after what they did. And my mother also was very fond of Jewish people. My mother was a very good Christian woman. And she really felt that the Jews were a favored people. They have that verse in the Bible that says that they are the apple of my eye, you know? And she did. She sent money to a Jewish organization every month, you know?

And you don't remember which one.

No, some place out in--

Yeah, the Scandinavian countries, very good record of how they helped Jews during the war.

[INAUDIBLE]

No, well, we had a Lutheran church and the Presbyterian church, I feel like in a Presbyterian. So we were Presbyterian. I think she was raised a Lutheran.

That's a stereotype we have, that all Scandinavians are Lutheran. That's not necessarily true.

But she was just very, very [INAUDIBLE]. And she just felt that if you mistreated Jewish people, it was going to come back to you. She felt that very strongly.

Yeah, well, now it sounds you had a fair number of Jewish neighbors.

Yes, yeah, we did. They lived down in that area, a lot of them. We didn't get any Jewish neighbors, but they were, I think, they lived down or just a few blocks down, down by Franklin more, in that area, you know?

Yeah, that would feel Jewish.

Yeah.

[INAUDIBLE], particularly the [INAUDIBLE] Jewish community.

Yeah, we had quite a few.

I usually end up an interview by asking people now what did I forget to ask you? Is there something you thought that you would talk about today didn't really get to?

No, I don't think so, really. I don't know how helpful I've been from what I've said. But I have enjoyed this, you know? And I said, it was an interesting experience to be there, really. And just to get to know some of those people, really.

And you know, I was just an admirer of Cory Temple. You know, she was in a German concentration camp, and I remember seeing her movie, The Hiding Place. And I think that really brought back memories to me.

And we have a lady in our church who was half-Jewish, you know? And in her book that I read and just what she had to go through. And she wrote a book called Angels in the Camp, something like that.

Now is that in your church here?

Yeah, in the church I belong. And just her experiences with the Jews.

Yeah, that's a book I'm not familiar with. Did she publish it herself?

No, no. Who was it written-- it was written by-- she wrote it with someone who writes, a Jewish lady who writes around here. I forget what her name is. I don't know her, but I know this gal. I've got a copy of that book. I could maybe-- someplace. But it was interesting. But she was, I think, half-Czech and half-Jewish.

I'd like to see it.

Yeah, but the book was called Angels in the Camp.

Yeah, do you think you paid more attention to the Holocaust all the books and movies and TV shows that are coming out because of having had this experience?

Oh, yeah, and I said and I always find myself getting a little angry when people say, well it really didn't happen, you know? And there are people who say that it really didn't happen.

But I said, I think probably one of the deepest experiences I have ever had was going down to Dachau and walking through that camp and just seeing the pictures when they first went into these camps and just the, oh, just the way those people looked, really. Well, just like skin and bone skeletons and the children.

And really, I just, like The Diary of Anne Frank, I went to see that play. They put it on at Normandale. They did it last year, and I went to that and just really, things like that and just to see how people have survived through these things, really. You wonder what you would do in the same kind of a situation. And I think where would I hide, really.

You do you think things like that, yeah.

And a man from Norway, who's a relative, his wife was a Stengel in Norway, came to visit me a couple of years ago. And he had worked in the Norwegian Underground, you know? And he didn't talk about it too much, really. Some of the things that they did, Decorated by the king for the work he had done.

And he lives in Norway.

He's still in Oslo. He just came over here to [INAUDIBLE].

And he didn't talk about the things he had done.

No, no. He seemed a little reluctant, really, to do that. But he was, I said, in the Underground, and I'm sure, helped people get out and escape.

And I said, to me, I just believe that people, I don't care what your color is, what your nationality is, we're alike, really. And you can't look at someone and say, I don't like him because of this or that or something else without even knowing who that person is. Sort of this Archie Bunker approach, where you're sort of against everybody if they're a little bit different than you are. I just won't go for that.