

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War 1939-1945

Personal Experience

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GISELA GEHRINGER

Interviewed

by

Elizabeth Clark

on

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C This is an interview with Gisela Gehringer for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Germany during World War II, by Elizabeth Clark, on December 17, 1986, at Warren, Ohio

Where were you born?

G I was born in Berlin.

C When?

G: On August 23, 1923

C Were you born in the city part? What part of Berlin were you born in?

G On the outskirts of Berlin

C What did your parents do?

G My father managed the Pullman Trains, or the eating and sleeping car, where they were repaired. He was the manager of that.

C Did you go on the train much with him?

G No, not with him. He never went. He took care of the plant.

C What was life like? Do you remember? Do you remember your parents ever telling you about what life was like during the 1920's when you were born?

G Well, actually I do not remember. I know that we had inflation, and my grandmother was quite well off. We never had the problems that other people had to face. So, I never heard anything about that.

C What was your home like?

G We had a nice home.

C What were some of the holidays like? Such as Christmas?

G Oh, they were beautiful.

C: What do you remember about them?

G The sixth of December was Saint Nicholas Day.

- C What was school like? Did you go to the local school?
- G. Yes, we went to the regular school. I went there until fourth grade. Then, I decided to go to Ulicium.
- C Ulicium?
- G Well, at first I wanted to become a German home economist. We had a friend who was interested in photography, so I took up photography.
- C Then, did you go to the eighth grade? What was after eighth grade?
- G. No, you went to twelfth.
- C You go to the twelfth?
- G You have to pay for it like you do here for college.
- C Like a tuition? Then when you were eighteen, did you graduate and then go to the gymnasium?
- G: No, the gymnasium was for the boys. The girls were in another place, and the boys were in the gymnasium.
- C Oh, I see. Your profession was photography, then?
- G Yes.
- C What type of pictures did you take?
- G Well, I took some at the time that the war started. I was lucky, at that time, to get a job with Heinrich Hoffman.
- C Okay, I want you to hold off on Heinrich and go back to your growing up years in school. Did you belong to the Hitler Youth?
- G Oh, definitely.
- C What did you do?
- G In fact, I lied about my age. When the Hitler regime started, I was not quite ten years old. You could join another group from ages then to fourteen. Well, we would meet, sing, and read about German History. We went camping on

weekends

C Did you have nature walks?

G Nature walks, yes We learned certain things, like cooking.

C Did you get involved at all in the Olympics or any type of sports? What did you do?

G. Well, I was in gymnastics, and I belonged to my school team In fact, I have a book here that all of my trophies are in. The best girls from school were picked to compete in gymnastics at the time of the Olympics There were about three or four thousands girls from all over Germany

C Which in particular?

G This was just gymnastics

C The bars?

G No, just gymnastics. Not the bars. The bars and things like that we did in school for certain programs that we had for the parents Then, Hitler had a program

C Were you really involved in sports?

G Yes.

C You are still active in sports now, are you not?

G Oh, yes

C You are a golfer and a bowler. I bet that you are very good at it, too

G Yes We have a membership at Yankee Run, and I won this year's Membership Championship

C Wonderful.

G. At my age, I was just lucky.

C. No, it was just because you have trained well your entire life Did you wear uniforms?

- G Oh, yes
- C What were they like?
- G Well, we had a blue shirt, a white blouse, and a black tie Then, we had our emblem on our sleeve, a brown vest, loose knee stockings, and brown shoes
- C How much training did you have? How often did you train, practice, and work at this?
- G In what?
- C Every week, your gymnastics
- G In school? I think that there were always about four to six hours involved They were really going up, and that is the time that they believed in school sports
- C As you went along in school, did you have a change of teachers when Hitler came into power?
- G No.
- C Did you keep the same, or what was it like?
- G In my school, there was not much change, but in different schools, they joined the party and had to leave Then, I imagine that there were quite a few Jewish teachers, but at the school that I went to, there were none
- C Was this a public school or a parochial school that you attended?
- G. A public school The Catholic schools were all by themselves automatically
- C Was it just the regular school and church?
- G Yes.
- C What were some of the subjects that you learned at the time when you were older at age twelve, thirteen, or fourteen years old?
- G Well, history, arithmetic, and religion are learned in school. Gymnastics, reading, and writing are just the same as over here They made quite an effort over there You have to learn how to write

- C Penmanship?
- G Yes It was very much like that
- C Just conquering that beautiful writing, or that German, is wonderful
- G This is the way that I learned how to write This is the regular German handwriting here
- C It is very neat. You said that you took up photography. How long did you spend learning photography?
- G Four years
- C It is just the same as going to college?
- G Yes, you paid for it Usually afterwards you go into an apprenticeship Well, since I went to the Lycseum, I did not have much of an apprenticeship You have to work for someone, and it hardly pays any money.
- C Then when you finish your four years or so, so you take exams after that?
- G Oh, yes
- C In photography, do you do the developing?
- G I did the developing, the retouching, and the enlarging
- C Were you surprised when the war started or when Hitler started to move? Tell me about that.
- G Yes Well, I was quite young then, but when the Hitler regime started, we went through a terrible time first I remember when Berlin was burning They threw burning mattresses out in a certain sector of Berlin. There were lots of communists living there Then, all of a sudden when Hitler came on, they were marching, but people started getting work Poor people got lots of help He took the young, or boys at the age of eighteen, into arbeitstiens, and they built roads In fact, I myself was an arbeitstien for a year You lived in a camp and wore a different uniform that was like my Hitler regime uniform You went out everyday to a farm that they assigned you to Now, you could help them in their homes or out in the fields It depends on what kind of work they had Then, you came back at night, got dinner there, and sang We had a good time

- C As Hitler was coming to power, could you see it moving toward war?
- G No I think that I was too young to realize You heard rumors, and we were called on it All of a sudden, we started hearing things like warships such as the "Bismark" sank
- C Did your grandma tell you what was happening?
- G Yes.
- C What did she think about it? What else did she say about it?
- G Actually when anybody heard her talking, we could have put her away. That is how much she hated Hitler
- C How about your parents?
- G Well, my mom never made any comment on it. They were that type of people, but with my dad being a manager, he had to join the party, which he did not, that if he would not have joined he would have lost his job So, he was a paying member Later on, he had to get a Nazi, too, but he could not improve anything
- C Well, as the war progressed, did you have hardships? What happened in Berlin?
- G It was terrible. We lost our home in one of the first attacks, and we were moved They took families out of Berlin with children There is an empty apartment, and you moved in there In the meantime, we lost everything. Actually, we had only the belongings that we could carry on our back. Then, it was bombed again, and it was terrible
- C As it progressed, did you think much when they moved into Poland?
- G When they moved into Poland, I had an aunt whose husband was like a ranger, and they had to leave Poland Again, we were told that Poland belonged to us, and we wanted it back. Well, as the war progressed, we went into Russia Then, Stalin did not fall in war We then knew that the war was over It all went very, very bad for us
- C Did you have any brothers or sisters?
- G: Yes, I have a brother and a sister
- C Did your brother have to go in to Army?

- G Yes Now, he was in a gymnasium It was at the time near the end of the war They took boys who were not even eighteen, yet
- C Where did he serve?
- G They took him to France, and Mom never heard from him until the end of the war Then, she found out through the Red Cross that he was alive, but all of his toes were frozen
- C Is he still alive?
- G No
- C Well, did the German government take care of him? Because I heard that many of them did very well
- G. We lost everything, but my brothers were the type who were just like my sister Her husband was a doctor, but he lost his practice and everything. Then, he went somewhere else. In the meantime, he shipped her because she had one child and was pregnant, to a safe place near Bremerhafen. In fact, my husband and I went to see her there He had to get milk and bread that the farmer did not want because he wanted jewelry for money I remember when she wrote I forgot that they walked the railroad tracks to find pieces of coal for heat
- C. That is the way that it was here during the Depression People were trying to get coal, but they did not have that war and the losses.
- G Finally, her husband made arrangements Many people lost not quite what he and she lost, but they took advantage of it She said, "Look here, Gisela," when I went to visit. Those people had big homes, and she lived in a condo, or an apartment Mine was the same thing We lost our home
- C. Now, would your family be at either East or West Berlin?
- G Well, I have no family
- C But, which side would your home have been on?
- G We were in the East, but after losing our home, we ended up in the West Mom lived before she died in the West
- C As the war progressed, where were you when you finally realized that the German troops were coming back in? Where were you at the time?



- G I was on my way from Berlin to Munich Like I said, I worked for Heinrich Hoffman, and they had a shelter built. Well, he had something in Munich On the outskirts of Munich, he had bunkers built. In fact, many movies and pictures that you see this is where the photographer took them They thought that we could work there safely. So, just two weeks before the war was over, they had a train on the camera Oh, the pictures and everything on On the way going to Munich, we noticed that our soldiers came from the front wild and running around, and the Americans were marching in
- C Tell me about this Heinrich Hoffman, a photographer How did you happen to go work with him? What did you do?
- G Actually, after I was finished with school, I went to the unemployment office I went to apply for a job, and the girl there and I were together She said, "Would you like to work for the Heinrich Hoffman?" I said, "You must be kidding " She said, "No, you have the qualifications " That is how I got the job
- C What were some of the experiences?
- G Actually, we had one dark room there where they developed films and printed them. I was not permitted to go in there, but I went in anyway I had to go in I had to see some of the pictures Here in Berlin, we had no food or anything, and there were some big shots just living it up high I remember Fritz Schulz and Franz. I will never forget their names. They were two photographers They were belonged to the SS, and one always was with Hitler when he was developing films and things like that The other one was there When they came in, they spent most of the day up in the lab, and they brought a package with sandwich meat My mom got me a quarter of a pound of sandwich meat or regular meat, and she had to stand in line
- C Did you eat well, though? Did they see that you were fed since you were the photographer?
- G That had nothing to do with it I went home
- C Can you tell me some of the different pictures that you did take or helped develop?
- G Then, when the war started, I took pictures of marvelous homes where they would put families when we were bombed and had emergencies I went once to the vice consulate. I took pictures of Hitler's birthday table. Just street scenes and activity of people. Many times, I had to go to certain houses and take pictures maybe of people attending a birthday party.

- C Now, were these pictures just for the people? Were they published in newspapers, books, or magazines?
- G Well, some of them were for the newspapers and some were private. Most of them were private. There were two reporters, or civilians, and they took other pictures. The vice consulate only had two photographers.
- C Well, then as you progressed your profession as a photographer, did you get to take pictures of other famous people?
- G: Well, at that time, there was a war, and it was pretty bad.
- C: Did you take any actual fight scenes or battle scenes?
- G None what so ever. When the first house was bombed, I took pictures of it. When they had something else, there were certain churches and things like this.
- C You were saying that you were on a train to Munich. What were you going to do in Munich?
- G Well, I decided not to go on the train, and it was lucky I did not. It was attacked by machine guns. I went in a mobile home where we had a lab, and it was a bad trip. It was horrifying. We went to go to Munich. We were on a highway, and there you could see all of the diplomats with big Mercedes Benz passing us on the way to Switzerland. There was a railroad, and they had machine guns on the railroad. We could not see that they waved us to stop the car, and we just hid. Then, there came the planes, and I went on top of a hill and just pulled my hands over my head. I said, "Do not shoot me in the head." Then, we had a very bad attack in a park. We were lucky to get out. Then, on the way to Munich, we were at a farm house, and we stayed overnight.
- C Well, you proceeded on. Did you get to Munich?
- G We did not get to Munich. We had cameras, enlargers, and all of this, and we found a place to bury it. I stood in a farm house. I had an aunt nearby. She is not really an aunt, but she was a friend of my mom's. I could not go back to Berlin, so I went to her place.
- C How long did you stay with her?
- G. Well, I stayed for a little while. That is where I met my husband. He was a First Lieutenant in the Army. I worked in a little photo shop. I went out and took pictures of farmers, and he had a camera. He spoke broken German. He asked

me if I would explain it to him. He said that he did take it. He said that the German soldiers had to give all of their cameras and guns up. I explained it to him. He asked me if he could walk me home, and I said, "No." He followed me, and the next day, he stood right at my aunt's house. He had oranges, and he asked me if I wanted one. I said, "No," but my tongue was hanging out so far. She lived in the United States from 1923 to 1932. Her husband was secretary for Anheiser Busch, but then, his mom got quite ill. They came back to Germany. She spoke really good English, so she talked to him for me.

C So, you met your husband that way?

G Yes. We met in 1945, and we were married in 1946.

C Was he in Germany as part of the occupation?

G Yes, he ran a motor pool. Then, he thought that he had to go home, but he found out that he could be a civilian. He stayed there, and we came here in 1947.

C What was your reaction to the United States?

G Well, when I came over, we were in Philadelphia, and the people were just fabulous. My one sister lived there. We stayed there visiting. Then, we went to Allentown, and he had three more sisters there. I felt very much at home. He introduced me to lots of Pennsylvania Dutch people. Then, my husband said, "Well, we cannot stay here. My job is waiting in Warren." Then, he said that he was going to go ahead and see if he could buy a house. Well, he came back, and he said, "No, you have to come along." So, we packed up and came to Warren. We found a home. There were some people like John who were very, very nice, and then, I had other neighbors that told stupid stories about me. They did not even know me. In fact, one neighbor saw my husband leaving, and she came in with a friend or hers, which I found out later on. She asked if I had rooms for rent. Then, my other neighbor during the following year came and asked me if I stole all of her cherries.

C Some people can be very cruel. I think that Warren has a reputation of being very unfriendly.

G It is like a clique.

C It certainly is.

G Exactly.

- C I believe that you were telling me about how you were going to Munich. You were talking about the train and how you got out of there. This van that had all of this equipment in it for photography.
- G We finally got outside of Munich, and then, the American soldiers came. We buried all of our camera equipment. It could not go back to Berlin because the Russians were there, and I heard horrible stories of what they did to girls. I had an aunt in a place nearby. She went to school with my mom. I called her "aunt." I went to her place, and to keep myself busy, I found a job in a small photography shop. I took pictures of farmers, and that is the way that I met my husband.
- C Then, you married and came to the United States. What was it like around Munich? How far did you get? Where did you get into Munich?
- G No, we were on the outskirts of Munich.
- C What was the farm like?
- G Not at the farms. In fact, those people in the northern part of Germany and the Western part lost everything, but the people of the South did not. In fact, many times I thought that they were selfish because they did not lose anything. They had plenty of food, but they had to take in people who were fleeing from the Russians. They resented that.
- C When you realized that the war was over and that the Americans were coming, what were your feelings? Were you glad that it was over?
- G Yes. Before, you felt like you could not breathe, and all of a sudden, you felt like you could breathe. We did not know what the future would bring us.
- C It was better than what you had been through.
- G Well, we knew what Hitler was doing wrong, but we never could give our opinion. The minute that you would say something, all of a sudden, you would disappear. When they bombed Berlin, they had an American radio station, and they would forecast that they were going to bomb. If they found out that you were listening to it, they would send you to a concentration camp.
- C: Did you know anybody?
- G I knew that the Jews were put in concentration camps. I am not interested in their part. I am interested in the people who were Germans and what they went through. Such as the Lutherans, the Catholics, and those who were not in any religious sect. I am not

concerned with the Jews in my program, but I want to know about the other people

C Did you know any other people who were opposed and what happened to them?

G They disappeared.

C Did you ever find out what happened to them?

G. No, never

C How about the towns that you were in? Did you fear the SS?

G No, I had a cousin who was in the SS. In fact, I had two cousins. One was in the elite, and the other one was in the regular SS. They were the two nicest young men that you could ever meet.

C They were probably fair about what they did. What happened to them at the end of the war?

G I never heard from them. In fact, my aunt lost three sons. One was in the SS, one was in the airforce, and the other one was in the army. They were all in Russia, and she never heard from them again. When she found out that I married Carl, she would not speak to me anymore.

C Is that right? Because she was so angry about you marrying an American? How did the rest of your family feel about this?

G. My mom and dad were very happy. My mom met Carl, and she felt that I could not be in better hands.

C Did she ever come to the United States?

G. No, she traveled all over Europe, and then in 1972, my sister came to visit. Mom was in her late seventies, and then, we corresponded. She wishes that she would have come with my sister.

C Do you still hear from your sister?

G They are all dead.

C Oh, they are. So, your family is right here, and your children are, too.

G Yes.

- C Do you think that they will ever re-unite West and East Germany?
- G I do not know. It is too far separated. The ideas are different from the way that the Russians are. From what I read about even the teachers in the schools, it was just like two different countries.
- C When you realized that the Americans were coming, did you wish that they would hurry up and get there or something like that?
- G That is true, yes. We were kept in suspense. We knew that we could not come out of that war winning or anything, and they bombed more and more. Many times, we said, "Where is God? Why does He not stop it? Look at what has been done to the people, how they have suffered, and how they lost their families." You forgot that you lost your home. It is your family that you are most concerned about. They really got split apart.
- C Were any of your family taken into concentration camps? How about displaced persons? Did you have any?
- G No.
- C You were lucky.
- G In fact, I did not hear about it until after the war.
- C How about when the Nuremberg Trials came about? When they were trying the war criminals? Do you remember any of that while you were there or was that after you came to the United States?
- G I was here.
- C You were here. Do you believe that a lot of the Nazis escaped into South America?
- G Oh, definitely. They started sending their money to Switzerland, South America, and those places.
- C Do you have any idea how soon they started doing that? When was the war over? When did they start the slow evacuation?
- G. They knew. When we could not take Stalin, even before that, I heard rumors that they took oil paintings, money, and gold out of the country.

- C Did you feel that it went into South America someplace?
- G Well, Portugal or South America
- C Do you think that it went into Spain?
- G That I do not know I never heard of it
- C Can you think of anything else that would be of interest historically?
- G Well, you ask me, and I will answer you
- C What were the holidays like? What did you try to do during the war time or when things were pretty rough?
- G We tried our best My mom could not get anymore flour to bake. She would bake a cake from potatoes. I told you before that we only got a quarter of a pound of sandwich meat or regular meat, so one day, she had a roaster full of stew that she just piled on our plates We ate it We were amazed because that there was so much meat After we were finished eating, she said, "How did you like it?" It was horse meat through the black market Then, she had something that looked like really hard salami She said, "How do you like that?" I said that I did not like it because it was kind of sweet That was horse meat, too Then, I had two long-haired dachshunds, and they disappeared We looked all over for them, but we could not find them Well, my mom went to the dog catcher, and he said that somebody made a meal out of them
- C Is that right?
- C Yes
- C Oh, that is sad to think that people are forced into a situation like that
- G You should read the book by Albert Spearman called The Third Reich He tells all He wrote it exactly the way that it was.
- C It is exactly the way that it is?
- G. Exactly. There is one thing that I came away with For years and years, the sirens frightened me over here, and I dreamed that the bombers were coming I could not find my children I did not have any then, but I do now. It took me a long, long, time to get over that

- C: When they had the air raids, what did you do? Where did you go?
- G: We had a home with a basement, but our basement was not that nice. We went in there, and we had a neighbor who was a doctor. He put a shelter below his house, so the closest thing we had to use was a Mercedes Benz plant. During the war, they made mines. So, one day when the sirens blew and the first fire bombs flared, you knew where they bombed. Luckily, we did not go to our house, but rather, we went to a regular shelter. Like I said before, our house was one of the first ones to be bombed. We could not save it. The whole district was bombed.
- C: Were you near any industrial plants?
- G: No.
- C: Do you think that it was a freak bombing, or do you think that there was a purpose?
- G: Well, they tried to get the Mercedes Benz factory.
- C: Oh, I see. They were after that.
- G: Yes.
- C: Were you aware in the late 1930's that Hitler had been trying to build a war machines likes planes and tanks? Were you aware of it?
- G: Oh, yes. He was doing just what they did in Russia. He believed in lots of marching, parading, and showing the tanks to show that Germany was strong enough to defend themselves. That was if anybody declared war on us, but we did not realize that he was going to start one.
- C: When he started this war, how did you think that the United States would react? Would they stay out of it, or what did you think would happen?
- G: Well, I do not know. The only thing that I thought was that when we would defeat England, then, the United States would enter the war.
- C: With England?
- G: No, with Germany. Not with England. They were allies.
- C: At the time of the 1920's, there was a Communist movement in this country, and I wonder if there was one in Germany at the same time?



- G Yes, there was
- C: In the late 1920's and 1930's, there was a Communist push?
- G· Yes, that is right
- C Well, when Hitler started this bit with the Jews, how did you feel about it, and what do you remember?
- G Well, I only remember how my sister was engaged to a Jewish man. He was a doctor. She broke off their engagement, and he went to Africa. The only thing that I know was that you saw people going with a yellow star, and they set fires to the synagogues. Their store windows were broken. Then, you heard that they took the Jews to the concentration camps.
- C Were you given any explanation as to why this was being done?
- G No.
- C It was just happening to them?
- G Yes, it was just happening to them. He wanted all Aryans in Germany, and he could have sent the Jews to Israel to let it go as that.
- C Well, I have read that there were six million Jews, but there were six million others who were executed. I am concerned with the six million others. Can you tell me something about the concentration camps?
- G I cannot. We knew that there were concentration camps. I heard rumors. You could not talk about it, or you would end up in a concentration camp yourself. It was not until I saw the young line that I realized that it was a concentration camp. That was the first time that I was ashamed to be a German.
- C· But, it was not the German people's fault.
- G· No, actually, it was not, but, then, they always talk about Nazi Germany. Not everybody. Many times, they tried to assassinate Hitler. They always ended up dead.
- C I have always liked Rommel, I think that knowing General Patton and how he respected Rommel in North African campaign helps. I have always been fascinated with that particular thing because I think that it is like two geniuses together who respect each other. What was he like?

G Well, actually, I do not know too much about him, but we adored him

C Rommel was just a regular German Army, was he not?

G He was just a regular German Army, yes

C Well, he was supposed to be such a genius in tanks Tell me some more about him

G Well, we just admired him Then, when the war was over, he committed suicide

C Why do you think that he did that?

G The things in Africa did not go the way that Hitler wanted it to, and then, I think that Hitler found out that he went against him

C Do you think that he realized that the war was lost?

G Yes, he tried to tell Hitler Then, he was on the black list of Hitler, and he had to go

C Back up for just a moment on this Jewish thing Did you think that Goering was a Jew?

G No, I do not think that Goering was a Jew, but Goebbels was These were only rumors, too He decided that there were many movie stars, and they did not get any more starring roles when they were Jews He decided who was a Jew and who was not a Jew.

C He made those decisions?

G Yes, he made them

C Rudolph Hess. Do you remember that he was captured?

G Yes, I remember.

C What happened there? Do you remember?

G Well I remember , but it was a long time ago. It was close to fifty years ago The only thing that I remember is that he flew to England, and he wanted to prevent a war.

C Do you think that he was there to negotiate?

G Yes.

C Do you think that he was sent by Hitler, or did he go on his own?

G No, the way that we understood it was that he went on his own will.

C How about the airforce? What do you remember about the German airforce?

G I thought that they were fabulous I remember Mueller or something He was one of the top aces, and he got killed in the air That is what we were told, but later on, we heard different stories My grandmother and I went to the cemetery where he was buried It was close to where my grandma lived, and we went to see it. Everybody was very sad

C: To lose him?

G Yes.

C: Can you think of anything else that we should talk about? Did you ever get to go to church? How did the churches keep going during this time?

G Well, there were no politics involved I am a Lutheran, and we went to church like always

C So, that means that Hitler did not get involved in that at all?

G Not to my knowledge Now, my sister and her husband had their first child, and he did not want the little girl to be christened, and it upset my mom quite a bit. So, later on, my sister had my niece christened.

C: Now, what was her husband? What did he do?

G He was a doctor.

C Was he involved in anything?

G He was quite active in the Nazi party He joined the party before Hitler's regime, and he wore a pin with gold on it Then, when Hitler was in power for three years or so, my mother-in-law realized what Hitler was doing, and she did not approve of it at all

- C Did he have to go in the army as a doctor?
- G No
- C He took care of civilians?
- G Yes He died quite young When he was over there, he went to the University of Heidelberg, and the students drank a lot and were quite rough with words and things He was not wanted there. The way that my sister told me later on was that he lost his plaque It was gone. One day, he went back, and he had to sneak back The people remembered that he was a party member, but they forgot that he did not believe in what Hitler was doing So, he had to sneak in, and his own practice was there
- C What town was he in outside of Berlin, or was he just here in Berlin?
- G He was just in Berlin.
- C Do you remember any stories about the Russians coming into Berlin, or how the decision was made there?
- G. No, the only thing is that I read about it, and I heard about it from the first Russians who came to Berlin. It was from the elite, and he treated the German people very nicely. They told him that he had to leave. I forget which book it was It may have been written by Tolstoy. They said that after the soldiers came in Beware of the Mongols because they raped and did just everything I know I met women in the hospital when I did volunteer work there. They were not raped once, but twenty times or more They walked on crutches. They lost their minds My girlfriend and my mother told me in Berlin that one day a soldier called all of the neighbors together Eve was her name. He wanted her to expose herself, and I think that he wanted to rape her She refused, and he shot her twenty times
- C I heard about the Mongols coming in, and I do not think that we realized that the Mongols were in I heard that before, and I just could not believe it That reaffirms that other tape I have from a year ago that the Mongols came in I did not know about the Russians.
- G. Well, I do not know if you know Schmidt She lives in Howland. I do not know if she is German She said that she is, but she told me that the Russians came They raped everybody In fact, she got raped, her mother got raped, and her grandmother got raped The reason that she told me the story was that our minister here at Saint Paul's Lutheran Church gave a sermon, and he talked about the people who commit suicide They are weak people She resented that She

said that one woman threw herself in front of the apartment building when the Russians came, so that they would not go in and rape the women. Again, she told me that she was raped, her mom was raped, and her grandmother was also.

- C Bringing the people back and recovering from war, Germany has done a phenomenal job. West Germany is in the rebuilding.
- C Yes, they have.
- C: I know that the Marshall Plan helped a lot.
- G: What would we have done without the United States? In fact, when I went back to Germany and my husband went back with me, all of a sudden we were different. At first after the war, the German people were crazy about Americans. Then, all of a sudden, they got back on their feet again, and they were not that friendly anymore. I resent that. Like you said, Germans are hard working people. I read that, too. A long long time ago England won the war, but Germany was sending them gift packages.
- C That is what they say. If the United States won the war, then, Japan and Germany are doing better than the United States.
- G Yes.
- C They took our money.
- G Yes.
- C. All of those billions and billions of dollars to rebuild, but I think that we learned our lesson from World War I. The Versailles Treaty was so horrible. We had such a terrible treaty at the end of World War I, and I think that is the reason that when this war was over, we did not want that to happen.
- G: Well, the biggest mistake was that they let Russia have half of Berlin. They should have just left them there on the border and not let them come in.
- C As the war ended, the United States and Russia had a competition for your scientists because, of course, Hitler was so far ahead as far as missiles.
- G: Yes, the V-2 bomb.
- C Yes, it was the V-2 bomb. Of course, we were lucky enough to get Werner Von Braun. Do you recall any of that when the Russians were in there trying to

kidnap, and the United States was trying to obtain the scientists?

G: No, I do not

C: You were unaware of it?

G I did not know anything about it.

C What did you know about your missile program? Did you know anything about that?

G Well, we knew a little bit

C Were you aware of it?

G We were aware of it, just by how people talked. They had some missiles there, all underground, and that is where they sent them to England.

C I will give you a little story, and then, you can rebut it In 1935, a girl from Harding High School was sent as a student over to Germany She happened to go to the Cole of the Clyde-Cole. She was married to Jack Cole She was not then, though Her parents were very close friends of mine When she came back, she said to my father, "You should see the underground factories that I saw " Apparently, when she was in Germany, she got to see these things in 1935 She saw the planes being built. She actually, in 1935, saw the cement things that eventually became the U-2 bases. She was telling us about it, and I think that a lot of people thought that she was exaggerating. We were so deep in the Depression that we had no idea this was going on

G They were building buildings, and they used what they called the young Arbeitstiens. Each young man, before they built up in the army, was an Arbeitstien. You did not get paid for it. They built roads and shelters, but I cannot say if this was true. I was twelve years old, I had no knowledge

C She was eighteen years old. Did they build the Autobahn during this time? Did they not build the Autobahn?

G Yes, all of the Arbeitstiens were young men. They built the Autobahn.

C Do you remember any kind of gift that you got when you were a little kid or something that you remember in particular?

G: No. Of course, we did not buy gifts like you do here. I got a baby bottle, and I

got a doll I never played with them I was more interested in sports. I got a little sewing machine We celebrated Christmas Eve, and we had a Christmas tree with candles on it Before we got our presents, we had to say a little poem in front of the tree Then, we got our present.

C Do you remember what you had to eat?

G Goose

C Oh, you had the Christmas goose?

G Yes

C So, many of our traditions that we have here are European

G: I just saw in a magazine the German Christmas goose

C. Do you keep that tradition with your family?

G: No, I tried it one year I love goose, and I love the grease when I put it on dark white bread. Then, one day, I had the goose in the oven, and we got company unexpectedly It was in the oven longer than it was supposed to be. I opened the oven Ever since then, I could not make a goose anymore.

End of Interview