

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Germany During World War II

Personal Experience

O.H. 913

ELIZABETH A. NYPAVER

Interviewed

by

Elizabeth C. Clark

on

December 3, 1986

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INTERVIEWEE: Elizabeth A. Nypaver
INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth C. Clark
SUBJECT: Germany during World War II
DATE: December 3, 1986

C: This an interview with Elizabeth Nypaver for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Germany during World War II, by Elizabeth Clark, on December 3, 1986, in Warren, Ohio.

Can you tell me anything from the time you were young?

N: About the first thing I can remember is living in my grandparents house. We had an upstairs apartment. They lived in a great big white brick house with the number [address], 1905, in red brick. We had the upstairs and my father, my mother, and myself lived there. I was not the oldest child. The oldest child of my parents died at the age of three months. He was a beautiful little baby boy and I was supposed to be a replacement for this baby boy. I think I was a disappointment because I was a girl.

C: What caused the death of the baby?

N: He had meningitis. My mother was very fearful that I would get sick too. I think she had sort of a feeling that she didn't want to get too attached to me. I often had the feeling that she was kind of aloof. She was not this loving mother that I was with my own children. But later on this

came to me, and I felt that maybe this is what caused it. She

had lost her first child and it caused her so much grief that she didn't want to go and get so awfully attached to the second one. I was left to my own devices most of the time.

I loved going downstairs to my grandma. My grandma was an enormously fat lady with her hair in a bun. She was a very smart person. She knew so much. She ran the family business. My grandfather had a construction business.

When I was about two and a half, my parents built their own home. Times were really bad, there wasn't much work. A lot of people were unemployed. My grandfather didn't have enough work for his sons in the business, so he gave them building lots that he had. My father and my mother built this house together. I mean every stone was put together by them. My mother used to go and mix concrete in these big pans they used to have--they didn't have concrete mixers. [She would] pour the sand and cement and lime in and pour water over it. She would mix while my dad laid the bricks. That was my first home and that was the home I lived in until I went to America. The town I was living in was just a small town. We had about 2,400 people living there at that time. It was mostly farm people. The men would have the job and they would come home and they would have little pieces of acreage where they would raise potatoes and wheat and vegetables and all of that to help out with the food. It was a nice place to live. We had a lot of young families living around us so there were many children for me to play with. It was a good place.

C: What large city were you near?

N: It was a half hour drive from Frankfurt. The next city, the seat of the county, was called Hanau. There is a large army base there now. A lot of soldiers go over there now, but at the time it was an industrial city. There was quite a bit of industry. There was a company called BBB. It was a British company. They made refrigerators, stoves, and that kind of thing. Then Dunlap had a big plant there. They were making tires there. They also had a jewelry industry and a lot of goldsmiths in Hanau. So, most of the people didn't have to travel very far to go to work. They would go to work on the train or on the bicycles. My dad worked with his dad and my mother never had a job outside of the home. She loved gardening. She was a wonderful gardener. She always had the most beautiful flowers and a nice vegetable garden. Home life was always very quiet. My mother would sit in the evenings and read. My dad would do the paper work for his business. I would be sitting there trying to play with what little toys I had. My favorite times were when my mother would tell me

about her growing up years and the big family that they had. There were eight of them. She was the oldest one. I loved that. So, I made up my mind then that I was going to have a big family, too, and I did.

C: Were you an only child then?

N: Until I was eight years old. I used to be at my mother all the time, "Why don't we have a big family? If big families are so nice how come I am the only one? I never have anyone to play with," and on and on. When I was eight she finally had a baby. I think that was about the happiest day of my life, honest to goodness. My little sister was born on Pentecost Sunday. I had gone for a walk with my aunt and uncle, who had a little boy at the time. I guess my mother knew it was coming, she wanted me out of the house. Of course she had the baby at home. In those days no one went to the hospital to have a baby. There was no doctor either, only a midwife. We went for this walk and I knew there was something in the air so I kept wanting to go home. She [the aunt] kept on stalling and stalling. Finally, they let me go home and when I walked in the house it was so quiet. My dad was in the kitchen and he said, "Go in the bedroom." I'll never forget the sight of it. The sun was coming into the bedroom and there was my mother propped up in the bed with this pretty nightgown on, her hair was all fixed really nice, and a baby in her arms. I couldn't believe it. I was just so thrilled. I couldn't wait until I could run down to my aunt's and tell her about it. That was the first thing I did.

I'll never forget, I was running down the road and there was this old farmer standing by his gate. It was a Sunday evening and he said, "What are you so happy about?" I was skipping and jumping and running. I said I just got a baby sister. He said, "Oh the stork dropped it down the chimney." I guess I must have told him, "Don't be silly." He told that all over town. My mother said she was so embarrassed about me. It wasn't the thing to know about the facts of life when you were eight years old. But I always was a curious child. I kept asking questions, and she [mother] said babies don't come from the stork, they grow in the mother's stomach. But that really was a wonderful experience. A year and three months later I had a little baby brother. That was really nice. My dad, of course, was very happy to finally have his son because he had have someone to leave his business to.

C: He built homes?

N: Yes.

C: Were they contractors?

N: No, they were brick layers. The did the brick work, they didn't do the wooden part. They also did excavating. They laid all of the stones. In Germany there are no wooden homes like there are here. The homes are made mostly of cement block and brick over there. They had these special cement

blocks they used to build a house and then they stuccoed the houses. If you have seen houses in Germany you'll noticed most of them are stuccoed.

C: What was it like in the 1920s?

N: Well, I was born in 1928, so I don't really remember anything about the 1920s. But I do remember a lot from the 1930s.

C: Do you remember your parents telling you about the rough time they had in the 1920s?

N: Oh, yes.

C: What did they have to say about it? What did they think caused it, and what was the main problem after World War I?

N: I think everybody was disappointed about the rough treatment we received after the Treaty of Versailles. That was one of the bones of contention, that Germany had to go and pay such huge reparations. We had so much of country taken away by that. So that was a lot of the bad feelings. Then there wasn't enough work. It just seemed like working conditions were just awful. It was hard to get a job. The bricklayers used to go and work in the forests during that time. The state would get them jobs as lumberjacks. I have pictures of my father, my grandfather, and several of my uncles working as lumberjacks in the German Forests. The German forests are mostly state owned, so I guess the state tried to help the unemployed people by giving them jobs in the forests.

C: Did the government help you at all during tat time other than trying to provide a few jobs?

N: I think they had unemployment benefits, but I think they were very meager. They didn't get very much. But we were lucky in as much as we always had a big garden. That kept us in vegetables. Then we raised chickens, so we had fresh eggs and chicken. My parents always kept a goat, so we had mild. We kept a pig every year. They would buy a young pig early in the spring and then when the time came, they would butcher it. That pig got rationed out. It had to last until the winter. There was no such thing as like here we buy a ham and eat a ham. Well, this ham was smoked, of course, at the butcher shop. It was very delicious. You didn't have to do anything

to it. You could eat it just like it was, it was like Virginia ham. It was very good. we would slice it paper thin and maybe have it on sandwiches because it had to last. Then they would go and plant rye, which is the main staple of our grain crop over there. They don't have as much wheat in Germany, they have rye. we would have several acres of rye, which we would cut down, mother would bind it up, and they would take it to the mill and have it ground into flour. Then they would take the flour to the baker. The baker would bake the bread and he would charge them a very small fee for the actual baking of the bread. He had already figured out how many loaves of bread a 100 pound bag of rye flour would make.

C: Did he store the flour for the family?

N: Yes, he stored the flour. He had storage barns. Living was very cheap. We didn't eat meat very often. We might have meat twice a week. One of the times was probably a soup with the cheap meat. Sunday we always had meat, but we had a lot of vegetable dishes that would just be flavored with a little bit of homemade bacon, or a little bit of ham cut up into it. They knew how to stretch a dollar, or rather, the mark. I can remember we used to get a weekly newspaper. There would never be a shred of that newspaper wasted. First of all, it would get read from cover to cover. It was a newspaper that dealt mainly with gardening. It was called The Green Post, and it gave gardening hints and had a novel in it. I can remember we had to use newspaper to wrap our sandwiches in because nobody had the money to buy the parchment paper that you would normally use. Then you would use it to start a fire with because we had coal stoves, not gas. We didn't get a gas stove until the mid 1930s. That coal stove was the only source of heat in the winter during the week. We wouldn't heat the living room until Saturday or Sunday. Nobody would go in there except on Sundays or when there was company.

C: And sit nice?

N: Yes. That is where we learned properly to mind our manners. Oh, I loved Saturdays. We would clean everything until it was spotless. Everything would be polished, and we would always bake cakes. Saturday was always a day we would bake. There was no cakes during the week, but on Saturday my mother and I would bake cakes at home, or she would make the dough--like a yeast dough--for those big flat cakes that they have in Germany. She would make the dough at home and she would take the dough to the baker. The baker would have great big cookie sheets, about 30 by 24 inches at least. He would roll the dough out, they would put the topping on it, like maybe apples, or streusel, or something like that. Then he would bake it, and we would put a little piece of paper in the

corner with our name on it. He would bake that for us and then after several hours we always knew it would be done. We would then go to the bakers to pick that cake up, and he would charge us a small fee for the baking. We carried those cakes home and the smell of those hot cakes from the baker, oh it was enough to drive you crazy. It was just so nice.

So, Saturday afternoon with coffee we used to have a little of that cake, but the main part of it was for Sunday. Sunday we ate cake. We even had it for breakfast. It was a coffee cake type. It was good. I love it and my husband loves it, too. That was nice.

I can remember starting school, I guess I was six. I do remember when Hitler came to power. It was January 1933 and I can remember this torch light parade. It gives me goose pimples even now when I think about it because it was so spooky. There was all these guys in their uniforms, and they had those boots with the cleats on them and they would be marching through the street and singing. They had torches and it was dark as they were marching through the streets. My mother was so much against it. She kept saying, "How can they be so stupid? How can they be so stupid to let somebody like that get into power?" I guess I picked some of that up from her, but this was a spooky thing for me. At first when I went to school. . . it was a Catholic town that I lived in. We had regular school teachers and we had religious instruction in school as well as other subjects until about 1938. We had quite a few Jewish children in the class, too, and several Protestant children. Whenever we had our religion class, the minister would come and instruct [them]. The Jewish children were excused from school when we said our prayers in the morning. Every morning we had to say our prayers first, everybody had to stand in reverence, but the Jewish and Protestant children did not have to participate in praying if they didn't want to. But after 1938 there weren't anymore Jewish children. I can remember some of the girls saying, "We are moving, we are going to Palestine." I asked mother, "Where in the world is Palestine?" Some of them went to America, but some of them stayed on. Some of them stayed right in our town, and I think some of them did go to concentration camps and lost their lives. I mean, the parents did anyhow. Our town did a history of all the Jewish people that lived there, and I want to get that book. It is a very interesting book. Some of the Jewish people that lived in that town have kept in touch with the people there, they still

write back and forth to each other. It is really a good feeling that they don't bear any grudges because they know that the main population really was not anti-semitic. We had Jewish butcher. There were a lot of people that we associated with because if you have a business you know a lot of people. I remember my grandmother had some nice Jewish friends. This one old lady had a little store. I loved going there. It was just a tiny little place where she sold dry goods, and she would always let me look through their little sample books. She had these little tiny sample booklets of fabrics. When she didn't need them anymore she would give them to me. At Christmas time she would always give me a little handkerchief.

That was one of my favorite places to go because she would always give me a handkerchief for a present. They would have fairy tale characters on it. She was a very nice lady. She went to live in California. She got out in time.

C: Did you family fear Hitler's coming on? I know other families did and left because they were afraid.

N: Well, leaving was just not a possibility. That would never even occur to any of them because we were just so rooted in this town. My mother had never lived anywhere except in that town, that was her home. As a matter of fact, she would not even move out of the house. That was the house she had built and that was the house she was going to live and die in. So, moving was not a possibility for them. At first they didn't believe they would let him come to power. Then they thought he would not be so foolish as to risk another war. Well, you know after World War I, I think the German people really did not think that anybody would be risking another war. I can still remember when the war broke out. It is really strong in my mind. My father was drafted before the war started. He was 40 years old at the time. My mother was just furious. She thought the war had broken out. They came in the middle of the night,, SS men came to the house and pounded on the doors. Then my dad opened the door and they said you have to report tomorrow morning at 5 o'clock for active duty. My dad said, "What is the matter, did a war start or what?" They said, "Just be there." My mother said, "Surely they must have started a war if they called somebody as old as you." The next morning there was only a handful of the guys from town who had to go. They just picked and chose. People that they didn't want to go didn't have to go. My father was rather outspoken, and the fact that he had a business. . . . I think he was more or less a person that was looked up to by a lot of people. He was a very good common sense type person. He was a neat person really. He treated everybody so equally. It was really nice. He never went to church, but whenever the monastery that was in our town had any work to do, they came

to him.

C: Did he do it for nothing?

N: No, he didn't do it for nothing, but they knew he would give them a fair deal. He treated the poor people like he treated the rich people. He was just a real neat person. But I guess somebody wanted him out of the way, so they drafted him before the war started. This was in August of 1939. My brother was just a year old on the fourth of August and this happened at the end of August. my mother was just devastated. She said, "What in the world do they want him for? What am I going to do?" Finally things had started to look up, my father received his master's papers that summer. He had gone away to school most of the summer and he had just come back. He was making good money and he had taken over the business. Before it was in my grandfather's name and he was just making a wage, not a very generous wage either. It was always one of those deals, "Well, the business will be yours someday. Meanwhile, you can work for subsistence wages." My mother didn't agree with this kind of treatment. She was very upset about that. just when things started going a little bit better, they took him away. At first he was staying in Germany, so it wasn't so bad. He could come home on weekends and visit us. But then they transferred him over to France after the occupation. He wa with a group of old guys that were building an airport there. He didn't have a bad time of it, he had plenty of food and he was with a bunch of his old cronies. The got along together very well. He didn't have it so rough, but it was getting pretty bad for us. Food was getting scarce, things weren't' so good. My mother was getting pretty good money from the government. The had a pretty good. . . I don't even know what you would call what the soldiers families were getting paid.

C: Dependent?

N: Yes. There was no financial need, but the only thing was he wasn't there. She had to raise three children on her own, which is a big responsibility. My mother had always been the typical German housewife. "Franz, do you want me to do this? Franz, how do you fell about that?" She would get her household allowance and she would stay within this household allowance. She didn't know how much money my dad's business made or how much money he had, and she didn't need to know. She never asked. I can't understand how it could be like that, but she was a typical German housewife. When my dad left, that came to an end. She had to make the decisions on her own. There was no husband to ask for decisions. That was pretty hard for her. She learned how to make her own decisions, and when my dad came back she didn't like it. Of course, he was not the same husband who had left either. He

member of the Nazi party at the age of 15. My mother had a fit, she was read to thrash me. She was so mad at me. She said, "They are going to what? Over my dead body!" So naturally when they offered my that scholarship she said no way. She sat in from of the school board and they wouldn't see her. She said, "I am staying here until I see somebody because they are not going to take my daughter." Well, they wouldn't let her see anyone. The superintendent of schools was not in his office. She said she would wait. My mother is a very stubborn person. She waited until it was closing time. There was not another door so he had to come out of his office. She grabbed him and she said, "My daughter is not going to this camp." This was a school where they would give you a uniform and they trained you. Well, they trained you and indoctrinated you and that's what she was afraid of. I was very impressionable. Most kids are very impressionable at that age, especially if they tell you are so wonderful. That kind of stuff you like to hear. My mother never paid me any

compliments. Every time she said something nice to me she said, "Don't let it go to your head." So, I didn't get to go there.

Then I had to go away to a farm. I had to live on this farm for a year. It was not a good experience. I hated being there. I felt like I was being punished for something that I had no control over. I didn't like being there. The people that owned the farm were an old couple. They were in their sixties, they had only one son and he was killed in the war. The man had been a very, very active Nazi and so had his son. Then his son was killed and he [the father] turned so bitter. He used to around mumbling under his breath all of the time. He would say, "That murderer, that killer, that murderer. He ought to be hanged." He was talking about Hitler. He just turned completely around. Finally, I found out when I went back on a visit that the man had gone insane, and he had to go into an institution, where he died. It was not a good place for a young person to be. The woman was really depressed. She was a very kind old lady. She was 60. I am almost 60, but she seemed like she was so old. She was just so down beat. I can hardly ever remember her smiling.

C: Because of the loss of her son?

N: Not only that, the husband was very hard to live with. He was very overbearing and he was so mean. He had turned so mean on account of what happened to their son. The son had been married and had a child. The widow and the child were living with them. The daughter-in-law decided to marry and she was going to take the little boy away with her. That little boy was going to be the only heir to the farm, so they didn't want

him to go. He was just a little ray of sunshine to these old people. He was about two years old at the time. He was a darling little boy. But she insisted and got married to this farmer who had the biggest farm in the whole district. He was twice as old as she was. She married him and took the little boy with her. She didn't care about the old couple. That just crushed the old couple. By that time, I was so sick of being at that place. I said, "I'm not staying here. I am just not staying here any longer." The farmer said, "You signed a contract and you are staying here." I said, "I was forced to stay here and if anybody wants to make me stay here they are not going to do it. I am just not going to stay here." We fought and we fought and we fought. I was 15 and a half at that time. I guess I had a mind of my own. Finally, I made it so mean and so rough that they had to let me go. But they had to stick me some place else. So they really thought they were going to sock it to me. They put me with this family that had seven children and the father was in a concentration camp. So, they thought this was bad. They lived in a tenement. They were poor, poor people. You know what? I loved it there. They had a baby three months old. She was the only girl in the family. Six boys and this little three month girl. The woman had such a merry nature. She had a hard life. Instead of darning the boys socks, she would put big patches on them. Everything was patched in the household. She would sit there by that sewing machine singing away. She was a very nice person, and I really enjoyed that. But then the war got so bad. It got to the point where they had to move away from the city. They had to move away in order to be safe because the bombing started getting pretty bad by that time. So when they moved, I didn't move away with them. They just left me there. They just excused me and let me stay home. My year was about up by that time anyhow.

That was in 1944, the winter of 1944. The bombings started to get really bad. A lot of the cities were bombed out. Even the little towns, like our town. We had quite a few losses already. My mother's cousin had a very tragic loss. She had two sons and one of them was at school and the other one was home from the army. He was 17 and he was home on leave. The little boy came home from school for lunch. Just as the boy came into the yard a bomb hit the house. It killed the little boy and killed the 17 year old son. My mother's cousin was in the house and she had a big concrete slab thrown on her. She was buried under that for 48 hours. They dug her out. She had a broken back, but she recovered. Her own father was living in that house. Not a scratch on him. Her husband came home found out his sons were dead and his wife was buried under there. She was all right, but my mother was really shook up with all of this stuff. Every time there was a bomb you were afraid to come out of the basement because you never knew what you were going to find--how many hoses were going to be

bombed, how many people were going to be dead. It got to the point where my mother was claustrophobic. She started feeling that the cellar was caving in on her. So what we did was to dig trenches outside of town.

There had been some kind of a mine--some kind of a strip mine--and we dug ourselves trenches there and covered them over with pine to camouflage them. Then whenever the siren sounded we could go there. We would run up there. It was not quite a mile. Well, we had to go through these field paths. This was winter, and they would be so soggy. I remember one time at night the mud stuck on my shoes. I had to leave one of my shoes behind. The next morning I had to go and look for my shoe. It was just sucked into the mud. We would sit up there in those cold trenches shivering until the okay sounded. It got to the point where I felt that, "If you want to do that, it's fine with me, but I am not going up there anymore. I am staying home." My sister had been told at school, "Do not leave you house. When the siren sounds, get down in your basement." Our basement had been reinforced with extra steel beams and the windows had been boarded up. We had lost the glass in our windows a long time before because of all the detonations. The windows had burst and there was no way we were going to replace the glass, so we had some plastic cover over the windows. When the wind would blow, the plastic would sound like someone shooting. It was terrible. Your nerves were bad enough the way it was without that. But anyhow, we stayed home, my sister and I stayed home this one day. I'll never forget it. It was December of 1944, and it was a nice clear day. Usually they didn't bomb during the day, but the siren sounded. My mother took my little brother and ran for the hills. We went to the basement. They bombed and they bombed and they bombed. It seemed like they were never going to let up. Then finally, there was a bomb coming towards us. It just wouldn't come down, and then there was a big crash. There was stuff breaking and the sound of tons of stuff coming down. We were huddled together with our arms around each other. We just thought, "Well, this is it." When it stopped our cellar was still standing. Nothing had caved in. We opened the door. The hallway was clear to the basement, so we went out the side cellar door. The whole yard was covered with about 20 or 30 inches of dirt. On the side of the house and the middle of the street an impact had broken the roof and stuff, but most of the dirt had been thrown through our house and into the yard. My mother had seen all of these infants coming toward the tunnel. She said she just about had a heart attack. She never prayed so hard in her life. When the all clear sounded, she said she stood up and climbed up this little hill and thanked heaven our house was still standing. When she came in the yard and saw the mess, she couldn't wait to see if we were okay. When she got in, I had a wheel barrow in our bedroom. I was shoveling dirt into the wheel barrow

out of the bedroom. There was a big rock in our bed, it had just flown in the window and landed on the bed. The funniest thing was that after this happened she said, "I think this was our bomb." Then she stayed home and didn't run anymore. That was good. She kind of eased up.

That was about the hardest winter there. It was really bad. In that town food was really scarce. We were luckier than the city people. We had taken in some people that had gotten bombed. They lived in the upstairs. They were worse off, the people from the cities were worse off. We shared what we had in the garden with them. A man and his wife and daughter lived upstairs. I couldn't wait until spring came. On March 19 there was this awful bombing. It was such a beautiful Sunday. I still remember it. We had violets in the yard already. My mother said, "Whatever you do, don't go across the river." We didn't have a movie in our town, but there was a movie in a little town across the river. There was a ferry boat that would go back and forth. She had forbidden me to go to the movies long, long before. Well, we didn't want to stay with our parents on a Sunday afternoon, so me and a bunch of girl friends went across the river to the movies and came back okay. That evening there wasn't even an air raid siren. We had gone to bed already and all at once everything started breaking loose. There was such a horrible bombing. It was the worst thing that we had ever witnessed. The town across the river was completely levelled. I mean, there was not one building that wasn't at least three fourths damaged. There were walls standing, but there was not one building that was still left intact. They didn't even have time to sound the air raid siren. Later we found out that it was the wonderful German propoganda had claimed the city was fortified and that they had all kinds of troops there. Well, in truth the Americans were coming closer and there were no German troops there. My mother was so mad. Anyhow, we couldn't wait until the Americans came to our town.

C: What did you feel when they arrived?

N: We couldn't wait until they got there. We were just hoping and praying they would get there soon. While I was away on that farm, there was an invasion of France [D-Day], that was in June of 1944. My father had been taken prisoner by the English. He was shipped to Canada. Well, for awhile we didn't have word, but then we got a card from the Red Cross that he had been taken prisoner and we were allowed to communicate with him. We were allowed to send post cards with no more than 25 words on them. We were told guidelines of what we were and we not allowed to write. Well, we received a card from him, but he didn't hear from us for the longest time. He had to listen to all this radio propoganda about the fighting that was going on around our part of the country. He

didn't know if we were dead or alive. It must have been a really bad time for him. Finally, he did get a card and he was so happy we were okay. There were two other young men from our town that were in the prison camp with him. It was really amazing. Their families, for some reason, had never been notified that their sons were there. These were two unmarried men. He was not allowed to tell names of who was there. He had his own guidelines, too, of what he was and was not allowed to write. He wrote some kind of a code, and my mother figured it out even though she was never good at things like that. She became very good at a lot of things. She got to the point where she could hear what a British airplane was, what an American airplane was, what a German airplane was, and what a Russian airplane was. She could tell whether it was a reconnaissance plane or whether it was a bomber with a reconnaissance plane. Anyhow, he met these people and he let us know, and then we let their families know that their sons were there. These people were very much relieved that their sons were alive because they had no idea where they were. We knew he was safe and had enough food, which was something we didn't have.

But by the time the Americans were close, things were so bad. We were really, really hoping that the war would come to an end; the sooner, the better. We had known for a long time that the war was lost. The soldiers, too, said there was no use to fighting anymore. What were we fighting for, a heap of rubble? That was all we had left. They wanted the war to end because it was so destructive. When the Americans came close, we had a lot of artillery fire because there was an officers training school on the other side of where the Americans were. The Americans were on the other side of the river, the south side of the river. We were on the north side of the river. The training school was a little north of us. These people were young officers, very gung-ho, very Nazi, and their instructors were even more so. They said, "You have to fight to the death. We will not let anybody take prisoners." And then these Nazis would go and write all these slogans on people's houses like, "Death rather than be a slave". All of this kind of stuff during the night, and people would try to whitewash it. We were afraid the Americans would come and see that kind of stuff. We had no idea what Americans we like, we only knew what Hitler had told us, and that wasn't very pleasant. We expected them to come plundering and murdering, and I don't know what else. He tried to make the people afraid of them. People were willing to take their chances with the Americans because we knew what the Nazis were like, and we didn't like that a whole lot. We had this really crazy Nazi that came to town. By then all of the eligible men had already been taken by the army, even the young boys. what he was taking was old men, people that were very sick or had some kind of problem. He expected these people to fight against

the American tanks with no weapons. "Use you pitch forks," he would say. He was crazy.

Finally, the Americans came so close and this guy was driving everybody crazy. Three of the soldiers who had come from the war--one of them had lost a leg, one had lost a hand, and I don't remember what was wrong with the third--got in a row boat, tied a sheet on a post, rowed across the river in the middle of the night, and took their chances with the Americans. They told the Americans to get over there as soon as possible. They came in the night while my mother was doing something. She was always awake. She was looking out the window when she saw somebody standing on the corner. We lived in a corner house and she saw somebody standing on the opposite corner. She said, "Oh boy, the Americans are here." It wasn't very much longer until a bunch of Americans came to the door. The Germans had taught each other how to say, "I surrender" [in English]. We didn't know what it meant really, we just said, "I surrender," when the Americans came so they wouldn't shoot. This was something that wasn't official, it was just something that people had taught each other. It was just one word to us, "I surrender". When the Americans finally did come we were so excited and so curious, we didn't remember to say anything. They came to the door--there were maybe 13 or 15 of them--and they asked if we had any weapons or soldiers in the house. We said, "No." They searched the house and told us to go down to the basement. That was what we did. We went down in the cellar and nobody bothered us. These poor guys were so worn out. They had advanced so fast, their rations hadn't been able to follow them. These poor guys were so hungry that they searched through the whole house for food, but there wasn't anything in the house to eat. They found a bottle that we kept vinegar in--it was a brandy bottle--and I guess somebody must have taken a swig out of it and found out it was vinegar. We found it bashed up against the wall. The next day the rations did come and they shared them with us. They were very nice. They treated us very well. They didn't get rough or anything. They asked for souvenirs, so we let them have what there was. We weren't about to start fussing with them. I had a jewelry box in my room with some little things like rings and bracelets in it; nothing valuable. They took those things, but that was to be expected. They were really decent guys. I think they were so sick of the war and all the killing and bad stuff going on that they were just willing to go and have a peaceful night. After they moved out, we had to be in at six o'clock.

C: A curfew?

N: Curfew, right. We had to be put on curfew. The soldiers would go and pace back and forth. First of all, they were

good looking soldiers. I was 16 years old at the time, and I was very much interested in getting to know these soldiers. There was this one soldier who kept on marching in front of our house every day. They must have been there a couple of weeks and he was there every day. Finally, he started talking to me, but I didn't speak any English and he didn't speak any German. He introduced himself and he said his name was Red, but that didn't mean anything to me. He said, "Rouge." Rouge meant something to me that you put on your cheeks. Finally he took his helmet off, which they were not allowed to do, and he had this flaming red hair. Then I knew what red meant, why they called him Red. Afterwards, my mother told me that she expected me to take off with him. He was such a nice kid. He must have been about 17 or 18 at the time. It was interesting. We tried to talk to one another, but didn't know how to speak the language. But you do get across.

C: The message?

N: Yes. It was kind of neat. It wasn't very much longer that the war was over. We expected things to get back of normal, but they were far from normal. Food was still just as scarce. You couldn't buy anything with money. Nobody would sell you anything for money. People wanted something else in return. If they gave you something or sold you something, they wanted something in return, even if it was just a service. If your shoes were worn out, you would take them to the shoemaker. He would not patch your shoes unless you had something to give to him. At that time I was apprenticing myself to a seamstress that had got bombed in Hannau. She had moved in across the street and I couldn't go to school. I had finished that home economics school and I had finished that time with the farm and the family. Now I was supposed to go to a business college. That is what they intended me to do. Well, the business college was, of course, bombed out, so there was no place to go and nothing for me to do; no job or anything. When that seamstress came across the street it was like a heaven send. I apprenticed myself to her. She was thrilled to have me because I had gone to that home economics school. I was quite good at sewing. As a first year apprentice I hardly got any money.

I had lost so much weight, I was so skinny. My little brother was just skin and bones. My sister had developed some type of a skin condition, she would just break out all over the place. It was just malnutrition. My best girlfriend, the one that I had gone to school with all those years, was dying from tuberculosis. So, my mother said we had to do something. [She said], "Start working for the Americans. You seem to be so interested in them anyhow. Go out and start working for them." I said, "I don't think I want to work for the Americans because all the girls that work for them have bad

reputations." (They did it, you know) After awhile I said I had to do something. So, I applied for a job with the Americans. All of these people said, "I wouldn't work for the enemy." It got to where they had a big hall and that hall was so crowded you couldn't hardly get in. All of these people tried to get jobs with the Americans because they gave you free meals. We were still on very tight rations then. We got a ration card and we could only get so much. Fifty grams of fat a week is not a whole lot of fat; that's about half a stick of margarine. We were on very short rations, so I applied for a job. The funny part is that I got a job right away. My mother stood waiting outside. We had come down on bicycles, and she was waiting. I couldn't go and get work for her because I wasn't about to jeopardize this job that I was getting after so many people tried out for it. There might have been maybe 10 jobs and the hall was crowded. There might have been 150 people in that hall. It was really a big hall. They took another young girl, myself, and two women. One of the women fainted. She was really malnourished. They took her and the woman she came with as kitchen help, and they took me and this other girl as waitresses in the officers mess. We had to start working right there. They fed us well. They gave us anything we wanted. Can you imagine not having food for so long and then seeing all of this food? Well like a stupid, I ate the whole meal they gave me. I worked my shift and went home beaming. I was just so happy that I had a job that I was getting food. My mother could then use my ration to feed the rest of them. I got very sick after eating this food, after not having had decent food for so long. For three days I thought I was going to die. I couldn't go to work. I was worried that they were going to give my job to someone else. I felt so bad about that, but they let me keep my job. Little by little you got used to eating a little bit more. I got a little smarter and didn't eat so much. I guess I must have made a pig of myself the first time around. I worked at the officers club for about three months until they moved out. Then I started working different jobs, but most of the time for the American Army. I worked for the Army from August of 1945 until April or March of 1947. Then I started working for the German lady as a seamstress. By that time things were still not very good.

C: When did you dad come back?

N: My dad didn't come back until Easter Sunday of 1947. He was gone all of this time. I was so happy to see him. I was the one that opened the door for him. It was very early in the morning. The first thing that I thought when I saw him was, "My God." He was always such a giant man to me when I was growing up. I admired my dad so much. He was always so big to me. What I didn't realize was that I had grown up in between and he was only about my size--five foot seven, five

foot six. he was more my size than I had imagined, but I was very, very happy to see him. It was a very happy Easter. But there was a lot of adjustment to make, too. It was hard. He wasn't used to having a grown daughter, so there was a lot of friction. He didn't know how to take me. The fact that I worked for the Americans might have bothered him, too. After all, he was a German soldier. We didn't get along. I am not going to lie about that. We didn't get along at all. He had a hard time getting used to his new wife.

C: His new independent wife?

N: Yes, this independence he was not used to. He expected to find the same wife. I'm sure his head told him she couldn't be the same, but what our heads tell us and what our emotions do are not the same thing. Anyhow, there was a lot of friction between them. Of course, I would always have to defend my mother, and I would go jump right into them as soon as she would say one word. I was at that age, I guess, when you are a little bit more selfish.

C: Selfish?

N: Right. We got into it quite often. He expected us to work so hard. He always expected to work so hard himself and he expected the same from us. We had to get back on our feet and he had to go and build up his business. When he came back his tools were gone, that little bit of machinery he had was all gone. He was 48 years old and his business was gone. He had to start from scratch. My mother had just kept hoping that if only Franz would come back then we would have this and we would have that. He said first we had to save 10,000 marks. My mother said, "What?". He said, "If you want a business you have to have capital." He worked and he worked and he worked and he worked and so did we. I remember one day we had cut down the rye on a Saturday because we had an appointment threshing machine to go and get it threshed. There was only one threshing machine in the town and you had to make appointments. We had to cut that stuff down and do whatever had to be done to take it to the threshing machine. It was filthy work. It was August and very hot. In the neighboring town they were having their fair. They celebrated the dedication of the church. They had a fair with merry-go-rounds and all that kind of stuff. In the evenings they had dances. Everybody went to those dances. Well, I worked with that threshing machine all afternoon until about 6 o'clock in the evening. When we were done, we loaded it on that wagon, and we were supposed to go home and unload it. But I went home on my bicycle and took a quick bath. When my dad walked in the door he said, "Where's Elizabeth?" My mother said, "I don't know." He said, "Well, we have to unload this wagon." I said to myself, "I'm not unloading any wagon." I went out

the bathroom window and took off. He couldn't understand that a girl at 17 couldn't miss out on the biggest dance of the year.

So, we would fight. When I left [for America] we were still not on the best terms. He hardly ever wrote to me. But he wasn't mad, it was just that things were very different.

C: Because there was a gap in you lives?

N: Yes, right. It was not a good relationship. It was not very good. I left in December of 1948, right before my 20th birthday. I had gotten married and had a little baby girl right in the house where I was raised. When she was two months old my husband was shipped to America on a boat. I went on a plane. I remember when I said good-bye to my little brother. He acted like I was not really leaving. He was coming home from school for lunch. He didn't believe I was going. My sister, well, she was more interested in all of the stuff that I was leaving behind. She was keeping all the jewelry and everything. My mother really felt the worst about it because she and I had gotten really close when my dad was gone. It was a long time that he was gone and I was the oldest one. The other two were so much younger, so we had become more buddies than mother and daughter in our relationship. I had to learn to do so many things that normally my father would have done. My mother was never very good at facing up to people whenever we needed shoes for my little brother. My mother was such a proud person, she wouldn't go and tell them that she needed shoes for that little body. I had to be the one to do those things. I had to learn to do an awful lot of things. We became really close. I would confide in her. We had a really good relationship. When my dad came back, that relationship was somehow destroyed. It was out of kilter. Maybe I resented my dad for that, too. I think probably my dad resented me for that, too. It was only natural that we became so close. We were a team against him.

C: He didn't have a chance with you two.

N: That's right. I'm really glad that when I went back in 1960 I got to really know my dad. That is the only time that I could sit down and talk in the evenings. After he read his newspaper and did his paperwork, we would sit and talk about all sorts of things. He offered me a chance to come back. He said, "Don't you think you would like to come back? I could go and build you some apartment houses." By that time he had gotten his business together and had made quite a bit of money. Anyhow, he asked me if I wanted to come back. I said, "No, I don't think my husband would like that." I had three little children with me when I came to visit. He had never

met any of his grandchildren except my oldest daughter who was born over there. He got so attached to our youngest one. He was two years old then. He was so much like my dad that it's not even funny. If you look at childhood pictures of my dad and of this boy, you would think they were the same person. I had never seen my dad cry, but when we finally did leave he sure did cry that day. I said, "Don't worry. You promised me that you would retire in two years and you would come over to America and be with me. You buy the lot and I will take care of everything else." That was 1960. My mother had been very sick, that is the only reason I had gone back home, because she was sick. I never expected my dad to be the one to go. Two years later my dad had an accident. I didn't get a chance to see him again. So, I was really, really happy that we had had this chance to finally get close. I could tell he was proud of me. Before, he was ashamed of me.

- C: It must have been a really good feeling because sometimes so few people get a chance to [make their peace].
- N: Yes, I was just so grateful that we had this chance to get to know one another.
- C: Is your mother still alive?
- N: Yes.
- C: Isn't that something.
- N: I make sure that I visit her as often as I can. I go to see her about every three years.
- C: What was Christmas like when you were a kid?
- N: Our Christmases were lovely. They were our favorite time. I just loved Christmas. I was so shocked when my mother told me one time after I had grown up that she felt bad about Christmas, that we always had such poor Christmases. I told her, "What are you talking about poor Christmases? Christmases, were wonderful." She said when she would see how many toys the other children would have and how she never had the money to give us anything much, she felt bad. I said, "Did I ever feel bad? No, I never felt bad." We had our gift exchange on Christmas Eve, and we never saw the Christmas tree until then. We didn't have Santa Claus. The house would be all shined up and we would have an early supper on Christmas Eve. Usually we would take our baths and get cleaned up when I was a little girl. My mother had this little silver bell that she would ring and that was the signal. The living room had been closed off beforehand--we had the doors between all of the rooms and the living room didn't get used during the week. So anyhow, the living room doors were to be opened and

there was this beautiful Christmas tree with real candles lit. It was just a wonderful, wonderful sight. There weren't many toys, that's true. I would always have one toy every Christmas, one nice toy. I can remember one Christmas getting a beautiful baby doll with two nice dresses that one of my aunts had made. Another year I got a beautiful tea set and that was it. Another Christmas my dad made me such a beautiful doll cradle. It's still over there and it's still in tact, that's how well it was made. Another Christmas he made me a store, a grocery store. It was the most marvelous grocery store. It had a counter and it had one of those cabinets with all of these different drawers with all of these different things inside of it. You could buy these little packages with food and stuff.

In our house, we lived downstairs and the upstairs was usually my father's workshop. When they built a house, they built it for two families. It must have been on order to get a little extra income. When you went up the steps to get to the upstairs apartment, you could look onto the skylight from the hallway that was over the door in the hallway. If the kitchen door was left open, you could look through the skylight right into our kitchen. One Sunday afternoon in December I had been outside. I don't know why I was going up there, but sitting up there on the steps looking into the kitchen I could see my dad just working away, building that store for me. He didn't know I was sitting there watching him. It was nice to get anyhow, even if I knew my dad had made it. Sometimes in the winter my dad would take me up into the workshop and let me help him. He had a workshop next door with this little pot belly stove. I would watch him. I had a good time.

Christmases were wonderful. My grandparents would come over on Christmas and visit. My mother's mother lived in the same town, too. She had become widowed when I was about eight I think. I was about seven when my grandfather died, so she used to spend Christmas Eve with us. Then my grandparents would come, and my dad's mother invariably would bring me a piece of material for a school dress. One of my mother's girlfriends would make this dress. She was not an official seamstress, but she knew how to sew pretty well. So, she used to make this dress for me, and that was the gift from my grandmother. It was so nice. My birthday came right before Christmas, so on my birthday--December 19--she would fix me a plate with all of those fancy Christmas cookies before I would get up. She would put a big red Christmas candle and a few pine branches, and she would have that lit when she would wake me up in the morning. I just thought that was so nice. There weren't many gifts ever. There wasn't much money. Before the war we were so poor because of the Depression, then they built that house so we had to save to get that paid off. But everybody else was poor, too. It wasn't that we were poor

people in a wealthy atmosphere, we were all poor people together. Nobody had more than we did. So, I don't know why my mother felt that I didn't get as much. Maybe some people indulged their children a little bit more than I was, but I really never felt that I didn't have as much. I never felt I had more either. We had a nice new house. I had my own room, which was nice. Some of the girls that I paled around with didn't have that. I never worried about things like that. I was happy with what I had. It was always a wonderful Christmas.

When I was in the second grade, I got this great big Grimm's fairy tale book. I was just so thrilled, I took it to school. I was so proud when the teacher read us a fairy tale out of it. It was really a nice thing to have. Once I learned how to read I got a book every Christmas. We would usually go to midnight mass. Sometimes the instead of having midnight mass the church would have a mass at four o'clock in the morning. We had to get up at three thirty and our church was not heated. It would be so cold in there we would be shivering. We would get up early in the morning, then by the time we got home--it would last for hours--we didn't feel like going back to bed because there was so much excitement. Christmas was always a strenuous time, too. It was a wonderful time. I loved Christmas. I always loved Christmas. I just wish I had a little bit more time.

C: Do you recall any changes in the school as Hitler gained power?

N: Yes.

C: What were they? Do you remember?

N: Well like I said before, we were not allowed to have religion classes in school. Then for awhile we were allowed to have religion classes in school, but the religion was not on the regular report card. We didn't get report cards like they give report cards here. We had these little booklets and that was your whole school record. It went from first grade all the way through eighth grade if you stayed on through that school. If you wanted to go on to higher education you left after the fourth grade. But this little booklet would have all the subjects in there. We only got report cards twice a year, once in the middle of the year and once around Easter. We always changed school years around Easter time. The first of april was the time when everybody changed, even if you wanted to get a new job, that was when you would get a new job. So, these booklets would have religion listed right in there, too. At first we would have religion notes right in the booklet. Then after Hitler took power, he started easing it out slowly. We were allowed to have religious instructions

in school, but we were not allowed to have the notes. Then we had to go and start off the morning saying, "Heil, Hitler!" instead of our regular good morning. They started fussing about the school prayers. We were not supposed to have school prayers, but because our teachers were in a small town, they could get away with it. If they would have lived in a city, they probably wouldn't have been able to do those things. But we always said our prayers.

We had this one old school teacher who taught my mother and, would you believe, is still alive. My mother is 83 years old and was in her first grade she taught. The first year she taught seventh and eighth grade girls together. She was such a dedicated woman. [She was] very, very modest, very frugal, no frills about her, very strict. But she was a wonderful teacher. She was just a wonderful person. She saved all of her money. We used to think she was so stingy. Later we found out that she saved all her money to help these poor nieces of hers. She came from a large family from the mountains. She put her nieces through college. That is why she saved her money. She was just one of these people that would not let anybody influence her morals. She was a very moral person. She was very upset about some of our behavior. Sometimes she would really come down on us because of the silly way we would act.

C: You weren't taking your work seriously?

N: We were just not proper enough. We were worried about how we looked more than what was in ourselves. She hated when we fixed our hair. We were never allowed to wear makeup in those days. Decent people didn't wear makeup. If you wore makeup you were kind of suspected of. . . . Anyhow, we were supposed to wear aprons to school, but I said, "I'm not wearing an apron to school." When I got to be in the seventh grade I said, "I am not wearing an apron to school." She would always fight with me about this. We would go around and around. One time she talked to my mother about me. She said, "You know your daughter is very stubborn. She is always giving me such a hard time." My mother said, "Smack her." She was so surprised. She even told my mother that she never expected her to say that. She never smacked me. She really like me. I know she did. She was just upset because she thought I was turning into a scatter brain. She thought I was wasting the brains God had given me and not being serious enough about myself. But we got along.

C: Since you lived in a small town, did you have a radio that you could hear broadcasts of what was going on?

N: We didn't have radio until my dad bought our first one in the early 1940s. That was the first radio we had. We lived a

very frugal life, a very simple life. My grandfather was always into a lot of international politics. He would read all of these newspapers. He was always discussing these political things that were going on. My father's parents were very informed about things that were going on in the world. I remember going there and they would be talking about all these places that I had no idea of.

The changes came about pretty gradually. When we were 10 we were inducted into the Hitler Youth. This was just a matter of doing. You didn't go and apply for it, you had no choice in it. When you were 10 years old, you were of age and your name was put into the Hitler Youth. You were supposed to go and attend these meetings. In our case, the meetings consisted mostly of learning songs and playing games. They would teach us some things, but they were very subtle about some of the things like the messages in the songs. I think they were using subliminal messages because some of the songs were the same old songs we had sung before, but the words were changed. They were just different. You got the feeling that we are a new generation, we are the ones that are going to be carrying the responsibility and we're not going to let these old ones tell us this or that. This was one of Hitler's big ploys--to go and tell the young people that they knew better than the old ones. A young person doesn't have to be told something like that. You could be very easily wrapped up in this type of thing. We had a lot of sports in the Hitler Youth. They had bands where the kids learned to play music or march or attend different festivals and stuff like that. We would have sports meets.

C: Did you get involved in sports?

N: Yes, very much. I even got to be a leader of a sports group where I had to go to all of these different sports meets. We did folk dances, too, which was nice. I really like gymnastics an awful lot.

C: Didn't you call them tournaments?

N: Yes, tournaments.

C: This friend of ours was head of the tournaments in Cleveland. In fact, I think he was an Olympic judge for the tournaments in Germany.

N: Really, no kidding.

C: Anton Bindle.

N: Yes, that's interesting. Well, one of my uncles, all of my mother's family were very, very sports minded people. One of

my uncles was in the Olympic Games when they had them in Germany in 1936. He is still a wonderful athlete at the age of 75, he is in wonderful shape. I marvel at him every time I see him. The sports world was a big interest for me as was singing. We learned a lot of songs at the Hitler Youth camps. You were taught how to go and teach these songs to the children and how to teach them to march. They weren't heavy into indoctrinations. If there was any indoctrination it was very subtle. They knew how to get to you.

C: Did you have any change in you teachers?

N: Some of the teachers, there were only maybe two teachers that were changed in our school system. Most of the teachers stayed. There was one of them that was a Nazi. He was the only teacher that we had in the whole group that really was a Nazi. He was a person from our town. It's funny, when you live in a small town and people know you from the time you were little kid, it's a different ball game. You can't come across as some kind of person of authority all at once. People say, "Hey, we knew you when you still wet your pants." So, you had to kind of go easy on that, too. He didn't really have that much authority, either. He tried, but he didn't get too far. Most of the teachers were very traditional. They really were not into Nazi stuff. We had to say "Heil Hitler", but we only did it because we had to. There weren't really too many changes except that the Jewish kids couldn't go anymore. At the end there was no religion as part of school at all.

C: Did you learn much about the outside world or was it mostly your history and geography of Germany?

N: Oh no. Our geography was of the whole world, but history was mostly Germany. Of course, any time you learn history it's slanted. Not matter what country you are in, it's slanted. So we were always the good guys and the other ones did us in. Prussia was a wonderful institution, it was a wonderful way of living. Frederick the Great was wonderful guy because he was one of Hitler's big heroes. Naturally we all loved Frederick the Great, we all loved Bismark, we all loved whoever we were told to love. That's the way it works until a child has a change and develops a sense of judgement. I think you have to be a little bit removed from the whole thing. I think you would have a much better perspective when you get away from it. You see how other people live and how they feel, then you say, "Well, it's not so bad."

C: That is very hard to get across to boys and girls, that this is how you feel but these people feel the same way. This is very, very hard. Just because they come from a different country, they still cry and they have pain and they live.

N: Another thing I feel that is hard for some people to understand is that you can have a hard time in a country, that you can have a very poor life in a country, but you still love the country because it is your home. That is where you grew up, that is where your roots are. I hear so many German people say, "Why don't these people from East Germany come over to the West?" It's their home. Yes, they have it rough, they have far fewer material things than the people in the West have, but it's their home. If your parents and grandparents lived there, all of your roots are there, you don't give all that up. To go some place where you are going to have to prove yourself again and have to start out from scratch again. Take my word for it, it's not easy to start in a new country where no one know you.

C: It has to be very difficult.

N: Especially when you come from a small town where your family is very, very respected, where you have a lot of support, and you are somebody. Then you come someplace and you are a nobody. You are only as good as what you prove yourself to be. If you get a chance to prove yourself, that's another question. Sometimes people are against you merely because you are from another country.

C: Or if you are a stranger or new in a town.

N: Some of my former neighbors wouldn't talk to me because I was German. This one Jewish lady lived next door to my sister-in-law and she would absolutely have nothing to do with me because I was German. Two little boys used to come to my house and play with our children. They were nice little boys and they loved playing at our house until the mother found out that we were German. Then those boys were not allowed to play with ours anymore. So, those are the things that you encounter, and I understand, I can respect people's feelings for that. If you had lost someone in the war or if you have family that has been hurt by the Germans, you would feel that way, it's understandable. But, of course, that had nothing to do with me.,

C: No.

N: But I guess that's common guilt. It's just hard to take sometimes.

C: [They say] don't confuse me with the facts, I have already made up my mind.

N: Yes, that's about it.

C: Your life has been interesting. How did you happen to land in

Warren, Ohio?

N: We came to Pennsylvania to meet my husband's family. He came from a family of 12 children. One of his brothers was killed right before the war was over. His mother was not happy about my husband marrying a German. She made that fact known. I knew that she felt that way. I had to come over here before he did, and I had to face this family by myself with a little baby. I was scared.

C: That's tough.

N: I was just so scared. I got there and I will never forget it. It was almost midnight by the time I got there. It was right before Christmas 1948. I got to the house and the whole thing was lit up. At that time in Germany we were still electricity rations. Everything was so dim and dreary. Oh, that's depressing when you don't have enough lights all the time. Her house was all aglow with lights. It was before Christmas and it was all trimmed up. The whole family was assembled. She had a big meal at midnight. She had a baby crib ready. She had things for the baby already. It was like coming home. She saw me standing in the door. I was so tired and so scared. I had been on the road for whole week with this little baby, not knowing where I was going or what I was doing, and not being able to speak the language that well. It was so wonderful to have this woman come up to me, give me a hug, and say, "Welcome, Elizabeth." I will never forget it. She was just wonderful. Sometimes afterwards we didn't see eye to eye on raising children, but I will never ever forget how she was when I first came.

We lived with her for nine months, then we got a place of our own. In 1962 when my dad died, my mother asked me to come back. She said, "Why don't you come back over." My brother had just gotten out of college, and there were about 25 guys working for my dad when he died. She was afraid my brother couldn't handle the business by himself. My husband had not been working very well at that time. He was working for the coal mines as a heavy equipment operator and work was very poor. So, he agreed for us to go. Here we went with seven children. We moved back to Germany and stayed for nine months until my husband said, "This isn't going to work. I have no authority here." Supposedly my mother deeded the house to me as part of the inheritance when my dad died. Anyhow, he [my husband] couldn't hack it anymore. It was just getting to the point where he was getting more frustrated all of the time. I really don't think my brother liked the idea too much either. It made him feel like nobody had confidence in him. He had to prove himself. That's understandable.

So, my husband decided he wanted to move back. I didn't want

to move back. Oh, I cried and I begged him to please give it another chance, but his mind was made up he was going to go. He came back here by himself first and found a job. I told him, "I'll go back to the States with you, but I will not go back to Pennsylvania because we've had nothing but poor times there." He had a brother in Warren who always did very well. I said, "Why don't you try Warren? Your brother lives there, surely he will put you up." We got in contact with him and he said, "Sure, you can stay with me." So, he came over here and a couple of days later he got a job at Copperweld. As soon as he got a job he wired me, "Come over, I got a job and Warren is a very nice little city. You will like it. It is almost as nice as nice as Germany." Well, I took it with a grain of salt. Anyhow, we came over with six kids, my oldest one decided she wasn't coming back. She liked it in Germany. She was finally getting some nice friends together and she was going to a very good school. She really liked the school she was going to. She said, "Mom, please don't make me come back." I hated to leave her there, but on the other hand I hated to leave my mother alone. It seemed like a good solution. She said, "After I get out of school, then I will come home if you want me to." That is what I did. We came to Warren and rented a house. We found a nice lady that was willing to rent a house to a family with six kids. He worked at Copperweld and then he got laid off. While he was laid off I got pregnant. Then we had our little Mary Beth, but before she was born he got hired at American Welding. Of course, the burden of the hospital bill and everything was on us. He has been working for American Welding ever since. It has been a good job. He has been laid off several times in between, but most of the time it has been good. We bought a house. The day Mary Beth was born we signed the final papers. I signed the final papers when I was in the hospital. We have lived in that house for 19 years and then we bought this house a couple of years ago.

C: It's a lovely home. You've done nicely here, too.

N: Yes, it's home. America's home now. When I came over there [Germany] I remember more the part of me that seems to be American than I do when I am here. It's funny, maybe it's one of these things like the grass being greener on the other side of the fence.

C: It depends on where you are.

N: Yes, but I like it over there and I really like it here. It's a good country to live in. It has its faults just like Germany has its faults, but in this world you are not going to go and find the perfect place.

C: Well, I think you have found the place that is as close to

Germany. I mean, with regard to language.

N: Oh yes.

C: The seasons.

N: Definitely. Yes, the climate is pretty similar, too. It gets a little hotter here than it does in Germany, but basically it's about the same. I don't think I would want to live in a part of the country that has no snow.

C: Me either. I love it here.

N: Christmas has to be cold, it has to have some snow.

C: Well, I thank you very much.

N: You're welcome.