

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Germany during World War II

Personal Experience

O.H. 881

INGRID M FLUEGGE

Interviewed

by

Elizabeth C Clark

on

December 12, 1986

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Germany during World War II Project

INTERVIEWEE: INGRID M. FLUEGGE
INTERVIEWER: Elizabeth C Clark
SUBJECT: Germany during World War II
DATE: December 12, 1986

C: This is an interview with Ingrid Fluegge for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Germany during World War II Project, by Elizabeth Clark, on December 12, 1986.

When were you born?

F: December 4, 1927.

C: Where?

F: In Brandenburg on the Havel [River].

C: Where is that? What would we know that is near it?

F: It's close to Berlin. About 50 kilometers from Berlin.

C: Is it East or West or South?

F: East.

C: East of Berlin?

- F: It's East Germany I grew up there. When I was 17 my mother died and I had to go to Reichs Arbeitstiens. That is how he [Hitler] got the youth off the streets. They had to go there. The boys had to shovel ditches and clean streets and build streets and stuff like that at that time The girls had to go--I went to a farm We lived in a camp. We had uniforms. Then we went from the camp to the farms to work. We helped the farmers because everybody was in the war, there were no people We had to go and help and do the stuff, such as milking the cows. I think it was pretty good because we learned a lot
- C: You also probably had plenty of food.
- F: Oh yes, we ate. During the war, we all ate. Even those in town [ate]. It was a garden restaurant, you could take walks in the afternoon and then there was a restaurant. You could go there and have coffee and cake and sit there. The kids play--there is a little playground for the kids [with] a swing and a teeter-totter and stuff like that. Then I was at that age where I didn't want to be there because my friends all went out on Sundays and I had to help
- C: You had to work at the restaurant.
- F: Yes, then my mother said, "You can go out tomorrow and they have to go to work." I said, "I don't like it when I am all alone." Mostly I went to Berlin to see my grandmother and her friends.
- C: What was it like growing up in the town? What was your family like? And what was your home like and school?
- F: Well, for a while I had to go to school in town For four years we had to walk an hour. Maybe not quite an hour, but we had to walk really far. For kids that was far Later on they built a brand new school. When I looked out my window, I could see the clock on the school. I used to have to cross the street. That is why I was always late We had a brand new school. We had in that school everything and anything you can think of. Kitchens and the boys had their home for everything to do in. It was a really modern school at that time.
- C: What year are we talking about, 1930 what?
- F: It was just about when the war broke out, 1939. The war broke out September 1, and I had . . . I can remember when the war broke out, my mother went to the store and bought soap and all the war pieces that she could have in the house and could store. At that time. . . .

- C: She figured it was going to be short?
- F: No, but in case it takes longer, then you have something. Like you would hear there was a shortage of coffee, then everybody runs to buy coffee. We used to have it. So at that time the war broke out, everybody went to the store and bought. Well, I remember that because my grandmother, my mother's mother, was living with us at that time, and I don't think she liked girls. She liked my brother, my brother could do no wrong. He was four years older than I am. He came up and asked if he could have some pudding. My grandmother said, "Yes." My mother got mad. She said, "Why didn't you get the little one some, too?" That was me. There was the big one and the little one. So my grandmother said, "She can wait until he is done eating, then she can take that plate." She said, "No. If he gets a clean plate, then she gets a clean plate. We don't do stuff like that around here." My grandmother grabbed a piece of soap and tried to throw it at my mother. My mother said, "Wait a minute. No more! My kids are 14 and 10 years old and you are going to hit me with soap? No." Then she put it down. That is what I remember.
- C: What was your school like? When you first went to school, what was it like? What were the teachers like? What did you learn?
- F: The first four years we learned . . . I don't think . . . We had one teacher for the school. In front of our school was a big--what do you call it? You know, like Lincoln sits there in Washington.
- C: A museum?
- F: No, the statues. There was a statue, the "Gross Wilhelm." And we were taking a walk from school and the teacher said to us, "Now look at him. What do you think he thinks now?" We all looked at each other, we were in third grade or something. We didn't know. Well, he makes one step forward then he fell down.
- Later on in the new school we had a teacher that was in the party and they were kind of--but still they didn't enforce it. Every morning we had to go when they pulled the flag up and stand around there and sing and stuff. Some teachers were pretty good.
- C: Did you notice, did you remember that they had teachers and then got rid of them and then they brought in the Nazi teachers? Do you know anything about that?
- F: No.

C: You didn't experience it at all?

F: No, not at all.

C: Did you belong to the youth movement when it started?

F: No, I didn't. I did for a little while but then I lost all interest in it. It wasn't for me. I didn't go into it. At that time, they didn't enforce it yet. I think later on they did, but I'm not sure.

C: Maybe with the younger ones

F: Yes. Well, that could be but I don't remember that. They never came and said I had to pay a fine one time because I was a I worked in a

When the alarm came and I wouldn't go to bed. . . . Everybody went in the basement and I was sleeping. I even got hit by my mother on my birthday for that. Because I gave her a snotty answer. She came and woke me up. But then it was bad around Berlin. You could see all the bombs. They looked like Christmas trees when they came down. My mother would knock on the door and say, "Get up!" I said, "Yes." Then she left. Then she came back and I was still sleeping. That time she came in my room and said, "Get up and get in the basement!" I don't know what I said, but anyway, I gave her a snotty answer and she

C: Spanked you.

F: Yes. So I had to pay three marks because I wasn't in that basement. That's why I think she got mad because they came checking and I wasn't there. That's the only reason I could think of.

C: She got fined because you weren't in the basement?

F: Yes.

C: Did you have any damage around you?

F: No, Brandenburg never got much and I never experienced it either. I went out of town, I came from Poznan once. We went there with a friend. That is in Poland. We went there and we left and the bombs hit. I went to Wilhelmshaven. My brother was there; he was in the navy. Shortly before we came there, the bombs fell. I never experienced it. I always missed it. I was in Berlin at one time, and they sounded the alarm. They came and knocked and told me to go to the basement.

and I thought, "No, you are not getting me into the basement I'm not going." And I didn't go. I stayed up there but then it was over, too. So I didn't have to go. . . .

C: Were you afraid of going there and having something happen in the basement?

F: I don't know.

C: Did you have claustrophobia?

F: No, I don't. You know how young people are. [When you are young] you think nothing is going to happen to you. Well, I was lucky that day.

C: Did you remember your parents talking about the Depression at all and the tough time they had during the 1920s and 1930s?

F: Well, not very much because I just know that my grandparents, my mother's parents, they had a restaurant and I guess they lost everything at that time. My grandfather had a heart attack. He died. But that was before I was born. My brother was born already, but not I. So I really don't know.

C: As Germany started getting stronger and stronger in the early 1930s, were you aware of any changes?

F: No, not really.

C: The times were getting better and things were. . . .

F: Well, everybody had everything. You could buy anything you wanted to. At that time, the parents didn't talk much in front of the kids. No matter what it was, they didn't talk much. It is when you got a little bit older, then you might hear a little bit. I heard at that time that my mother's cousin in Berlin, he wanted to marry a half Jew. They weren't allowed to do it. So they both took their lives and turned the gas on. My mother's aunt had a little grocery store at that time, and they had to throw everything out because everything was poisoned with gas. But I can't tell you when it was or anything because I just heard them talking. At that time, the kids left the room so the grownups could talk.

C: Did you have any contact with any of the people who were put in concentration camps that weren't Jews?

F: Well, my father worked in the Stahlwerke. I don't know, he was. . . I didn't know how to translate that, but he worked in the Stahlwerke.

C: And what was that?

F: The steel fabricating plant There was a real big one Over there you got the apartments. From the steel factory they built big apartment houses and all the workers lived in them. Every week they took so much out for rent. They really didn't notice that they had to pay the rent every month At first you had to pay 30 dollars rent. They took it out every week from your pay a little bit at a time. So it wasn't that bad. Well, there were four families in that house and the oldest daughter from the one family--they had four girls, maybe five. The one that was born in Slave, she wasn't pretty, but there was something attractive about her. They came from far East Germany and the men went like flies to her. So I guess she was invited with all the officers and everything and she didn't like the one, or what I'm not sure. There again I just can say what I heard, as a teenager. Her oldest boy came there to visit the grandparents My mother said, "Well, she probably couldn't shut her mouth " And I still didn't think anything of it I heard after the war that she did tell dirty jokes about Hitler. Not dirty, but she said that if a Berliner is going to bake a cake, it must be brown like Hitler. And he turned her in And for that she went to a concentration camp. I think she was in there for two years. But I found that out after the war because her youngest sister and I--she was four or five years older than I am--were friends. They lived in Berlin, [and] a lot of times I went to Berlin. But that is the only person I know.

C: Did you know any Jewish people who disappeared?

F: Not disappeared. I know they came, a little guy came to our house all the time. He came to our house and he was heavy set. And when he walked out, he was kind of thinner

And then, I always got a new dress. He sold my mother material for a dress or skirt or stuff like that I walked down the street in town and here that little guy came, and I wanted to go towards him and he went. . . .

C: He shook his head no

F: Yes. Then, I saw the big Jew star on his. . . That is when I found out that he was a Jew. Then I came home and asked my mom why she didn't tell me I wanted to go up to him and he shook his head not to come. I guess he had to say it for me. I don't know

C: He was afraid he would get you in trouble

F: Probably. That is the only thing I know.

C: What did you do during the war? Did you work at something?

F: No, I was home. My mom had cancer then. My [mom] died in 1944. My mom died in October, and November the 7th, I had to go to the work force. They drafted me.

C: What did you do?

F: I had to go to camp. I used to know where the town was where the camp was. It was behind the Oder, Frankfurt Oder

C: I found yesterday that there are two Frankfurts on the Oder River.

F: Yes, but that is on the East Side. So I used to know that it was behind there someplace. I was there a half a year and then the girls from the camp from the Eastern part, they all came. The Russians came and, they came in front of them. So they came into our camp. . . We had to leave our camp, and I had to go then to the factory. We made little airplane parts. There was a camp and we had to stay there. Then the Russians were all around us. We asked them if they would let us go home and they said, "No." You can go with the Russians standing in front of the door. We said then that is too late. We couldn't go home. They wouldn't let us go home. So the next day we had cream of wheat--they made cream of wheat to eat. That is what we got to eat. They filled big canning jars full. From our camp--she always went at a certain time--there was a little hill, and there was another camp. She always went there. So we packed our suitcases and we had the jars with the cream of wheat, and then we took off. When we took off we saw a car, and we jumped in the ditch. Then we went right to the train station because we were afraid that they would come after us and lock us up. So we got in the train, and it was full of soldiers. The one soldier said, "Girls, do you have something to eat? We will trade you whiskey for something to eat." We said, "You can have the cream of wheat, but we don't want the whiskey." Well, then we gave them the cream of wheat. . . .

C: Was it cooked?

F: Yes, it was cooked. It was in milk, cooked, like a pudding. And we gave it to the soldiers and ate with them. There were two of them. One lived in the town where my grandparents lived. My father was drafted in March, 1945, and in May, 1945, the war was over. He never came back. So I lost my parents in a half of a year. My mother in October of 1944 and my father in 1945.

C: How about your brother?

F: My brother was in Russia then and he came back in 1949. I did run away from East to West already, and I didn't see my brother then because he wasn't back

C: Was he a prisoner or something?

F: Yes, he was in Russia.

C: In a Russian prison?

F: Yes. Then he came home and he had TB. He had a fight. I don't know what he did, but he had a fight with the East German police or soldiers or Russians or whatever. So he ran away from my home town to Berlin and got into West Berlin. Then they flew him from West Berlin to West Germany.

C: Who flew him?

F: The government

C: Is he living now?

F: No, he died They took one lung out because he had a lung disease when he came out of Russia and in East Germany he couldn't get any help. I have friends in East Germany they wrote to me and asked if I could send them some medicine . . . was married at that time. Then I went to the drugstore and got the medicine, and I sent it over. That girl is still alive today. I saw her six years ago I went over there after 25 years. I went home for the first time.

C: I bet that was exciting.

F: Yes. I have three aunts living and some cousins. But there too, I stayed with my cousin. Her son is a guard at a jail He was not allowed to say hello to me. He could come and say hello, but that is all.

C: Now, this is in East Germany?

F: East Germany I have a cousin who is a little bit higher in a factory He didn't say that I was there, but my cousin's husband worked there, too, and he told them, "I want three days off My cousin is coming from America and I want three days off " So we went to her mother's and she lived with her sister, my cousin Anna's mother. He said, "Did you tell them that she is here?" And he said, "No. I don't want to make any trouble for them." She said, "Well, I want you to get him and have dinner at my house, and then Klaus can come to my house " Now he came, but I never met his wife. His wife didn't come.

C: Was she afraid?

F: I don't know why. I didn't ask. Then my cousin said that it was Saturday morning and she was going to go shopping. I got up at 8 o'clock, [because] I wanted to go shopping with her. She said, "You have to get up a little bit earlier here."

C: Are they satisfied living under these conditions?

F: Well, they are used to it.

C: They are used to it by now.

F: They are used to it. Her husband told me then, he said, "Ingrid, when you were at our wedding, why didn't you tell us to come over there?" I said, "No." When they got married, we went there and they had the wedding in a restaurant. The restaurant once belonged to my grandparents, my mother's parents. So it is a little farmer's village and everybody knows everybody, and they know me from growing up there. My father's parents lived in that town, too. So, I went in the front and they said, "Where is your brother?" They knew that my brother ran away. I said, "Well, I don't know where he is." At that time, I don't think I knew. She said, "What you see here, we built that with our own hands." They built everything with their hands. I said, "What do you think we do over there? Hold our feet in the air?" The guy who owned the restaurant, he told my cousin to get her out of there. "I don't want her in here, shut her off. She is going to open her mouth a little bit too much and then that is it." So he took me out of that room because he thought we were going to start a fight.

C: Did they ask about what your life was like here in the United States?

F: Well, my aunt and my cousins did, but everybody else really didn't.

C: They didn't really want to know?

F: Well, they wanted to know, but.

C: It doesn't help.

F: No, it doesn't help. You can't buy or take anything out of there. You are not allowed. If anybody wanted to buy a souvenir, you couldn't. They have a store in East Germany you can go in and buy as long as you have West German money. In those stores you can buy everything and anything you can think of.

C: If you have West German money?

F: Yes, if you have West German money. Let's say if somebody sent them money--for example, around Christmas time I always send a card and put five dollars in it. You have to go there to the bank and change it. Then we get play money, monopoly money, something like that they get from the bank, and then they can go in that store and buy. With the East mark you can't go in that store. You wouldn't get anything. So my cousin said, "Let's go in there." I said, "Okay " We went in there and I bought coffee and tea and stuff like that. For my cousin's daughter who was two or two and a half years old, I bought gum. They love gum We have here the little animals, the little farm things that you buy for a dollar [and] you get a whole bag full These kids played with them for hours. The little black horse was his Fury. Because they would see the television from West Germany and they brought at that time Fury and all of those shows. And they could be watched there That little horse was his Fury. For a long time I promised Michael that I would send him a bigger one I didn't know how to get it over, because if I send it they have to pay toll on it They would have to pay more [for] it then what I paid for it. So, my girlfriend went home to Munich and I said, "Would you do me a favor? I packed a package. Would you send it from West to East?" She said, "Sure." So I bought that horse and I put it in there, and I thought, "What else can I put in there?" I put lots of little match box cars and I went to the store and bought them gum and candy and suckers and threw it all in. It was on the weekend and I had tea and threw that in. In plastic bags and stuff like that, I put it all in there. So they got it alright. And she said she was really happy. That is the only grandson she has and she has three granddaughters, and they didn't get anything Well, the candy she split up between them, but the boy got the horse and the cars.

C: What was your life like growing up under Hitler? Can you think of some things, some incidences of what your parents talked about? Since you were pretty close to Berlin, you would be more aware of things than if you were on the farm

F: Well, I don't think so. We knew the war was on. Well, one thing is that I lived close to a big jailhouse A big jail. One was a . . . and the other was the . . . tower where they . . .

C: Executed

F: Yes, there was an electric chair there. I really can't say that there were all Jews in there. There was a train going and they would throw some papers out. When we would go we would have to wait and let the train pass, and sometimes they

threw their glasses out. If we could find them we would send them. A lot of times we didn't know who came out of there, if they were Jews or. . . .

C: Political prisoners?

F: Yes. Political or really bad people. We never knew. The electric chair that I know about because the guy who brought them to the crematory--they were cremated--he had little boxes on his horse and buggy on the back. He would stop and say that he would give me a deal. They are dead and he didn't want anymore. I told my mother, I said, "He tells pretty dumb jokes." She said, "Why, what did he say?" So I told her what he said. She told me that they were coffins and that they got electrocuted, the electric chair.

C: When the war was coming, did you realize the war was coming and did you have a problem with food?

F: No.

C: You never were hungry?

F: Not during the war or before the war. After the war I was, because you didn't get anything. In 1948, I was in industry already. Before that, I grew up to be a farmer.

C: Were you afraid of the Russians coming and taking over your part of the country?

F: No, I don't know if I was afraid of them. I know some of them were pretty bad. I had to work for them. Down from my grandparents there was a big airplane factory. In town there was a big airport, not the airport for the planes, but where they would try them out. They made the water planes, too, because behind it was water. My home town was like an island, probably because of the canal they built. Where we had to walk there were big holes, and we had to shuffle through them, too. There comes a Russian girl with my clothes on. Boy, was I mad. I wanted to jump off that. . . . My aunt grabbed me and held me and said, "Let it go." I think I would have jumped up and beat that girl up.

C: How did she get your clothes?

F: They stole them. My grandparents had to get out of the house, too, at one time, and the Russians took all of the furniture. They took over everything.

C: What were the Russian girls doing there if the Army came in?

F: They came in. It was the Army.

- C: It was the Russian people that came?
- F: Yes, afterwards the people did. The wives came. You should have seen them. They came in a babushka, long dresses, and big boots and long coats. I don't know how to explain them, like old fashioned. That's how they came in. They didn't have anything No handbags, nothing They just had a babushka tied together. That's how they came in. They were there for three days, and they had the best clothes you can think of.
- C: They stole everything?
- F: Yes. and we had to stand there and look at them So I was mad. I wanted to jump on that wagon. And my aunt said, "No." So then, we had to work in the kitchen for the Russians. Well, my two aunts . we all worked in the kitchen. Now, I have to say the Russians that came were pretty good, they gave us what they had left over. We could take it home.
- C: Did they bring their food with them, or did they use your food?
- F: No, I think they used our food. My cousin was born in October. My mother died the 22nd and his birthday was the 18th. So he wasn't very old He was a baby. We didn't have any milk or anything for him So whatever we could get, we took from them.

There was one Russian. He was a Mongolian He came to me and he said for me to teach him German. I told him he should say, "I am a dummy." [in German] My aunts they said, "Shut up, shut up." I wouldn't listen. So he asked a translator and the next day he came in with them. I thought, "Oh my God, what are you going to do now?" So he took me and led me around the building down a room with ceramic tile. There were two big cans of milk, cream rather. So he took a spoonful and drank it Then he took a cup and filled it up and gave it to me and told me to drink it, and then wash all the walls up because they killed pigs and stuff in there. It was all bloody. Then he said he was going to lock the door. He locked it because if there was a soldier up there who saw me, he can do nothing. So he left then, [and] I put the milk there I didn't drink it He came back and opened the door and asked why I didn't drink the milk. I said, "I would like to take it home for the baby." He said, "You have a baby?" I said, "No, but my aunt does." He said, "Drink it!" I had to drink it and it was all cream. Then later on he came and brought me bottles with milk and said they were for the baby. Then my aunt said, "Where were you?" I said, "I had to scrub the walls up down there where they kill the pigs and stuff."

C: So you got the milk for the baby

F: Yes, I got milk for the baby. Then he got it everyday

C: Did he see that you got it everyday?

F: Yes.

C: For heaven sakes. Well, that was nice.

F: Well, every place there are good and bad people. I thought, really, I didn't know what he was going to do with me. Because I did that, I wouldn't listen. But that's how it was.

C: Did you have any other experiences? That is certainly interesting Did you ever see him again?

F: No. One morning we came to work and they were gone. Nobody was there

C: They moved on to someplace else?

F: Yes. We don't know where they went. The only thing we did, the rest of what was there that they left, flour and stuff like that, we took home

C: Once they left your town, were you back on your own? Did you have to worry?

F: Well, it was a little town. Brandenburg was a military town There were big camps. You had everything in there. You had the Air Force. You had the. . . . Everything was in that little town. There they stay today. They still are all there. I don't think they are the same people, but they are still there. Now you can't go in that section anymore.

C: It's all military

F: Yes, all military.

C: What was it like when you were a child growing up? Your Christmas? What do you remember?

F: Our Christmases were nice. Tomorrow is the fifth, we have St Nicholas Day All the kids are going to polish their shoes and put them on the window, and then St. Nicholas comes overnight and puts cookies and chocolate and chocolate Santa Clauses in the shoes. If you weren't good you got potato peels or coal or whatever, you got something bad in there. It all depends on how good you were. Then we had advent. Every Sunday my mother baked all of the cookies. They were always gone We found them. Christmas Eve my father's family all

came to our house. There was my brother and my cousin. He was the oldest. Then we had to wait, but they all came. Like Karl said, we looked through the key hole. We didn't see a Christmas tree or presents. We snooped around, sure. I always did. Then my mother played piano and my grandparents came and then all of the grownups were allowed in. They would sit down and my mother would start playing Christmas songs on the piano. We sang and then we had to say our verse. We had to learn poems, Christmas poems. My brother was the oldest, so he had the year before. I had the next year. And then it went down to my cousin. He had the hardest one to learn, but he always helped us. Then we would go and gather our Christmas presents and stuff.

C: What kind of presents did you get?

F: Well, I got a baby doll that looked like a real baby with a big cradle. Two years ago, he had to make my granddaughter a cradle because I remember the cradle I had. Then I got a full cowl, the long one, and a muff. We got pretty much.

c: You got a lot.

F: Yes.

C: Your parents must have been pretty well off.

F: Well, my father was working. My mother was working and then later on we had the restaurant.

C: They must have done pretty well with the restaurant.

F: It was more or less in the summertime. Like I said, people go out and walk. Over there, you can walk in the woods, which here you can't. But there you can go out and take walks and then there's a restaurant to go and sit [in].

C: That sounds wonderful.

F: Yes. Well, [wonderful] for those who could go out there and sit, not when you had to work there.

C: When you realized the war was coming to an end, how did you feel or what effect did that have on you?

F: Then I was in the camp, and we went away. We went home and then to my grandparent's because my mom was dead and my father was gone. I didn't know that he was dead at that time. My brother was gone. So I had to go to my grandparents. Well, we had to have the ration cards. He told me to go and register, which I was afraid to go because I was afraid to go close to the police station. I thought that they reported

that I ran away from there and they were going to put me in jail. So that is why I was so afraid. Then they fought and they fought and they fought. So finally one day, I started walking and that day I had to walk about an hour and a half to town. Like I said, there was the airport, the factory where they make the airplanes and stuff, and on the other side was the water. There was a house and there came the Russians. I was walking and the Russians started shooting. All of a sudden I was in a ditch. There was a soldier in the ditch and he grabbed my foot and pulled me down. He said, "What is the matter with you? Are you dumb?" I said, "No." I said, "I have to go to the police and I am scared they are going to put me in jail." I might as well be dead. He said, "Nobody would put you in jail anymore. The Russians are not too far. Everything is over. You go and I will go with you." So he went with me, but I never got the ration cards anymore because the Russians moved in.

- C: Then what did you do about getting food at that time? You didn't need the ration cards or what?
- F: No, we didn't get any. We just got what we could get. You ate what you could get. Sometimes I went in the garden and stole some tomatoes and stuff like that.
- C: What kind of training did you have after you went to school?
- F: I didn't have any training at all, because I stayed at home. My mother had cancer at that time, and she needed me at home.
- C: Did you go to school up to the eighth grade?
- F: Yes.
- C: But you didn't specialize in anything?
- F: No. I didn't specialize in anything, because I stayed home.
- C: Then after the war, did you do anything special?
- F: No. Well, I ran away from East Germany. I had to go to a farm, and I didn't have any choice because they wouldn't let you come into town. When I got to town I had to do housework. Then I worked for two girls. One was upstairs and one was downstairs. They had a jewelry store. That is where I met Karl. Then I went to the factory to work. I was pregnant so I couldn't do piece work anymore. They had to pay you from what you did before. They had to give you the same wages; they couldn't put you down because you couldn't work anymore.

Over there when you were pregnant they had to let you go five minutes before everybody else went home. At quitting time, a pregnant woman was allowed to go five minutes before everybody so they couldn't push or shove you.

Well, one thing was that anybody who wants to go to a doctor has to tell him before 8 o'clock, or he wouldn't give them the slip of paper that they can go. Well, I didn't know before 8 o'clock that I didn't feel good. I was mad because I rode my bike to work and my back light wasn't working, and I had to pay two marks fine. I was mad. I was sitting on it and the more I sat, the madder I got. So when the manager came, I said, "I want a pass. I want to go to the doctor." He looked at his watch and he said, "It's after 8:00. You can't go anymore." I said, "I want to go to the doctor, I don't feel good." He said, "No. You can't go." So the president of the Union was working behind me and I turned around and I called him. He said, "Okay. I will see what I can do." Well, he didn't come back for a while. Then he passed by and he said, "I forgot." I said, "Come here." Then he came and he said, "I can't go to the doctor and I don't feel good." After that, I got more mad, because he did that. So he said, "You give her a pass that she can go to the doctor with right now." Then, he brought me my pass and I went to the doctor. See, they had to pay. When you went to the doctor, they paid for the hours you spent at the doctor's. When you came back from the doctor's, they paid you overtime for the rest of the day. I went to the doctor's and I said, "I can't sit. I can't lay. I can't do anything anymore." He said, "The baby is going to come on January 4." He wrote my papers out and I went back to the factory and handed them the papers. They all looked at me and I grabbed my stuff and went home. But they had to pay me for the whole day.

C: So you were through working, then?

F: Yes. Six weeks before and six weeks after. but if you breast fed the baby, then you could stay at home eight weeks, and they would pay. Then after that they had to give you an hour for lunch and they had to pay you for the whole hour. Otherwise, you just got half an hour. But then, I went home to feed the baby. I got an hour and the company had to pay me for the hour. The hospitalization paid you a mark a day for breast feeding the baby. So you got 30 marks in a month. For a half a year, I breast fed.

C: When Karl came and made arrangements to come to this country, where did you live when you came to this country?

F: In his hometown with his parents. [We lived] on Draper Street in Warren. I didn't want to come.

C: It must have been awfully hard to leave your family.

F: Well, I didn't have anymore family That's it. I didn't have any family, but I was thinking of his parents. I said something, [and] he and his sister got mad at me. They said, "You don't care about my parents." But later on, who had to run home and who had to do everything? It was me Not them two. I had to run. I don't think that was fair Now, she still likes to push everything on me. She is the daughter She should take care of her mother.

C: Can you think of any other stories or anything?

F: What kinds of stories?

C: Anything that you. . . .

F: You know Mr. Coffee?

C: Yes.

F: Well, they talked about the coffee machine. I asked my cousin where is the coffee machine? We went in that store [where] we could buy everything. She said, "Oh, it isn't here " I said, "Where is it?" She said, "It's in Anna's store." In there you could buy jeans and sweaters, but you had to have the West mark. I could pay them in dollars, but they couldn't exchange it. They wouldn't know how much. So they wanted the West mark. Well, I didn't have the West mark So I went in and I said, "I want that Mr. Coffee up there." She said to me, "Ingrid, you can't take that home." I said, "I don't want to take it home, what am I going to do with it? I have one at home. Iris doesn't need it here either, in West Germany." My daughter's husband was stationed for three years in Germany. She looked at me and she said, "Yes " I said, "That is your anniversary gift." I was there in March, and in September they had a 25th anniversary. I said, "It's your anniversary gift." Oh, she started crying She said, "Ingrid, I have always wanted that." So when we came home, her little grandson pulled everybody who came into the kitchen to look at the coffee machine. You have to have the West mark in order to go in that store and buy. They go to the farmers, they look over the best pigs and everything Just for export. In East Berlin, they get everything because it's close to the border. And other people can see. People who come over just for a day to visit, they see then there is everything. But farther in, there is nothing The people don't get anything My girlfriend's nephew got married in Munich. He had an aunt in East Germany and she bought him a coffee set of china. She was not allowed to send the whole set over, because that is too much to send over to West Germany They sent it all back to her Then she sent piece by piece over. To buy a car, you

have to apply and after 15 years, you get it. But you can get it earlier if you have some rich relatives in West Germany They would buy it for you and send it over. As long as there is West mark or dollars or whatever involved, you get it.

C: You wish you could send them more.

F: Yes

C: Now if you sent them cash, does the cash get there?

F: Yes, they get the cash

C: Then they can take that and change it?

F: They can change it and then they can go buy what they want. They can go in that store.

When I was there, I washed my hair. I had "Prell." I walked from the bathroom into the bedroom, and my cousin's daughter came home She followed me, smelling the "Prell." She said, "Aunt Ingrid." I said, "What?" She said, "What smells so good?" I said, "I washed my hair I don't know, what is it?" She said, "Yes, it's your hair. Where do you have the shampoo?" I said, "It's in the bathroom " She asked if she could use it I said, "Sure, you can have the whole thing I don't need it anymore " You see, they can't even get shampoo that smells good

C: So whatever you take over or send is wonderful?

F: Yes, and I leave it. Especially stuff like that.

C: Now, your daughter that was in Germany, can she get stuff to them, too?

F: Well, she could send a package, then they don't have to pay the duty

C: If it comes from West Germany to East Germany, you don't have to pay duty tax?

F: No, it's just from here [U.S.]. It used to be that they didn't let the young people go out of East Germany. Now people that are retired are allowed to go.

C: Back and forth.

F: Back and forth, they can go visit. They can even stay in West Germany. They don't care.

C: But the young people who work, do they have to stay there.

They don't get any. . . . We don't know how good we have it, do we?

F: When you go over there, then you know. In East Germany, it is terrible.

C: Do you think the time will ever come when they will unite?

F: I don't know I hope.

C: Fifty years down the road or something?

F: Maybe maybe we won't. . . .

C: We won't see it

F: I would like to go home once more and see everybody. When I can't, I can't. That's it.

C: You have had an interesting life, haven't you?

F: Yes.

C: Yes, really. Look where you have been.

F: Yes. Well, I saw pretty much in Germany, too.

C: But your experiences you had as a young girl are something else.

F: Well, I think the hardest was the time when I was alone after the war. Everybody was gone. My grandparents were old and I lived in a room I rented a room someplace and everybody kept to themselves They were always afraid that they would have to give you something, and they didn't have enough But it was, "I don't know." Actually, after the war it was worse in Germany.

C: For what? After two or three years?

F: Until 1948, the money was changed. All of a sudden, everything was there. They changed the mark from one to 10 Believe it or not, seven years later, we had seven millionaires in Germany. They started out with 40 marks.

C: Well, can you think of anything else?

F: [My aunt,] she was the youngest sister of my father and she was hanging on mother's shirt tail. My grandmother never cut the apron string with her. She was all alone then with her two little kids. Well, she tried to get everybody to go into town Everybody said, "No " They weren't going She said,

"Ingrid, you go." Like I said, it was a long way into town, so I had to walk, and there he was. I think it was the worse thing I ever did in all my life. Dead Russians and German soldiers were lying in the street and I had to step over them. That is the way I used to go to get to my aunt's house. I think that is the worst thing I had ever done. That was terrible. I was 17 years old. She was alright, she was sitting up there.

C: Did you go to check on her? To see if she was alright?

F: Yes. Then she packed up and all four of us left. Well, she had a sister living on the next street, the older sister of my father, but I don't know, they weren't there. I don't know where they were. So we went and took the kids and walked home. Again, stepping over all of those dead soldiers. That was terrible.

C: Had there been a battle there or something?

F: Yes. Sure, we had soldiers there and they fought.

C: Right on the main streets?

F: Yes.

C: Was this Berlin?

B: No. This was in Brandenburg. That was behind Berlin.

C: Okay, you mean toward Russia.

F: No, toward the West. The Americans just went to the Oder [River] when they stopped. Then the Russians went this way, so they met there.

C: On the Oder?

F: Yes, and that is where we met the Magdenburg there. See, if the Americans kept going, they would have gone straight through Berlin, but they stopped right there, and they didn't go any further. I lived between Magdenburg and Berlin. It's probably half maybe a little bit more than half way to Magdenburg. But the Americans were tired of the war, too. They probably wouldn't have fought anymore, but with the Russians there was a fight.

C: I know I've heard that before that the Americans made a big mistake. Was that with Roosevelt? Don't you think that was decided then, with Roosevelt and Stalin? Wasn't that at Yalta?

F: Yes.

C: They all decided that they were all going to divide it up. That was a shame. Well, is there anything else you can think of now?

F: No.

C: Thank you very much.

F: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW