

YONGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II: The Home Front

Personal Experiences

O.H. 1463

Ursula Hilliard

Interviewed By

Rebecca Smith

On

October 30, 1991

Ursula Zimmermann Hilliard

Ursula Zimmermann was born in Suhl, Germany on June 3, 1932. She was the second child of five children. Her mother, Hewig, received the Silver Cross for “producing” so many children for the Fuhrer thought she said later she would rather received money instead of a medal, in order to buy food for them. Fritz Otto Zimmermann, her father, worked as a foreman in a gun factory until 1944, when he was sent to a concentration camp. The Nazi’s had learned that someone in the factory had set up a short-wave radio to contact the Russians. Therefore, they sent every employee (about 500) to the work camps.

Thought Ursula was quite young during the war years, she has some vivid memories of events there. She remembers the brutality of the Nazi’s and her fear that they would come for her mother, a rather out-spoken opponent of Hitler. She also remembers standing in line for hours waiting to buy food, and the little amount she received from the farmers she worked so very hard for. School was interrupted because of the war. Ursula remembers going one or two days a week. However, the propaganda was always there, as the students recited “Hitler over all, Germany over all.” Ursula also recalls the bombing of the allied powers over Germany. She herself was strafed once by low-flying allied planes. As the war drew to an end and the allies began to enter Germany, Ursula, like most people feared their arrival. She had heard “stories” about the way Americans treated Germans. Ursula states that once they arrived, the American treated the German people very well, and her fears soon dissipated.

In 1957, Ursula met an American soldier, Ray Hilliard, stationed in Germany. She and Ray were married in December of that same year, and in 1958 moved back to America. Ursula has no regrets about leaving Germany, for her life there had been a hard one. The mother of three children: Ramona, Alan, and Lorraine. Ursula states that her proudest moment came on April 18, 1963, when she became an American citizen.

Youngstown State University

Oral History Program

O.H. # 1463

World War II: The Home Front

Interviewee: URSULA HILLIARD

Interviewer: Rebecca Smith

Subject: World War II: The Home Front

Date: November 24, 1991

Rebecca Smith: This is an interview with Mrs. Ursula Hilliard for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. Project World War II: The Home Fronts, by Rebecca Smith at 712 Center Rd. East Liverpool, Ohio on November 24 1991 at 7:30pm.

RS: Okay Mrs. Hilliard would you give me first some background about yourself, where you were born, what your father did, your school, and so forth?

UH: I was born June 3rd, 1932.

RS: Okay

UH: In Suhl, that's Thuringen. Thuringen is an ascender of Germany.

RS: Okay.

UH: My father's name was Fritz Otto.

RS: Okay, that's a nice German name.

UH: Zimmerman. He was, how do I describe him he was little. He was a little guy. He worked in a gun factory and he was foreman at the gun factory he putting the eye sight on the guns, I remember that much.

RS: He had always done this to your knowledge?

UH: At the time, during the years that I remember.

RS: Continue.

UH: What else do you want to know?

RS: How many were in your family?

UH: There were five children, three girls and two boys. I was the second one I had a brother before me.

RS: Okay.

UH: There's still four of us living, my older brother died a few years ago.

RS: Okay. Did you say that your mother got some kind of a medal for that?

UH: Oh, yeah but then during the war the bigger the family the bigger the reward. Since my mother had five children she got a silver cross at one time. That was sent to her by _____, whatever that was whatever the translation I wouldn't really know what it is.

RS: Okay.

UH: At first we had a pretty good life in the beginning. Beginning of the war it was still pretty good, but then as the war went on it depressed.

RS: From your earliest memories from before the war began as a little girl what was life like for you?

UH: Very good.

RS: Okay.

UH: It was very good. I was born during the depression in '32, but then from what I remember before I even started school it was pretty good.

RS: What had you been taught if you recall about Hitler?

UH: Well that was the big thing. Everything was "Hail Hitler".

RS: Okay.

UH: Morning, noon, and night "Hail Hitler". School started in the morning with "Hail Hitler" and it let out with "Hail Hitler".

RS: Oh did it really?

UH: Oh yeah. I mean that was the thing and you just had to believe in it or else.

RS: What was or else?

UH: Well, if you didn't you were snubbed and as you grew older it got a little bit more serious. You had to join the Youth Group that was for girls and for boys.

RS: Was that the Hitler Youth?

UH: Yeah. Hitler Youth, so it got a little bit more serious then. But I wasn't old enough really to get into that. But by the time I got old enough the war was over. But my brother was, he was in the Youth.

RS: When I was in school we were taught The Pledge of Allegiance. We said that every morning. What did you do every morning?

UH: We didn't have that as far as I remember.

RS: Were there any songs that you were taught other than "Hail Hitler"?

UH: I don't even remember that.

RS: Okay.

UH: I mean there were speeches and that about Hitler in school. And he was always, how should I say, you should always think more about Hitler than your own father let's put it that way.

RS: Oh really?

UH: Oh yeah. So, like I said Hitler over all.

RS: Hitler over all.

UH: Yeah.

RS: Now what did your parents think of Hitler?

UH: Well, my father he never really said too much, but my mother she didn't like Hitler too much. At first it was okay, because it was a pretty good life, but then as the war progressed even in the beginning she called him like a pig like a hoarder he wanted everything; today Germany and tomorrow the world. So, she never thought too much about him.

RS: Well wasn't that kind of dangerous for her to say things like that?

UH: Oh yeah. She was really lucky with the things that she got away with. She really was and even after my father was arrested and put away in a concentration camp in the late 1944, but he wasn't in there too long it was in November or December I know that it was before Christmas until then the next April or May when the American's came in and liberated the camps. So, he wasn't really in that much, but still he was brainwashed when he got out and he wasn't even Jewish.

RS: How do you mean Brain Washed?

UH: Well, what went on in the concentration camps you didn't hardly have any thought left.

RS: Did he ever talk about it?

UH: No, no. He was weird when he came back.

RS: Was he?

UH: Yeah. He didn't stay with us long then he went back over to, we had moved in the mean time, and oh I say about fifty or sixty kilometers from where I was born. Then when Germany was divided the border was between us and my hometown where I was born. So, then he went across the border and went back to the hometown.

RS: Oh did he?

UH: Where we came from. So, we really didn't have too much contact with him after and then my mother and father got divorced.

RS: Why was he sent to a concentration camp to begin with?

UH: Um, there was a rumor going around that the factory he worked in had built a short wave radio and they were in contact with the Russians.

RS: Oh.

UH: Whether it was ever proved or not I have no idea, but the SS came and just load the whole, all the people that worked in the factory and loaded them and put them in concentration camps.

RS: The whole factory?

UH: All the people that worked there.

RS: And how many approximately work there?

UH: About 400.

RS: That's amazing.

UH: Yeah.

RS: Had you, I am sure that you had saw SS...

UH: Oh yeah.

RS: officers, what were they like to you?

UH: Um, that was Hitler's elite troop and they were, and they thought they were Hitler themselves. One thing now where we lived it was a small town. Small farming town and it was different then in the big city or in a bigger town. So, we didn't really have that much activity like they would have in bigger cities or bigger towns. But still, it was enough.

RS: But you did have SS in your town?

UH: Oh yeah. They were just about all over.

RS: Did you ever see them in action or see them arrest somebody?

UH: Oh yeah. Every now and then you would see it. Even doctors sometimes they would get the doctor. I know they got one doctor, I can't really tell or say why they arrested him, but I remember when they came and got him. They weren't even gentle.

RS: They weren't?

UH: They weren't, they'd push you, and they'd shove you and kick you.

RS: Did you ever see them do this to somebody?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Can you tell me about it?

UH: Well, there really isn't that much to say. You know how when two guys come and shove another one around and push him and shove him and back then they didn't have any cars or anything they just had to walk. Of course the town wasn't really that big. They'd drag him and I've seen them. Even back then they older children when they started the Youth Group you got so brainwashed there they even turned their own parents in some times.

RS: Really.

UH: Yeah. The way my mother talked, my gosh we could have turned her in everyday.

RS: Oh my! Your brother was in the Hitler Youth.

UH: Yeah.

RS: What do you remember about him being in that? Was that exciting to him?

UH: Well, he was excited at the time. When he first started like every young person they were all excited. Cause in the school you get it drummed in your head, Hitler over all us, it was always Hitler over all us. Then after a while he figured it out for himself that it wasn't really that great.

RS: Was this before he went to war?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Was it really?

UH: He was in, like when I was talking to my sister last night she said that he was in glider's school for awhile. I remember that too because we went to see him on Sunday's. It wasn't too far away we used to walk there. He was afraid of flying really. Then he came back and he said that he had to go to the west to the _____ line. I had forgotten about that, but then when I was thinking about why he wasn't wearing an army uniform then I remember that he went to the _____ line. I remember when he came back he was so skinny.

RS: Really. Did he talk about what he had done there?

UH: Digging ditches.

RS: Digging ditches?

UH: Yeah. That's all they did was dig ditches. And then when the American advanced they came in land and then came home.

RS: Did he ever talk about his feelings about Germany at that point?

UH: Oh, he might have but I don't really remember.

RS: Okay.

UH: Our talk wasn't that Germany got defeated or anything it was more it was time it was being defeated.

RS: Okay.

UH: Because it just got too far out of hand the war. There was nothing left in Germany. We didn't have food therefore everybody was talking about it was time it was being defeated.

RS: So, you wanted it?

UH: Oh yeah.

RS: Okay. That's very interesting because we're never taught that. That's very interesting.

UH: Oh I mean there were some old diehards you have them every place, but the average people over there wanted they wanted it to be over.

RS: So it's not like the defeat was a shock to you?

UH: Oh no, no, no. Everybody was happy when it was over.

RS: Well you father getting back to your father for a minute. While he was in the concentration camp and do you know which one it was?

UH: I think it was _____. It was probably the closest one.

RS: Were you ever able to write to him?

UH: Oh no.

RS: So, you never heard from him from the time he was there?

UH: No. We didn't even no for the longest time where he was.

RS: Oh really.

UH: We didn't, until finally they said that they had cleaned out the factory and put them all in concentration camp.

RS: Oh gees.

UH: Yeah.

RS: Um, when the war first began things were going pretty good can you remember a turning point when they started getting bad?

UH: Um, probably about in '41 or '42. It was about two or three years after the war started then it was really starting to slow down. You had to stay in line for food for hours and hours. I remember, we already had our ration cards and everything, but still even with the ration cards food got so scarce that you could hardly get anything. I remember sometimes the town crier would come through town with his little bell and holler for so and so there will be horsemeat at the butcher and so the night before people started lining up. If you were first you got something if you weren't you didn't.

RS: How did you get along with so little food?

UH: Like I say we still had it much better than other people, city people, because we lived in the farm town with small farmers. So, we worked for farmers and even during the school years we had to work for the farmers, because school was only well at first it was okay but then later in the last two or three winters we hardly had school, because there was no coal so they could heat the buildings. So, we would just go and get our homework and maybe go to school for a half a day a week and get our homework and then the next week we'd go back and show the homework and get more homework. So, that's the way it went. Even during air raids there was no school, sometimes there was an air raid for the whole day.

RS: Oh really.

UH: I mean the warning, you had to be in the basement. So, we had to during the school days and hours we had to work for farmers. So, we got away with very little, but we still had something to eat. The three children and my mother we worked for the farmer. Then our wages was maybe a quart of milk and maybe a half a loaf of bread for the day.

RS: Oh really.

UH: But still it was food.

RS: Yeah, but that's not very much.

UH: Well, it was food.

RS: I guess so. Did you say that you had to watch the farmer eat before?

UH: Oh it was always the farmers would eat better than the help. They had their table and we had our table. They always got the better, I mean we never really saw what they ate, but you knew that they would eat good and they would eat before we eat. So, I think maybe that's true to every other place too. It's something that's nature. At the time we about anything being different, it was war and we had to eat.

RS: Can you think of any other changes that came as a result of that war?

UH: Changes like what?

RS: For example scarcity or food okay what else became scarce?

UH: Just about everything. You couldn't buy shoes, clothing you had to make mostly yourself. I mean you couldn't go shopping like you do now or everything was rationed. Maybe you got one pair of shoes a year, but then you were lucky if you got it.

RS: What did as a child, as a young girl what did you do as entertainment? Because I know that you just didn't sit and worry all of the time.

UH: Well, we had games we played table games. We had cards, what it was it we used to play the old witch. There were different games, like aggravation was the most popular game.

RS: Oh was it?

UH: Yeah. And it still is.

RS: It is very popular. This may sound foolish did you ever play war games?

UH: Not that I remember.

RS: Okay. Well, I am saying that because during the Gulf War I noticed my son playing war games.

UH: No, not that I remember. When we played outside in the summer time it was mostly tag and hide and go seek and things like that. We used to go hiking a lot.

RS: Did you?

UH: Yeah. It was more a family thing then and you know Sunday's you'd go hiking in the woods in summer or winter when the snow wasn't so deep we always went hiking and of course in the fall we went out and gathered woods for the winter.

RS: Do you, were there many Jews in your town or do you remember any?

UH: Well, there were still some when we moved to the town and we moved in 1942 and there will still some. But then the Synagogue was burned the year before we moved there and the town where I was born I don't remember. Well, there wasn't a synagogue for one thing; there was only one Catholic Church and one Protestant Church. And in the town we moved to they had Jewish people living there, but they were the Synagogue was burned and the people were most of the people we gone too, but there were still some. I remember there were still two stores, but they weren't there much longer after we moved there. Because I remember when the stores got plundered for one thing and the windows got knocked out. I remember the day that, that one store that they demolished that one store. And it was young kids they didn't know any different they were knocking out

windows, it was fun it was a fun thing to do and they didn't even know what it was all about.

RS: Well, that's normal. What had you been taught? Were you taught anything about Jews?

UH: Well, I am sure that, that's one thing that you really hate to repeat because...

RS: I know that's hard and please don't take that as me putting you down, because all I want to know is what you were taught in Germany.

UH: Well, it was like the Jewish people were evil and of course I was still young then I didn't know the difference, but since I've grown up I've learned to respect the person for the person and not for the religion or what they believe in. I mean I have all kinds of friends I have Jewish friends I have Catholic friends, you know.

RS: DO you remember any other groups that were persecuted?

UH: No.

RS: Okay. Do you remember the two families that were there? Were they just gone one day?

UH: Yeah, they were gone, I didn't see how they were taken away. All I remember is how the store was demolished, the one store. The other store was being demolished just like that, but I didn't see it.

RS: Did you have any idea what he was actually doing to the Jews?

UH: No.

RS: After they're leaving?

UH: No. The concentration camp, all that we really didn't know what was going on until after the war was over. I mean nobody knew what was a concentration camp. We figured it was a jail. Nobody knew, I don't know if anybody knew what was going on. We didn't.

RS: You had no idea what was happening to your father at the time either?

UH: No, we didn't even know where the concentration camp was. We figured it was a jail. So, then after the war when you saw all the pictures, the newsreel, and the movies then wow. I'm glad the way it ended it could have turned out so much worse. Just think if Hitler would have really taken over the war.

RS: I hate to think. When the allies began actually attacking Germany do you remember that?

UH: Oh yeah.

RS: Was your town bombed?

UH: Our town wasn't bombed by the planes it was bombed by the tanks; because the Burger mister, that's the mayor he wouldn't wave the white flag. So, the tanks more or less bombed our town and they always took every other house, they bombed every other house.

RS: Now that is amazing to me. A tank can do that.

UH: Every other house and our house got bombed too.

RS: Oh really.

UH: Yeah. Half of the upstairs was taken down. Oh, I think they shelled about a day and a night. I mean it didn't go one after the other they would shoot one off and then maybe wait a half an hour or maybe an hour and then shoot another one and then maybe shoot another one. I think it took about a day and a night before they finally gave up.

RS: Well, what did you? Did you stay in the basement?

UH: In the basement in the cellar.

RS: In the basement the whole time? Was anybody in your home hurt when it was bombed?

UH: No. No, like I said the shells weren't really that heavy. We had a two-story house and it took half of the upstairs. Well, the attic and one bedroom sort of got demolished. We had a dirt cellar, its not a cellar like we have now it was more like a dirt cellar. You have your cloths on one side and your vegetables on the other. My mother she got some bales of straw earlier and so when ever there was an air raid or something that is where we went and we slept most of the nights down there.

RS: Oh did you really?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Still as a child that must have been very scary?

UH: Well, some times it was and some times it was fun. It was scary when we heard the bombs fall somewhere.

RS: Oh yes, I guess.

UH: Sometimes you could hear when they bombed _____, _____, and _____ . I mean they were far off, but you could still hear it.

RS: Those are cities?

UH: Yeah, they were big cities.

RS: Now did you have black outs in your town?

UH: Oh yeah, we had black outs every night.

RS: Okay, can you describe it?

UH: Well, they call a black out and you'd have to cover your windows and now light could come out. They had guy, I can't remember what they called them, they controlled the streets and the windows, to check to see if light comes out and if they see a little bit of light they say _____, lights out. Most nights we had candles some nights the lights were turned out there was no power. We had covers over the window and there weren't any streetlights anymore.

RS: Well, while you were down in the basement during the daytime what did you do to occupy yourself?

UH: We had candles we could play games.

RS: Okay.

UH: We had candles, well we didn't have light in the basement so therefore we had to have candles.

RS: So, in between the shelling your trying to live a normal life as possible were you ever strafe by ally planes?

UH: In 1943, my girlfriend her mother had a baby and my mother had three younger sons. So, we were taking the kids for a ride and it was in March, no it wasn't in March he was born in March it must have been in April or beginning of May it was still cool. We were taking the kids for a buggy ride and there was, maybe it was a reconnaissance plane or something they used to come in before the bombers would come in. One of these little planes came swooping down and shot between myself and my girlfriend, right between the buggies.

RS: Oh my goodness.

UH: And that experience will never leave me because we were so scared.

RS: Oh I guess not.

UH: We were so uh and then about a half an hour latter we saw them bring in six bodies in that the planes had shot down by the train station.

RS: Oh really.

UH: And the workers, there were workers by the railroad tracks that were shot.

RS: Now where were you? You were right out in the open?

UH: Yeah. We were out in the street.

RS: That must have been scary, my goodness.

UH: Well, it was a nice spring day and we went for a walk and of course there was no alert so that happened some times when these little planes come in fast they didn't have time to sound the alarm.

RS: Oh I see.

UH: So, that was my most scary time. It was, but one time we went to _____ my mother, and I, and my sister and we got to _____ when they had an air raid and we saw the bombs fall then. We were standing in a church doorway because we couldn't get to the shelter. So, we saw the bombs fall then because we had to leave the train station they wouldn't let us on the train. We had to get out. So, those two times were about the scariest.

RS: When they came in did they have a specific target or was it just whatever was there?

UH: Well, I would imagine they, when they bombed the big cities.

RS: I mean is there like a certain place that you do not want to be, as a plane would come in?

UH: No. It really didn't make any difference then. When they bombed a big city they just bombed everything. I mean if you would have seen the cities afterwards there was hardly a house left in the bigger cities.

RS: What was your city like afterwards?

UH: We lived in a small town we didn't have any problems.

RS: Okay.

UH: The only problem we had was from the tanks when they came through.

RS: Okay.

UH: But we didn't get bombed by planes in our town didn't.

RS: So, what were the cities like, you saw them evidently then afterwards?

UH: Sure the cities were demolished and they were demolished for years after. Like when I left Germany in '57 there was very little built up, they were still cleaning up mostly. What they built was the housing projects for people to live.

RS: Don't you run into sanitation problems and water problems when a city has been bombed?

UH: Sure.

RS: Well, how did they get around it? How did the people get along?

UH: As best they could. Like I said we didn't live in the big city so I really wouldn't know.

RS: Okay.

UH: When I moved to the big city when I got older and could work things like that were pretty well taken care of, but they were still cleaning up and working on the housing projects for people to live. A lot of people had cleaned out enough that they could live in their basements. In the big city, people that lived in the big city lived in their basements. I guess it all worked out.

RS: Now you were still able to live in your house?

UH: Oh yeah.

RS: Even though it was shelled.

UH: Oh yeah.

RS: Were you able to build that back pretty quickly.

UH: Oh yeah, because that wasn't our own house we rented that house and the owner repaired it and it was fixed.

RS: Is there anything else you remember? Any other events that took place during the war? That might have affected you or your family?

UH: There were so many. It was just a struggle it was an everyday struggle. Food, I remember many times we went out and I hate to talk about it but we did we'd steal food. We went out to steal food from the farmers, potatoes, and beets, whatever. It was a hard life, but if you don't dwell on it you forget it.

RS: Right.

UH: I really I never really dwelled on it so I can't say that I remember the whole thing. I remember little things.

RS: Afterwards were you aloud to talk about Hitler or was it just something no one wanted to?

UH: I mean sure he was a household name at any time, but I don't even think that we dwelled on it. We were too busy working and trying to make enough food to eat.

RS: What did you; there has been a lot of speculation that Hitler didn't really die that, that wasn't his body because it was burned beyond recognition. Did you ever or was there ever any talk that he might be alive at the time?

UH: Well, at the time we didn't really think that he died. We always thought that he skipped the country some how, but then when we saw the pictures of the bombing and of the city of Berlin anything is possible. Anything is possible. I know if he skipped from Germany I don't think he would have had a happy life anywhere else.

RS: Well, that's a good point.

UH: I don't think he would have a happy life.

RS: Do you think he would have come back?

UH: No.

RS: When the American's came into Germany to occupy the towns did they come into your town?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Okay, what myths or ideas did you have about them? What had you been told about the American's?

UH: Oh. Now that is another story. We were always told, well, we never really got to see an American soldier in the movies or the newsreels normally they had the newsreels on before a movie and every now and then we were able to go to a movie. But we had really never seen on really other then a died one maybe, but we were always told in school that when the American's come they're black and they had big knives in their mouths. Moroccans, their big and black and had their knives in their mouth and they had swords and they would come in swinging with their swords and the chop your legs off if you don't get out of the way. We had one teacher she was so mean and she said that they come and they eat little children.

RS: She was serious when she told you this?

UH: Yeah, she said they eat little children. Of course then when the American's came in we heard the Jeeps and the tanks coming and we were so scared, but then we saw them everything was okay. My mother she always called us dumb because we believed everything that we heard. So, and she had many fights with my teacher too.

RS: Oh did she?

UH: Yeah. And I still don't know how my mother got away with the things that she said. I can't believe it.

RS: Maybe it was because she was in a little town. What did she fight with your teacher about?

UH: About the things that she was teaching.

RS: Oh.

UH: She always called the children words like stupid and my mother didn't like that so, she always marched to school now and then, told the teacher to change her language. My sister too and my daughter is a lot like my mother she's always going to school and telling the teacher something.

RS: Does she really?

UH: Yeah. I can't believe it some times. When the troops came in it was really a celebration after the initial shock, you knew it was coming and you were eager for it, but still until you saw what was coming actually see it, then everything was fine.

RS: I am going to stop here and turn the tape over.

RS: Did you get the same impressions of the Russians? What was your impressions or ideas of the Russian's coming in?

UH: Well, I don't know. I don't think at first it really didn't make any difference, but then after while you hear the different stories. So, I am really glad the way it happened because afterwards like now I have a good life, but if the Russians would have come in I wouldn't have.

RS: What did you hear about the Russians or what do you know about the Russians when they invaded Germany?

UH: Well, after the war was over and they divided Germany then we got to know more about them. We heard more about them because the Russian border was only about nine miles from where we lived. And all our family, my mother's family and my father's

family they were all in the east the part that the Russian's took over. So, we were lucky we ended up in the west we ended up in the American section. So, I thank God everyday for that, well not every day but I do thank him.

RS: So, how did the American's treat you?

UH: Very good, very good. Well, there were incidents with other people were there were problems, but I mean we made out all right. I remember that we went to the American camp some times and they would give us food left over food at dinnertime. Sometimes we'd get there late and somebody got there ahead of us and got it. So, and then of course later on they weren't aloud to give it out anymore, but the farmers got it for the pigs. Then and to I was thinking about that the other day my mother she used to after the troops came in she used to take in washing for the American's and she washed their clothes. There was a little extra food then of course everything was black market. Everything got to be black market then. My mother's sister she worked in a China factory she was a hand painter, she painted the little roses and so whenever there was a holiday, Christmas and so on, we always got things from our Aunt and all that went on the black market for food.

RS: Oh you sold it?

UH: Yeah. Candelabra's and we had some beautiful things. Well when I went to Germany here two year ago we had a chance to go to East Germany for one day we couldn't stay longer because we're American citizens so we could only stay a day. I guess we could have stayed longer, but it cost twenty-five dollars a day to go over there and that's a lot of money. So, anyway we went and found one of my mothers sisters and there another sister yet, but we didn't have time to go and see her cause it took us so long just to find her and we hadn't been there in so many years and nobody had the address, but we knew the town. So, it took us awhile to find her. And when we got there we saw all the things in her house that we used to have too.

RS: Oh really.

UH: And those are antiques now.

RS: Oh I bet.

UH: So beautiful, it really hurt my heart when I saw that and all the things that we had were all sold for food.

RS: You say that your father was in the East Germany section?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Then it was closed off, did you every get to see him while you were still in Germany? Were you ever aloud to go?

UH: I crossed the border one time. My mother and I crossed the border one time, we paid a guide and we went and got a pass and got permission. We went over one time and she went to see her sisters and I went to see my father. But he wouldn't talk, I was there for maybe two hours and he wouldn't even talk and he lived with my aunt his sister and she said that he was like that, he doesn't talk. So, then my sister went to see him one time and he cried, she told me that he cried, but that he didn't talk to her either.

RS: Was he like that before he was arrested?

UH: No. No. I heard then that he moved to Berlin and that was where he died. He went to live with another sister and that's where he died in Berlin. So, hopefully I can go some time if I ever save up enough money.

RS: Well, looking back on everything what's your feeling about the wall being opened, the Berlin Wall of course with the wall coming down the borders have opened up.

UH: It should have happened a long time ago. It really went too long and people are so dissatisfied because its not changing fast enough for them. The people of West Germany got used to the good life so long, they have been used to the good life for so long they don't want to give it up. They don't want to share.

RS: Oh. Do you think there is a chance that the Nazi's could rise up again in Germany?

UH: I hope not. I hope not. I'd like to have everything nice and smooth and no arguments. I hate arguments. But you never know, you just never know.

RS: Well, what did you do after the war, while you were a teenager?

UH: Well, I was thirteen when the war was over and as far as I can remember we always had to work. Work, work, work. Well, I graduated then in the year after '46 I gradated, we only went to school to the eight grade and then after that you go to your job and you go to school one day a week. That's what I did I worked for a dentist. Then I went to school one day a week.

RS: How did you meet your husband?

UH: I worked for his boss. He and his buddies and he had to bring some papers up to the house one time and he asked me if I wanted a blind date, if I wanted to go out with his buddies and I said oh I have nothing else to do, I didn't work that night so I said okay. That's how I met Ray, blind date. I use to do a lot of babysitting, because there were still two younger children at home with my mother and she didn't have any support from anything and she would work whenever she could, but she was getting sick and couldn't work so much anymore. She had a heart problem. So, my brother and I would try to buy her some furniture and give her money, because she still had the two young kids at home. So, I'd baby-sit whenever I had the chance. Even when Ray and I were going together

we'd still maybe see each other once a week or so Saturday night or Sunday. Of course whenever I had a babysitting job that had to come first.

RS: So, how long did you date before you got married?

UH: Two years.

RS: Two years. Did you move directly to the United States after you got married?

UH: No we got married in December, the 6th of December and then we moved to the States the following year.

RS: So, you got married in '56?

UH: '57.

RS: '57.

UH: We came May '58 on Mothers Day.

RS: Did you have any qualms about leaving Germany and coming here?

UH: No. No. Cause as I got older I was working for American families and I always heard how nice the United States was. So, well, the one family was going to bring me with them, but I didn't know whether I was going to do that or not, but then when I met Ray that was my goal then.

RS: To move to the States?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Even giving up your family?

UH: Well, I know that was about the hardest thing to do. I don't know whether I should say that on tape or not, but I really don't like German people that much.

RS: Really. Why is that?

UH: Because I was hungry for too long and there were too many people that had food. Well, I guess I was hungry for too long.

RS: So, did the United States live up to everything you thought that we'd be?

UH: Well, imagine I didn't pay too much attention to that.

RS: But you are an American citizen?

UH: Yeah.

RS: Okay.

UH: Oh you mean after I came here?

RS: Yeah after you came here.

UH: Oh sure, yeah.

RS: So what have you liked best about this country?

UH: Well, just about anything. I mean you can make it or that's up to you. I had a good life here I can't complain.

RS: When did you become an American citizen?

UH: April 18th 1963. In Fairbanks, Alaska.

RS: In Fairbanks?

UH: Ray was stationed in Fairbanks in Fort Wayne Right that's where I made my citizenship.

RS: What did you have to do?

UH: Oh, it really wasn't that hard. They give you a booklet and of course you have to have three person's vouch for you. They give you a book and you have to study and they ask you about twenty questions. That's all.

RS: Oh okay.

UH: But then I studied and I studied and I think I missed two questions. I remember the one question I missed and it was how is a bill passed I couldn't remember which way.

RS: That's hard for anybody to remember.

UH: And I still don't remember.

RS: That's pretty hard. Um, is there anything else that you'd like to tell me?

UH: Oh like what?

RS: Um well you've answered just about every question that I have got down here. Anything else that you, any incident that you might remember that happened during the war?

UH: Well, there was many, but I don't know which would be of any importance. Like the town we lived in it wasn't so big, well we've talked about that before, there was a big brewery and that was shut down and they had a big cellars where they'd keep the beer barrels and so on. All that was converted for people that was coming in from the East, like refugees. Well, whoever had any extra room had to take in refugees, which made it harder too because there were so many more people and less food. That was the big problem food and then fuel coal. Like I said there was a big difference between the bigger cities and the smaller towns. We were still lucky we lived in a smaller town. We didn't have the problems that other people had in the big cities. The ones that were really homeless; but there were struggles even after the war more so then during the war.

RS: Different kinds?

UH: Yeah. Yeah, when they closed the borders people were coming across the border to trade for food. People over there in East Germany still had it worse then what we had because the United States took care of West Germany, but the Russian's didn't take care of East Germany. So, the people there were hurting much more then we were. Oh like I said I don't really dwell on it so I've forgot so much of it.

RS: Well, you've given me a lot and I've really appreciated it.

UH: Now when we went back to Germany two years ago course I really hadn't kept up with anything and you don't get to really see that much on television on the news. So, I was really surprised how everything had been built up. In _____ that's where I lived and worked for a while and I where I met Ray too. All the old historical buildings were built up again like they were before the war and it was really amazing how they did that, I couldn't believe it. It was just like they had never been demolished, torn down, or bombed out. That was really something. What else.

RS: Tell me what a typical day was like?

UH: Well, a typical day depends on the winter or summer. Like during the time we had to go to school we would go to school for an hour.

RS: Okay.

UH: Then we'd come home and then we'd go and start working for the farmer. Now there was a time when maybe we'd go to school one a week then we'd get up in the morning and get ready and go work for the farmers all day. Then there was a time when just a typical day we'd get up in the morning and we'd get our slice of bread and had water and sugar.

RS: Oh my.

UH: Or you'd just eat your bread with sugar on it and we'd go out and play. In the wintertime it was about the same. It depended on not for us children when we had to go

to school. If you had to school you got up and you went and if not you got and you had your whole day ahead of you, other than going to work. It was the same thing with my mother. When she had to go to work for the farmers she went and when she didn't have to go she stayed at home and house cleaned, the same as normal procedure.

RS: Well, you say a lot had to do with food. You were hungry a lot. What were some of the things that you did to get food?

UH: Well, I remember my brother and I and my sister too would go, depending on who was available, we used to go to the next town and get bread, cheese, or butter, whatever and that was swapping something for food. Cause most of the little farmers in the little towns they didn't have that much either.

RS: How long would that take you?

UH: Well, about an hour there and an hour back and depends on which town we went to. Then one year we had a bicycle and my brother he borrowed his friend's bicycle and we went on a bicycle. And we were going down the hill and I didn't know how to use the back brakes I used the front brakes. Going down the hill it got a little bit shaky so I hit a hole and I fell off and I tore my hand, and I got a little scare where I went into the barbed wire. So, there were little incidents like that. But always walking, walking, walking. Where ever you went you had to walk. I remember one year we went out and picked the new shoots from the pine trees and my mother went out and got sugar from the black market and that was our syrup from the year, she made syrup. We got so tired of that and sick of it. I can't even remember what she called that, but it was always work around food always. Cause we got so little for it. Its not like you go to the grocery store and get a couple of big sacks of groceries. Back then you had to work all day for practically nothing, like a quart of milk and a half a loaf of bread. So, it was work for food. You couldn't really say a typical day come to think of it because when there was an alert and you had to go to the shelter sometimes you had to sit in the shelter all day. Really you couldn't say there was a typical day.

RS: All right are there any more little incidents that may be insignificant to you, but may be very important for us to know?

UH: The money change after the war was over.

RS: How's that?

UH: Well, we got ten to one, we had to give ten marks and we got one mark back. Something like that I can't really remember. There was one incident that was pretty dramatic for us and that was when my mother got arrested.

RS: Your mother got arrested?

UH: Yeah, that was already after the war. She got a gun from my uncle and he wanted her to trade it in for food. And she figured since it was a German pistol that she could sell it to an American and make money on it. So, that's what she did and that was during the first year of occupation and you weren't aloud to have a gun or anything like that. Well, the MP come and got her because she was trying to sell it to an MP and she didn't know the difference. So, she was arrested for that and she was in jail for a few days since my uncle came and told them that it was his. That too everything just went around food money for food, this for food. I wished I could think of anything, I should ask my sister a little bit more between the two of us we could have probably remember a little bit more.

RS: Well, like I said if you think of anything else you can certainly give me a call and let me know. I think I've just about worn you out with questions. So, once again I am going to conclude this interview with Ursula Hilliard.