

Theresia Jones

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Question: Let me do just one thing first. If I could get your name, first and last and the correct spelling, so I've got that on tape.

Answer: Theresa Jones. T-h-e-r-e-s-i-a- J-o-n-e-s.

Question: Thank you very much. What was your maiden name?

Answer: Wolf. W-o-l-f.

Question: And what city were you born in?

Answer: In Nackenheim. N-a-c-k-e-n-h-e-i-m. It's on the Rhine River. It's close to the biggest city of Mainz.

Question: Is that Northern Germany or Southern Germany?

Answer: No, it's Southern. Near Frankfurt. Half hour away by car today.

Question: What was it, were you born on a farm?

Answer: uh, it is agriculture, farm, ja. But my father worked as an ironworker in another town, and he had to commute by railroad to go to that everyday, but my mother was born in that town and we lived in that town. And that was when, I was born in '31. We lived there until fall of 1940, and in the fall of that 1940, we moved to Gustavsburg, that's across the Rhine River on the American side, when occupational time was the American side, and my father bought a house there, and we spent, it's still today there. We spent the rest of the war in that house, until it got bombed, but then we got back in it again.

Question: What was it like growing up in Germany?

Answer: Well, I, my happiest years were, of course, in Nackenheim where I was born. Uh, war I never heard of it. Didn't even know what war was, but until we got to the house in 1940, and it was just no air raids, no bombing, none of that. It was just the daily life. I'm the oldest of 6. Taking care of the house, taking care of the kids, taking care of the yard, etcetera, and it really for me started in 1943. That's when we felt the bombs, the air raids, shortages of food, um, having to go to shelter, spending days and nights sitting on hard boxes waiting for the clear sign we could go home again. Um, just getting through day by day.

Question: What were your Mom and Dad like?

Answer: My father was born in 1908. My mother in 1910. They married when they were in their mid-'20s. My father always worked in an iron factory. He was an ironworker. My mother had her master's degree in sewing, but then when she married and us 6 came along, gradually, why she just turned housewife raising 6 kids.

Question: You went to school in Nackenheim?

Answer: Oh, ja, sure I did, and even went to Holy Communion there in 1939, April 16. I'll never forget that date. And um, my mother's parents in Nackenheim had this great big house and lots of acres of land, and I spent lots of years going to

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the fields with my grandfather. His sons, which were my uncles, the oldest daughter. That's where I got my name, she's my namesake...her and I went to fields, townspeople came to help in harvesting. We had, grandfather had apple and pear orchards, another acreage had all the cherry trees from the sour to the sweet. Another area had all the fields for corn, sugar beets for the cows, and oxens and picks and potatoes for us. Another one he had lots of acres of vineyards overlooking the Rhine River, and in the fall every year, why, my godmother, my grandfather, uncles, townspeople, they helped harvesting the grapes, and so when we got home to his house, to his big estate, why they were tossed in the big vat, just like in the movie with Sophia Loren where she stomped the grapes and lifted up her skirts with the bare feet. We did that, and grandfather and his sons, they bottled the wine, and they had their own distribution of wine.

Question: Does your family still, do they still have the?

Answer: No, all this stopped about 1949, when my grandmother died. My grandfather's wife. And then he was widowed and getting older. I have his birth date at home. It's eighteen-seventy something. Um, he was taken in by his oldest daughter, my namesake, godmother, and she nursed him till his end of time, and that was mid-'50s, but by that time, though, I was in the United States, and missed going to his funeral and things like that. So it kind of stopped when the war really were in progress, you know, the bombing raids and stuff like that, because during the war you had to have permits. I don't know about Berlin, Munich, and Cologne and all these cities, but I'm talking about my town, ok? You had to have permission to leave your town to go to that town, even to the one across the river where I was born, and you didn't get permission. They wanted everybody to stay put. Just stay home, and so everything kind of ended, right then and there.

Question: You spent holidays at your grandfather's place?

Answer: Um, I don't remember any of that. I don't think, and I'm sure we never even a Christmas at my grandfather's house. We were busy. We were 6 children. There was school and the church to go to and the laundry and the yard and this and that. The time just flew by.

Question: So, being the oldest, you must have had a lot of responsibility.

Answer: Uh, ja, I was the first one born, and my father needed so much help and no body to help him, so I was the one. Whether I wanted to or knew how. I wanted to. I loved my father and he was good to me. We got along great, and what he knew and what I needed to know, he taught me, so all of me is from grandfather, my godmother, my father, my mother. Without them, there is not me.

Question: What was your Dad's name?

Answer: Heinrich. My mother was Maria.

Question: And you're Theresia?

Answer: Theresia. Hmmhmmmm.

Question: So did you spend a lot of time with your father growing up?

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Answer: OH, nothing but. When the war really got going and there was a shortage of food, of course, we all had the rations, and the more children a family had, the more they gotten from the bürgermeister, the mayor of the town, if you will. But, with 6 children there is no wealth, ok. Just what father earned, and whatever that is don't ask me. I don't got a clue. But we had more rations to buy, what we needed to feed us 8, but not enough money to buy them. The bread, the milk, the butter, the eggs, etcetera, ok? But there were plenty of people in my town who were, let's just say retirees, who had an income, who had money, maybe better off than my parents were, and they came to families such as where I came from with lots of kids, and they would ask my mother that they sewing some, but we were well know. My mother, my father knew everybody, and everybody knew them, and everyone went by first-name basis, you know. Oh, Maria, um, I could use some rations, I need butter, I need this, I need this, I give you money and sometimes lots more than what the prices were in the stores, and so it went like a black market if you will, ok? It was well known, but you also needed to be careful that it doesn't get out of control, and then the police would be on your door, you know. You shouldn't do that. So my mother got money and then she sent me to the store with a list of things, and this is how we managed to have at least food on the table. But then were times, in 1944 especially, into '45, everything was bombed and there were no stores. You couldn't buy anything, and when a butcher shop or a grocery store survived the bombings, and they had a certain amount of whatever the store was. Now in Germany in those times, when you wanted meat, well that store was just strictly meat. Not like today, everything is combined. Huh, uh. Separate. The meat, they had the fish, they had the milk, the bakery separate. So when the butcher put a notice on his window and said, let's just say for instance, Saturday morning from seven to ten, he is going to be open, limited of whatever meat or wurst, which is lunchmeat, and so my mother would wake me up in the night, Friday night into Saturday morning, like 4 in the morning, and if it was cold she bundled me up and she made me a cup of hot milk. We had a goat, so we just drank goat's milk. Stinks. And so she bundled me up, and of course, I knew where to go, and I started to stand in line. And so by the time I got there it was probably 4:30 in the morning, quarter to 5, and I thought I'd be the only one in line. Heck, no. The whole street was already full, and then the people. Young people. Mothers or fathers, or whoever, they were crouched against the brick building and had blankets to keep them warm. They had 3 hours to wait till, the store opened, you know, between 2 and 3 hours. And so we took turns. My mother had to get up every morning before 6 to get my father ready, and then gradually us to school, and she would send me off. Ok, I get in line and 2 hours later when she was ready to come, she said, Ok, Theresia, you go home, you do this and this, and get your brother and sister ready for school and yourself. I take over, and wait till the store opens. We did things like that just to get a pound of meat or less.

And then when, never forget this. The store had pork chops. Oh, mama hadn't cooked a pork chop in months, and here she came home with 2 pork chops. And with it, well.. we had potatoes you always had cabbages, and she put a meal together, and now we were 8 on this table in the kitchen. And she served it, and of course, the father there, mother there, and us 3 kids, 3 on each side. Was not chairs, was benches, and mother served it, and she gave a whole chop to father, and he wasn't going to eat that. He took his knife and mother had the other second pork chop on her plate. Of course, it had a bone with it, you know, so that's minus meat already. And so father started to cut, looking at his wife, and all around at us, and of course, we wanted some of that. And as father started to cut his port chop into 8 pieces, and my mother did the same thing with her pork chop into 8 pieces, and so we each had two nibbles of meat. I'll never forget that if I live to be a million years

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old. And that was just one incident, ok, of 2 lousy pork chops. But that's how times were. There was nothing to eat. There was nothing to buy. The stores had nothing. And here started traveling with the bicycles. Of course, there were no cars. My father never owned a car in his life. In those days, when you saw a car in town, they were just, the people such as our doctor, the butcher, of course, the clothier, you know, people like, common people, they're just bicycling or you walk. So it was getting very bad.

Father, man he was a genius. He was hustling, he was hustling, he was scanning the fields. He come home and he said, Ok, I have heard if I rode the bike with Theresia to the Schwarzwald, that's the Black Forest, but I don't know the mileage of it. I need to go home and figure out which way we went. In those days, I just followed father. We got on our bikes real early in the morning, and he had stuff to trade, such as.. material to make dresses, material for a window, and my mother had a sister working. She worked in Mainz in a department store, and being an employee there she got hold of materials. In turn, she somehow did something with my mother, her sister, because she wasn't going to give my mother all that stuff for nothing, so I don't know what those two sisters had in mind anyway. We took that stuff, had in on our bikes in the back, and father and I drove hours and hours and we came to farmlands, and so we just went to every farmhouse, and father said, I'm so and so, and this is my daughter, and we come from so and so, and we have so and so to trade. And so these farmer women mostly answer the doors, and what do you have? So they looked over what father had to trade. And by golly, my father got bacon, he got ham, we even had pickles and things we haven't had on the table for weeks and months. And it was great. And when it got to be nighttime, we parked for a little bit. You know, every road has a ditch, so we went into the ditch, put our bikes down and took a rest, because I was very tired and sore from sitting on a hard saddle, you know that kind of thing. Young girl. So we took a break and usually by about midnight we came home late. So we were on the go sixteen hours peddling and doing things like that. And because that was so successful, the harder my father strived now to get more and more and we even learned what these people wanted more of, and so my mother and father saw to it that when we peddled again.. that was in the house for us to take to those farmers to the very same people, ok. So we at least managed to get some food in our, we were all undernourished. My father. He looked like a guy from a concentration camp, so help me God. I got pictures at home, you know. If I didn't send them to my children already, to save for them for safekeeping, you know. I'm getting on in years. So I already gave all my good pictures to the family. So, um, God. I don't want to think about it.

Question: Sounded like you had a real loving Mom and Dad.

Answer: Uh, yes, but I was closer to my father, of course. We spent so much time together. I loved my mother, too, but she didn't have to do any of that, you know, but she had the other 5 to raise and everything in the garden we grew and she did a lot of canning, and she had the jars to can, vegetables, fruits, into. And then the heating was a problem. There was no heating like we have today, you know. Just flip a switch and the house heats up. Oh, God. Or washing machine for that matter. Nothing like, you had to do it by hand on a washboard, on a board with a brush. Anyway, uh, heating. My mother had a gorgeous oven, big, and it had 4 burners, a rail on the outside. It was chrome, so us kids or anybody don't burn yourself right away. Uh, but it only burned wood and coal. Briquettes, which were bar-like coal, I don't know if you ever seen anything like that. And there were pieces of coal, and you started with kindling, ok, then the coal, then it heats up the whole house. Mama would open doors and the heat just goes over the whole house.

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But to get coal stopped. When we needed coal, why, father would just say, Hey, Heinrich or Fritz, sent me a load. But that all stopped. There was no more, ok. Town used it all up. No more goods coming into where you live. But my father knew all about the railroads, too, that went from Mainz through my town, Grissenheim, and up to Frankfurt, and these transport were open and they were just loaded with coal. Ok? So father came home and talked about this at the dinner table, if you will. And he said, Ok, on so and so, this train's gonna come through and we just gotta be there. So again, father and me went every time, but sometimes it was even under a blue sky. And we went to the railroad tracks and we waited in the ditch, and when this transport train approached, slow, slow, slow, practically to a stop and sometimes it did stop, because it had to wait for the light to change from red to green to go on, and in that time, you tried to get on top of that car and throw the coals down. You can't go up there with your gunny, with your, what you call those bags, gunny bags? Fill 'em up, tie it up, you know. There is no time, and besides, there were patrols. You don't want to be caught and seen. So my father made me climb up this car with iron prongs that you climb up, and then with my fanny he would just push me up there. And he would say, now don't stand up. When you get up there lay on your stomach so you won't be seen. And then what I do, well throw down the coal. Ok. But no gloves, nothing. It's your bare hands. So on my stomach with both hands throw the coal down, ok? And down there in the ditch along the car sometimes it was still standing still or it slowly started to move now, and he would say now you be careful. You gotta get down here before this train. Ja, ok, fine. I climb down, so he was picking up the coal there, and when it was time for me to come down he saw to it I came down, and then we waited for the train to go, hid in bushes, and that's how we stole coal. But not just one time. Every time this train came through. And there wasn't just my father and I. There were other people, too. And, of course, the police in town got wise to all this. They were no dummies. They knew exactly who was stealing what and where and when. Well, they were husbands and fathers. They were on duty, so who's, how's he going to get food to his table, ok? So everybody would give him that much, and this guy would give him that much. Shhh, don't say nothing, ok? So this is how then the police were bribed and got a share of it, and it was ok, then. But I was black. I was dirty. My tongue, my eyes, I was a black pig. But it was kind of fun.

Question: You were a tomboy, it sounds like.

Answer: uh, I had to be everything, and I was, ja.

Question: Did you have brothers?

Answer: OH, yeah. Heck yes. There's 3 girls and 3 boys. The boy next to me was born 11 months after me, but the poor kid wasn't even a year old. He was diagnosed with polio. So he was no good to my father, which my father was waiting for, 11 months younger, you know. He was waiting. My father, in a way, and he cried several times, and my father was so hard I don't know how he managed to cry, but he loved us and he could cry, yes. And sometimes we hugged and cried together. He was waiting for this brother of mine to grow up to be his helper, and then this polio set in. Well, back to square one. Theresia, sorry you're it. Fine. Three years later. A sister. Three years later, on Christmas Eve, the 23rd to be exact, 1938, came a brother. In 1941, came a brother. My father had to go to the.... he was drafted, and it was really forbidden by Hitler to draft.. to take any family man, especially more than 3 children into his Wehrmacht, Because Hitler knows they are needed at home with so many kids. But the shortage of men, so

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everybody was drafted, ok? So in 1941, father was drafted. Oh, my God, it was bad. It was horrible, him gone. OH, God. But my mother knew that they had no right to call her Heinrich to war, and she went to the bürgermeister to town, went to the die Gesundheit Amt, which is the health department. She needed him home to keep us together. And I don't know. She was advised what to do, where to go to get her husband back home, ok? So I remember father coming home. He was stationed in Paris. He was a medic. He was with the Red Cross lotsa years lotsa years lotsa years. He was a male nurse. He went to school for that, too, besides all this. I don't know how he found time. He came home from, on the leave, for I don't remember how long, but he had to go back. But before you knew it here comes father, back home again. Everything was well. I lost my train of thought. How did that come in. You asked me how many brothers. Ok. So in 1941, come a brother, and during an air raid in 1944, on September 10, 1944, here comes my baby sister. She was born in the basement during an air raid. When my mother started labor during the day, I had to go to Dr. Pollack, not a German name, but he spoke German, I guess. I know he did. He came to the house early enough, took mother out. Now in those days I had no clue about babies, ok? I'm just that now because I, in hindsight, you know, I had 50 years to think about this. It got to be late in the afternoon, and the air raid started, the sirens went off and everybody got ready to go to the shelters. We all had our knapsacks ready for change of clothes, something to eat, and off we went. But here comes mother and the doctor. But in '44 I knew that I was going to have another little sister case it was me.. every time one was born, there was one more sibling for me to look after. You know, at least keep them clean. Change diapers, whatever. And the air raid started. First the doctor wanted to go home. We were all downstairs in the basement. We had several rooms in the basement. In other words, a basement in Germany in those houses. the same floor plan as the basement is on top, ok? So my father had all those rooms. The potato room went to a bedroom and the coal room where no coal is no more, that was made for us to sit, blah, blah blah. Doctor wanted to go home. Oh, he wanted to go home to his family. My father had this doctor on his throat, but they knew each other. He delivered all the rest of the except me and the brother next to me and the sister next to me were born in Nackenheim, the rest all in Gustavsburg. He wanted to go home. Father had him by the throat. I forget the doctor's first name, You're not going home, you gonna stay right here, ok? Well, it went back and forth and they screamed at each other. Oh, it was terrible. Before you knew it, here comes screaming. It's a girl!. Ok, fine, good. Now the doctor went home. So the baby sister was born during an air raid in the basement. And you had to register in those days. If somebody passed away or if somebody was born. So father, that's the first thing you do. So father went to the bürgermeister haus the next day and wanted to register is latest creation. Oh, Heinrich, we, ja, good, I'm fine. What's new? Um, Maria, we had another little girl. Oh, yeah? What are you gonna name her. Mareda, Ok. When was she born. Yesterday. So the doctor, whatever those people, secretary, I don't know. I don't know what you call them.. got the file of our family, and wanted to put in my sister's name and he says, Heinrich, you know what? You got two of them on the same day. What do you mean, two of them? Well, your daughter Maria was born in 1935 same day. We didn't even know it in the excitement. So I have two sisters still in Germany today. Maria was born '35, the baby in '44. They're 9 years apart. They have birthday the same day. And they all doing well. And we all made it through the war.

Question: Were you your father's favorite do you think?

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Answer: I don't think father played favorites. My mama was a good one for that.

Question: So you weren't your Mom's favorite?

Answer: But, uh, no, I turned out to be like her husband. Strong-willed, stubborn as hell. Um, I wasn't the daughter mother probably wanted. I was more like half girl, half boy. I had to be. I was no sissy like my sisters turned out to be. You know, I mean they didn't have to do anything. Everything was done for them. I don't know, I turned also from all 6 I would say I'm the strongest. I don't know why. The sister next to me with the polio boy, I mean, he learned to be a tailor, because he couldn't ever have a trade standing up doing any job on account of the leg. He was operated on many, many times, wore braces for years. So father got him a job tailoring, because he could sit like the Chinamen do, and found him a job with a tailor. A well-known tailor, and this brother turned out to be a tailor. He would make suits, and buttonholes.. perfect. And he had lots of clients, lots of people when the war was over and gradually there were goods to be bought, but nothing ready on the racks. So they would come, Herr Wolf, Mr. Wolf, if he wasn't known, others would call him by his first name. I got so and so, I want you to make me a suit, I want you to make this, I want you to make that. They guy was busy. He was sewing all day, all night. He hardly got to sleep, he was busy. Now my sister Maria, she's a sissy. I love her dearly. We on email twice a week. She came to visit me once 3 years ago. First time that she came to visit me. Good, Lord, well, I came to United States in 1953, but in between 1953 and now I had gone home, when my parents started to be ill and then passed away. I went home to funerals. But that's the first time, so we had a great visit. She's a sissy, but she ist a lovable person. Ah, you love her the minute you see her, but she is weak. She is not a strong girl, but she's a good woman, and the boy next to her is who, Dagobert, the Christmas boy. He is 6'3". He is my favorite. He's my favorite. And then there comes the one born in 1941, Heinz. He's Junior. Heinrich, Heinz, they're called, ok? He's somewhat of a big shot in his trade. And then my baby sister. She works in a department store. She loves doing what she's doin'. So and they all got children, so many of them.

Question: Why do you remember your communion date so strongly?

Answer: Because it was the 16th of April, 1939. If there was a calendar to be had today, it was Weißer Sonntag, White Sunday. That's when you had to be less than 10 years old, and I was 8, wasn't I? January 31, '39, I was 8, ja, and a few months. Uh, why do I remember that day. Oh, God. You know what Holy Communion means? You do? Catholic.

Question: Episcopalian.

Answer: It's like your wedding day as a bride when you were an adult, ok? I didn't know that then. I know it now. Anyway, my godmother, my namesake, she's my mother's older sister, and because I have her name, and she's my godmother, in Germany still today you are responsible to the child that carries your name...you give your name to. So my godmother saw to it that she would dress me for my holy communion, and it had to be all white, except, oh, the shoes were white, too. From inside out and brand new. She had the dress tailored. Was gorgeous. I got the picture at home. And White Sunday came in the morning and we all the girls and boys in town my age, thereabouts, we met at the sisters, Catholic sisters'

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establishment, and we all were paraded in deuces from the sisters' house through the main street on up to the church, and it had, oh God, at least 100 stairs going up. And all along the way there were the townspeople on both sides, and the church had a band, or the town had a band, they were leading us with hymns. And in front of us communion children were the little kids. Like you would have, when somebody marries today, you have the little ones throwing rose petals, and as we walked, well then we would step on the petals. Allllll the way to church. Got into the church and the boys there and the girls there and the family in the back. It's something you just won't, you just can't forget. The feeling you have as an 8 year old, dressed all in new clothes. You carried your candle and it was decorated with asparagus fern and it had a cover so your name wouldn't show, ok? You held your candle, it was a big one, and on this hand you had a little purse and a rosary. Well, I also remember that date so well because we all were given from our priest our hymn book, Gesangbuch and on the first cover it would be addressed to the recipient, which was me, you know, Theresia Maria Wolf, and in print April 16, 1939, and when our house burned down, we lost the first floor, my bedroom. I found my hymnbook with the date in it. About half of it was burned, but I don't know what happened to it. Mother didn't give it to me when I left home in '53, and that day is just imprinted in, you just can't forget it. It's just like your wedding day. How can you forget your wedding day, huh?

Question: Now your aunt, was she very special to you?

Answer: Yes, well that goes back to the times with the fields, you see. In 1940 when we moved across the river to the house I was still able to come by train to Nackenheim where we, where I was born, where we went to the fields and harvest all that. Why, my godmother was still a single woman at the time, although she was born in 1910, first of April, in 1941, she was 31 years old, looking after me being 9-10 years old, 8, 9, 10. And grandmother, she had her house to run and lunches to pack for her husband and her sons to go into the fields. My godmother was in charge of me, yes she was close to me. You're darn right, she was. And I went to see her before she passed away in 1982, 3. I could look in my passport. The date would be stamped in there. But she made it to 92 years of age, so she lived a long time. My father died age of 77 in 1986? I went home. The kids are still alive. He died of stomach cancer, and then a year later my mother was ready to call it quits and started with Parkinson's Disease and my siblings said, Theresia, you want to see Mother you better come on home, so I had to make this flight again all alone. But we put her in the local nursing home, and I didn't make it to her funeral, and she died when she was 82, so she lived 5 years after father died.

Question: Did your aunt ever marry?

Answer: No, well, I retract that. Yes, she did. But through the church. There was no time where she could find a man, and she was very particular, um, and there was hardly no men to be had, you know, so many got killed in the war. Um, the church knew her, of course. She was born in that church and baptized just like I was in that church. And they found her a man way, in Bad/orb, B-a-d-slash-o-r-b. Oh, God, I don't know where it is. Never heard of it in my life. There was a man. His name was George Lauer, L-a-u-e-r-. He was, uh, he served in the war, the last one, World War II, and the first in earlier years. He was widowed, had a beautiful brick house, and those two, through the church, met and married, and she did that only when she could leave home. She stayed as long as she was needed on that farm, ranch type house, and when grandmother died in '49, and then it must have been in

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'49, '50, thereabouts where this house went to the oldest son, and then my godmother married this man in Bad/Orb, and took grandfather with her, ok, so grandfather was taken care of. And she finally was married. Good heavens, you want this, I can supply that? I got it at home in the books. Didn't know I was going to talk about this. And, but that marriage didn't last long. The man was ill. He, um, had injuries from the war, just like Reginald, and she nursed him till grandfather died, but by that time I think I said that earlier, I didn't catch that, either I was already in the United States, so thinking about it, and I have in the past 49 years, I have cried many a times, that I didn't make it, you know. I grew up and started a family and come to the United States, and leaving everybody, ja, it hurts. And the older you get and the possibilities I may not be around tomorrow morning, that kind of thing enters your mind, you know. ja, it hurts.

Question: What's one of your favorite memories of your godmother?

Answer: Being, going to the fields with her. Waking me up in the wee hours in the morning to get the asparagus out before the sun, before daylight came. All these months going to the fields, teaching me how to take care of the body, which my mother, she kept us clean, but there was no teaching. She had no time for this. My godmother made time. She taught me lots of things. Um, I don't know it was just being with her. She was, she was almost better than my mother, but I shouldn't say that as a daughter. In many ways she was better than my mother.

Question: You were like a daughter to her.

Answer: Ja, ja. I liked the way she treated me. She had time for me. My mother had no time for me ok? That was missing in my growing up.

Question: So when you were on the farm helping with the harvests, you lived there?

Answer: All summer long, of course. And then our school years is nothing like it is here. It was just from 8 – 1, or from 8 – noon. Um, during the war, I missed lots of years and hours in school. Why, ok? All the men, doesn't matter what age. You own a farm, let's say, and you're gonna be drafted, you gotta get in that uniform for Hitler, ok? Ok, now you're leaving your wife and all that stuff behind, all those fields. Who's going to do the work? There is no neighbor to help you, and if there were neighbors to help you they were elderly men, no good for nothing, I mean, field work wise, ok? So they turned to the local mayors, bürgermeister, and that means that they need help, can he get us help? So, it got to us in school. So when we were at school, and were dismissed almost, teacher would say, Um, now tomorrow morning, don't be wearing your nice clothes for school, come in old clothes we're going to the fields, and when that first started, I had no idea what she was talking about. But I presented it to my mother. Why do I have to wear that old clothes? I don't know. Die Lehrerin said for you to wear this. This is what I'm going to put on you and this is how you're gonna go to school, and so we all were in school. We all gathered, and then she said, we gonna go to such and such a town, and that was like marching, too, you know. It was fun in a way, not have to go to school and sit all day and study. We were out in the open. I love out. I rather be outside than inside, anywhere, anytime. So we marched to the next town, and when we got to the fields, there were people already working there, and our teacher spoke with them, came back to us, and we were told what to do. For instance, when the potatoes were planted, they start to grow, but then everything you plant is bound to

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have a disease, and insect eating on it. So you had to pick the potato bug. I don't know if you know what that is. I didn't know what the buggers looked like, but that's what they were called, Kartoffelkäfer. We had to pick them. All of it. All of it. Row by row by row. We didn't finish that day, why the next day we come again. We did that for months and months. Now this farmer, then it was their turn, then it was their turn. We had to do farm work instead of schooling.

Question: You were pretty busy.

Answer: Busy.

Question: Trying to help your father find food.

Answer: Oh, my dear man. You haven't got a clue. I don't even know what it is to play. Like my sister was lucky to do years later. They play ball, they do this, they do that. I have to do that yet today. I ain't got time for this. I never learned to do this. I never had time to do this.

Question: So your childhood sort of disappeared during...

Answer: Oh, it was robbed. It was robbed. But I do it again.

Question: Did your father, when he was drafted, how long was he gone?

Answer: I cannot put dates on it.

Question: Just approximately.

Answer: A year. Mother got him back.

Question: Do you remember the day he left?

Answer: No. I just remember him saying that uh. He was in that stupid-looking uniform. He looked stupid in that uniform. Didn't suit him at all. Um, he just said that he had to go and we were understood what it is, you know, and why, and it was hard, ja, without him being there. Leading the family into daily routines. It was all up to mother now, and of course me. But we had, that year went fast, I suppose, because he was back home.

Question: Did the, when you in the, were you ever in the Hitler Youth

Answer: Oh, yeah. Golly, but not long. Another reason, just like my mother helping my father. Everybody had to join it if you wanted to or not, ok? And we had to wear this white blouse and this particular skirt and this necktie, whatever, with the Hitler stuff on it. But I don't remember, it wasn't a daily thing. But you did have to go to meetings. I remember that. And being there you had to do this Hitler thing, first, you know that song. Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles what that translates to. Ah, there wasn't much going on, and again, my mother, my father this time. My father saw to it that I get out of this ridiculous whatever they call it. He, I was needed at home and he had proven everybody knew it. So there was no argument. He got me out. So it was just couple months, if it was a couple months. But I didn't have to do this no more. And then my siblings behind were younger, so they were out of the picture completely.

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Question: Were you aware of, before things got really bad, were you aware of what was going on in the world, the war and

Answer: I had no idea what this was all about. I, nobody explained to me, to us. Things at the dinner table, there was never talk of war. My father just talked of the work he had to do, and then he would ask her how did your day go? Did the kids mind you, and uhh, mostly me, if I didn't mind my mother and she was mad at me, why she would tattletale that to father, and I got whipped pretty hard by him, and that practically killed him, but he had to punish me to please mother. And also to teach me to be a better daughter to mother, you know. Do what she tells you to do, you know. But I rather took orders from my father as my mother, so that was a clash, you see. So yeah, that was that.

Question: The young men in town, did you see them go away to the military? Did you notice that this...

Answer: Just neighbors. Just neighbors. I don't know, Mother would just tell father on the dinner table, Oh, did I tell you Adolph Right next door, he was drafted, he's gone now. Well, he was in a factory all day, you see, so when he came home, he wanted to know how our days went. What's new, what did you do, what needs to be done, you know, but boys at my age, oh no. We were too young. No, no, no.

Question: No, I mean just that you saw people leaving.

Answer: I didn't see them leave. You just heard it, that this is gone, that man's gone, he was drafted, he's gone. Uh, that's about all that I know of.

Question: Even though you didn't understand it you must have heard on the radio, did you have a radio?

Answer: We had a radio, but who listens to radio. I mean, during the day we all were busy. Ok, in the evening hours, um, there was radio. Of course, it was turned on, and when the younger ones were upstairs in bed, mother and I we had some socks to darn. You know, holes in the socks and a button to put on. Father would have the radio on, but poooh.. didn't interest me in the least. I was talking with mother, you know, what needs to be done next. I didn't. No, nobody told or explained to me what war is, no. I just had to find out the hard way when the air raids and running to the shelter and why does this get bombed. I don't know, there was no talk. My father was a neutral person. He didn't talk politics. He was not a politician. He didn't belong to no party. There was no such talk in my house. And if they did talk, our bedrooms, kids were upstairs; theirs was downstairs, and every room the door. Everything was always closed. Um, and whispering more or less. Us kids were not told, this is war and I'm going to tell you what war is and who's fighting who. Nothing.

Question: SO that time to you was just working...

Answer: Yeah, it was just working to survive, yeah. And before you knew it, years went by.

Question: Then you did get bombed, though, in that time.

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Answer: Oh, ja. My town of Gustavsburg we had the Main River meeting the Rhine River at a point, ok? And right at that point, that's where we lived, still today, Gustavsburg, Kastel, and our factories and a whole lot of bridges, and a lock. Now if American fliers or the British, if they didn't intend to bomb our bridges, which were just bridges to get from one town to the other over there or the railroad bridge, maybe they meant to bomb Frankfurt. Or Rüsselsheim the Opel factory, huh? We're so close together, those towns in home. In 5 minutes today by car, you're in the next town, you know. We even walked it in ½ hour, on a Sunday afternoon. Where do you want to go today. OH, let's go to Bischofsheim Ok. WE walk. I a half hour you there. So the bombs strayed, and then we got hit. Our town got hit. But I doubt it purposely, there's nothing there but an iron factory.

Question: What was that like? We haven't talked to anybody who has been a victim of a bombing. What it is like as a child? What do you remember from..

Answer: Well, we came home. We spent '44 fall into '45, days and days and nights in a high-rising, bombproof cement bunker. Two stories. And my father being well known and a foreman in his job, he had a job not being in the bunker, but to protect the factory. Robbers, you know. People would take advantage. Everybody's in the bunker, let's go rob the stores, that kind of thing. He was also a medic with the Red Cross like I mentioned. We had to go on this particular night to the shelter and it took a long time. It took hours and hours, and in between when father could find his way to the bunker he came to us and he told us what was going on, and then, of course, our neighbors and everybody first come serve, we all sit about. And he would say, our house got hit. Our house got incinerator bombs. Our house is burning or burned. And my mother just lost it, ok. My mother just screamed. And of course we heard what father said and then we started to cry joining our mother. Having no house, where we gonna sleep and eat? And so when it was the all-clear sound we could leave the bunkers, we ran home. WE didn't walk. We couldn't get there fast enough, and our house was connected with fields, not owned by us, to farmers who had this land, and there was a ditch. And when we neared our house, we could still see the smoldering, and in the ditch were my baby sister's diapers. You know, she was just born in September '44. She probably was just a month or two old. Her diapers were there, pots and pans was there. I guess whoever tried to save the house threw everything out and it landed there, ok? But I didn't. I said, oh, never mind that I was interested in my house, my bed. And the whole first floor was gone, but the rest of it was there. So where do we sleep now? Where do we live now? Where do we go now? So the Red Cross was there to help. Anybody, not just us. And the neighbors who were spared. Ah, Frau Wolf, can I help you? What do you need? Blah, blah, blah. And so my father went into the basement and really fixed it up for us to live there. We had no place to live, but we all got sick living there for months at a time. In a basement, the cement, the moisture. We were constantly, somebody was sick. Not having enough soap, you couldn't wash, you just washed your face. We broke out in boils from not being able to wash and to bathe, stuff like that. But then father managed again, wizard, to get this house back in shape, so whatever animals he could get, whatever he could muster, he traded it for bricks and cement, and him and his working colleagues and family members what have you. They tore the top down and rebuilt it. So in a year's time, we had our house back, what the heck, but it was hard, difficult to live in a basement.

Question: Can we stop just for a minute 'cause we have to change tapes.