

Tape 3 Mom Recollects Past

This is the last recording, last tape that we're going to make on your experiences.

Remember in the first tape we talked about your early childhood and going up to about the time of 1914, and then we talked about the family, relatives, names, relationships. Then the second tape we talked about 1914, war years, what it was like growing up, some of the things that you did, and your decision to come to the new world, to America.

And I think we finished the second tape which got you on the train over to Indianapolis, and at that point you began your life here in Indianapolis, and I thought we would begin there today talking about the first year, your experiences, people that you met, and then maybe the first four or five years as immigrants in the new world, in the country, your ideas, things that were different than in Germany as you grew up, and your thoughts about the rise to power in Germany of Hitler and some things along that line. Of course it was strange, but we enjoyed every bit of it, because Dad would have to look for a job first, and he found a job in Rome where he lived in America. He tried to learn more English, but what astounded us most of all is when we heard children speaking, we couldn't quite talk that fast.

But how did you go about learning? Well, Uncle Hans always advised us to read the papers, and we would read the papers and go to shows that helped, and of course you didn't have television, which might have helped, but it didn't take as long as we had it in school, but that isn't the same. You just feel like people are talking to us. Well, where did you stay? I was in Germany for a little while.

I actually wasn't very well. That was the beginning, but he wanted me to come around in the beginning to Hitler, and I stayed until we got married. I met a lot of people.

The family was just wonderful to us, and I met friends of mine, and I met neighbors that were just lovely people. The fridges next door, one of the sisters talked, and they'd been in Germany, and they couldn't talk enough about it and want to know about it. And then, next to them, the Troys, they came from the south, and they are just very nice people.

Cross the street, Seamus, and all of them. I just like all of them. What did your dad do? Did he work anywhere? No, he worked at Wannegut, of course.

Dad knew Mr. Wannegut, I mean Uncle Hannes knew Mr. Wannegut, and so he worked there, and he shopped. He learned the language. Then he applied at Lund Bell.

Of course, this wasn't the job he wanted. He worked at Wannegut. He did, I believe, machinery.

He worked somehow with machinery. And he got a job as a tour-major, which you remember he learned the trade as a tour-major before he went to the university. That was the way they usually did.

So they learned that for two and a half years, and then went to the university. So it was right in his field. He worked about two or three years, and then he got tired of it, and he applied for a job at the cash register company in Dayton.

Donald had been born in Dayton. Oh, I hated to move away. He lived in Woodward Place, in a nice apartment.

But he accepted the job, and then he told them he'd noticed that he wanted to leave. The superintendent said, Oh, you're not going to leave? He said, Why didn't you tell us you were an engineer? They said, Of course, you know us. And so he said, Well, we pay you as much as the cash register company, and you stay right here and get into the engineering department.

And that's how he got this job until the end. What about your passage? Oh, no, no. I never had to pay off my passage.

Dad did, of course, but Uncle Hans had invited me. I did not pay off my passage here, but I did help him out, and I imagine she appreciated that. I got used to living here.

It's all so different. And I learned something. I learned to cook.

I never knew how to cook. That's how I learned to make the spätzle, you know. In the north, never heard of spätzle.

Part of Germany, Denmark, loves spätzle. That's how I learned to make them, and to bake and cook. It did me a lot of good.

I went to an English school for a while, an English class, and my dad went to Tech High School, and that's where I learned. What kind of classes did he take? I don't know what kind of classes. I don't remember what kind of classes he took.

English, I know, but he took some other classes also. How long did you have to wait before you could apply? Well, Dad applied right away. I think you had to wait three years at the time.

He applied right away then, and got a citizenship. He didn't go to school. He had to take the test, yes, but he just learned what he needed to learn.

Now, I got my citizenship I think when you were a baby, but I went to school. Dad would take me, and I enjoyed the school. In fact, after I passed my examination, I stayed on going to school a lot.

Well, it's just the American citizenship history. Just all you had to know. There was a big article in the paper after he took our citizenship exam.

They said that 99%, the reporter said that 99% of the people born here couldn't answer those questions. Then when did you get to Detroit? What was your wedding like? Oh, well, the wedding the Fletchers and the Troys went out to the flowers. They had the Green Wing and Fall of Presentiment farm, and gathered and bought all the presentiments.

The whole house was filled with it. And we were married inside a church in a sanctuary. Very short.

And we had rented a house on the top of, up close to the link belt, because Dad wanted to come home for lunch. He always had stomach troubles. He had a lot of trouble with his stomach.

So it was best for him to come home for lunch. So we stayed there till about I was very sick. So we rented a house where we lived.

And the family was big. So we bought our house in Toronto. When did you get your first car? It must have been a taxi, because Dad worked more underneath the car than we were riding it.

But he really enjoyed it. He learned all about automobiles. You know, that was his dream.

That after he came to this country, he would go to Detroit and work for Ford Company. He wanted that interest in automobiles. And he certainly learned to know how to repair an automobile.

He did everything on this old car. It wasn't so old. It must have been a taxi.

It had a lot of miles on it. You don't want me to answer that, do you? Well, yeah, I tried. I just tried when I became pregnant with you.

So, of course, we stopped. So after you were too old, I started again. And Dad would teach me.

You had no automatic shift. You had to shift. And I would rock the car.

And I see him. He drove down Sturm Avenue. And the milkman with horses was coming.

And I came so close, Dad said. Well, the horse stuck his head in the car window. But I didn't hit the horse.

I just made it. And another time we went out to try and learn to drive. Dad had you on his lap.

And he said, don't rock the car. Give a gas. He said, give a gas.

I would rock the car. And you kind of, you could just talk. And next time Dad had said, well, he wasn't going to say it anymore.

He was thinking. So he didn't say anything. And I rocked the car again.

And I, give a gas. Give a gas. So that was the end.

I didn't want to learn anymore. That was it. Oh, it wasn't.

I just didn't get acquainted very soon. I found John who played with Bobby Donahue that lived two doors from us. And he was such a nice boy.

And they would come over and he would play. And so I got acquainted with his mother. And we became good friends.

That's how I got into their bridge club. That's how I met Eva Turner. See, we had learned to play bridge when we lived still out west.

Dad had met Harvick. He came from Sweden. And then we met Harvick's cousin.

She also came from Sweden. And that was funny, I tell you. Because she couldn't speak any German or English.

And I couldn't speak Swedish. But we sure got along fine. And then we met Elsa Werdicke.

At that time, he was Elsa and she met Werdicke. He came from Berlin. So we had a nice time.

They would visit us. We had a lot of joy having them visit us. Harvick's was a very good bridge builder.

And he taught us. It didn't take us long to be a great bridge. Let's go back again.

Our great bridge had a bridge club in Sturm. And when Eva and Pat sold this store, they had a grocery store in Black & Babbiton. And we had to leave.

But we still made a great bridge for them. So when Eva's farm was dry, to this day, we made a bridge for them. What were some of the other things that you did? Oh, we had lots and lots of family fests, family gatherings, eternal clouds and tambourines.

And pictures, of course. And a small family got married. And did you heard Lillie would often take us out.

She would often take us. She would take us. I was saying, you know, when you said my birthday, at the same time, the August 5th, we celebrated birthdays together.

And to listen to them. I think it's still there. And we always had such a nice time.

It was just like when we died, it was just like he was. He must have been about 50. Yes, he was.

I remember when Bob married Nell's son. And Lillie didn't have a cutaway, so he borrowed my dad's cutaway. And it was a shame because I liked him.

Did you get involved in any activities? Well, I belonged to school, school 14. I belonged to the PTA and belonged to the Mother's Chorus, once you put on the play. And all things like everybody else does.

What about when you were a little boy? Yes, when you were a tiny baby. She was working for the ship's yard. She was the secretary of the director of that huge ship's yard.

I also was working in the office. Of course, they were building ships. And they built an ocean liner for a Dutch line.

And so the captain said, if she'd like to ride along to America, and she said, I certainly would. I have a brother living there. And so Tunde Frieda came and we rode.

Elizabeth Geisler, this girlfriend of mine, worked in the office with me. She married and lived in New Jersey. And I asked her to meet the boat.

And so he did and he put Tunde Frieda on the train to come here. And Dad met her. And I tell you, they talked the whole night long.

And she was only here, could only stay for a few days because, that isn't true, because he didn't put her on a train, he put her on the bus. She wanted to come on a bus because she wanted to see America. And she said, even at night it was moonlight, she never slept away, all the way from New York, because she wanted not miss anything.

Well, of course they did. We went to Margaret and Court. They lived on Gilford then.

We still have pictures from that. And of course I met Laura and my father, so we went a long way. But we went to Margaret and Court.

Court was just a baby and we were still young. And by the time when she came that night, you were asleep and she looked in the crib and you opened your eyes and you said, Guten Tag, and then tickled her. Well, how did she feel? At that time, she didn't know anything about it.

She didn't mention it as far as I know and as far as I remember. She went back then to New York by train. Dad put on the train and Mr. Gadsby's husband met her again.

And he showed her New York and she told me later on, she said, you know that I almost missed my boat. And I tried to tell him and he always wanted to show me something else. And so finally, we were coming to its pier and they tooted because they had to leave.

The boat had to leave and I wasn't on it. She said, I had to run. Get on.

Yeah, she was quite aghast. She's still aghast. She had a wonderful sense of humor.

We went to English classes together, she and I. What about your decision? Oh, always. Child on, I wanted to live in the country. And Dad had promised me that someday we could live in the country.

Because I couldn't wait. So at the time, just a year before, it started a year before we moved, we always took a drive on Sundays and we often took Mrs. Hawkins along because they did not have a car. And she knew everything where to go.

When she went first to Edgeworth, she knew Edgeworth. They had lived in South, before they had built a house in Clark. So I loved Edgeworth.

It was all full of trees and it was a pretty country. And so finally, we almost bought a great big place in Edgeworth. Dad was ready to sign and I got scared because there were three acres of ground.

I didn't know how to manage that. And the house was built. It was a beautiful house.

Dad had brought Mr. Barton out to see if everything was all right. And he said yes. He wanted to buy it.

And he had the pen in his hand at the realtor. He saw that I got nervous and said let's just think about it. And so we decided then not to buy it.

But it shouldn't matter. Then it wasn't modern but it had the bathroom. So we bought the fixtures for the bathroom.

It was all fit for bath, but no fixtures and no water yet. So the first thing when we moved in, Dad had to shave out the cold. He said, he went to the library and got all the books on plumbing.

He learned it. He got the fixtures and he put the water in the sewer system. And so he got more money.

Now then Mrs. Bush would come home and she'd come home almost every day. She wanted to sell her house to Dad and build a house but she didn't want to advertise. And she said, now this house isn't big enough for you.

She used to talk and talk. You should buy it. We still had the house in Stone, you know.

And we had a ranger. I said, Mrs. Bush, just afford it. And just so she talked and talked finally she decided we could afford it.

So she talked to Dad and it was, I thought it was a beautiful place. And do you know we had that cow. There you go.

Oh dear, you really lived on the farm then. Some chickens. Oh, we had some dandelion chickens.

You know, we moved out first and he just sort of said, he couldn't see it how deep the men is that way forward. And he loved to come at the time that Laura died. He loved to come out and spend the weekend doing service special.

He used to come out and spend the weekend because he had no room by himself. It doesn't seem so long ago. We even had two goats once but not for long.

Oh, two goats. I wonder if they were alive. Yes, Rita did talk about it a lot.

Of course she did at that time that she was here because she said they were supposed to put the swastika up the flag and he would do it. So he didn't put the old German flag on but he did put the state flag. We had blue, white, red was the state flag of Sweden.

So he put it up high on holidays, you know, like he always did and then the police came and I don't know what happened but Rita was very worried about it but they couldn't do anything with him. That's what his mother used to say. It's just like his father.

He wouldn't take it down either. He said that was his state. He said he'd have to come back to the police department.

I don't remember how it was. I guess he went down and told them the same thing. They couldn't do a thing with him.

They realized he was old and I guess maybe he got one of the nicer men. He went to Rita and said... That was quite a lot of time.