

Interviewer: Can you say your full name and when you were born and where you were born?

Ragoish: My name is Lieselotte Ragoish and I was born in Uberlingen Germany which is on the Swiss boarder so I am a German Southerner and the date was 24 February 1926.

Interviewer: Were you in a rural or an urban area?

Ragoish: Urban

Interviewer: Urban?

Ragoish: Small towns mostly.

Interviewer: Okay

Ragoish: Well no one bigger town when I graduated from high school.

Interviewer: Do you remember what your father's jobs was?

Ragoish: Yes he was a tax assessor and worked for the government.

Interviewer: Do you remember do you want to just talk about what you remember trough the war? What it was like growing up there?

Ragoish: During the war there was rationing everything was very rationed and you couldn't buy anything so money wasn't worth much at the time because it was thinking of my children my growing up it was easier because you didn't want anything. There was no Reebok problem or expensive shoes or whatever because you couldn't buy anything. So it was up to your mothers to lengthen and shorten and widen your dressed. And you were lucky if you had a trunk in the attic where you had some old clothes you could redo.

Interviewer: Was your family associated were they involved in politics? I assume some since he worked for the government.

Ragoish: I don't think so.

Interviewer: You don't think so?

Ragoish: No, not much but my parents were older. They were in the 40s when they finally had me and I was an only child and born in 26 so that was before Hitler. And I do remember hard times there because a lot of people out of work would come begging at the door. And I was cautioned never to open the door and it got better after 33. People were working and seemed to me happier or anyway I don't know. I was in the Hitler Union that started right off when I was seven years old and my mother was happy to get me into something with other kids and it was fun. It wasn't much different than Girl Scouts we had little diddly things and sang a lot and played a lot and sports. We ran track and we did this we did that in school too so anyway.

Interviewer: Were you on the track team when you were little?

Ragoish: Well we don't have that you had track in school. In the summer you ran track and in the winter you are on parallel bars sports were very important. So you had to and you had to do that for your grade and so you learned a routine on the parallel bars and like I said it was your grade in your what is it called what you get? At the end of the year. Grades

Interviewer: Grades. Do you remember anything much about Hitler and the Nazis?

Ragoish: Never saw him. No, I was young I was in I didn't listen to my parents when they discussed things, did you?

Interviewer: Not really.

Ragoish: See there that's what I mean I was interested in having a good time and doing the same thing. I lost my parents in 40 and there was an estate and there was enough money for me to continue my education. And I went to boarding school and that might be interesting. The nuns weren't allowed to teach anymore it was the Ursuline Nun Boarding School. Ursuline is for education but they couldn't teach we went to a regular outside school but then came back and then the nuns took over. We had study hours and dinner and we had plays and things and there was always something. There were enough girls that played the piano in the various stages so we put on plays and it was okay. Like I said I had a good time. We did now this was in _____ and the planes went over because _____ is near France. And you know they came over so we had a lot of air raids and of course we had to go to the cellar that was sort of fixed up. We had some cots there and things for everybody and we were supposed to carry a suitcase with three days of clothes. First of all none of us had much clothes at least me. I carried an empty suitcase and nothing happened, I graduated in the spring all schools do eastern not in the fall like you do. And that fall and I don't know if they ever figured out why, they destroyed the city total almost. Possibly because they had to dump their bombs because there was nothing _____ was very _____ of town on the foot of the Black Forest. Had a lot of hospitals and very good medical university medic studies and but anyway it was very very sad and it was many many casualties because everybody felt safe because this was the end of the war and nobody went to the shelter.

Interviewer: Do you know about how much before the end of the war it was?

Ragoish: There was just months before. In the fall and the war was over I'm not sure the spring of 45 so.

Interviewer: Do you remember like the day the war started or were you not really did you not pay attention?

Ragoish: Well again we had how do I say that, controlled news.

Interviewer: Right

Ragoish: Newspaper everything was stayed on or whatever the radio. I mean controlled anyway.

Interviewer: Censored

Ragoish: Anyway I did remember listening some and I was convinced that we had a right to go into Poland that was when it started.

Interviewer: Right

Ragoish: Because Poland that part of Poland was actually Germany they gave it to Poland after the First World War. And I think the whole I remember even learning in school and what not all the territories that were lost after the First World War were actually ours. And so when the thing started in Poland I thought we had a right to do that I mean I was 13.

Interviewer: Right

Ragoish: And of course my parents didn't say every much or I didn't listen I don't know. I imagine my father hated war he had a stiff arm with a whole lot of shrap metal and he had a bayoneted anyway.

Interviewer: Did he fight in World War One?

Ragoish: Yes

Interviewer: Did you believe that there's be a wonder weapon toward the end of the war to turn the tide for Germany?

Ragoish: No

Interviewer: Did you hear anything about that?

Ragoish: I knew that we had a new plane I heard that one time. It was very frightening what is it the Chet exhaust?

Interviewer: Yes

Ragoish: So I knew that but I didn't know what for and like I said, I was in boarding school didn't listen to the news there. And then I was drafted in something in a year you had between graduating and university or whatever else you were going to do. You had to work a year for the ___ for Germany for the good of Germany.

Interviewer: The Rikes?

Ragoish: The _____ yes. And so I was drafted but first of all before then you had an exam a physical like soldiers and I was physically fit so I was drafted and I went to Central Germany where I'd never been before. And worked on farms and it was a lot of fun too with lots of girls. And it was where we were the camp if you want to call it that was an old castle. And it had a spiral staircase 44 steps and on the first floor were the shower and the washroom and the second was the dining room and kitchen and all of that. And way on top was the bedrooms and bathrooms was on the second floor. And if you had to go at night you had to come down those stone steps and the leaders or whatever you want to call the ones in charge were on the second floor they had rooms there. And they heard you know a bunch of girls going up and down you know they complained about it. And also we had what is it soldiers do in the morning?

Interviewer: PT

Ragoish: PT okay so you were woken up like at five and then you ran and you did all types of calisthenics. And I remember we had one leader to shoot her she said to be cold is a sign of weak character. And we ran rain and shine you know. But is still I enjoyed it I'm a city girl or a small city girl but I like farm work. And everything was done by hand because first of all I imagine they didn't have the machines and then there wouldn't have been gasoline.

Interviewer: Right

Ragoish: So it was hoeing and weeding and crawling up and down fields planting things.

Interviewer: Did they heavily ration gasoline?

Ragoish: Oh yes there was no gasoline at the end even army trucks had stoves on the side. They actually you know that better with wood gas. They had to go out and keep feeding that thing that they built on the side, there was no gas.

Interviewer: When was your, did you have any contact with the allied troops?

Ragoish: Well after the war when we lost it.

Interviewer: Toward the end of the war when you lost it?

Ragoish: How could we?

Interviewer: You didn't interact with them much?

Ragoish: Well no there was no interaction until the war was over. The first American soldier I was I was in Yana then because well this too difficult but well I wasn't home. And they were riding on this funny what do you call it Jeep? Is that right that car that thing open?

Interviewer: Jeep yes

Ragoish: They all sat in there and that was the funniest thing.

Interviewer: Were they so you had contact with the Americans or British or?

Ragoish: Americans the Americans well I went back to the city where I lost my parents and that was American occupied. The 15th constabulary was in town and of course when they war was over there were no schools no banks whatever ____ lost thing. And you had a military government it was called and somebody regulated what was going on. We had curfew we had to be in by 10 o'clock and couldn't get out until six in the morning on the street. And rations still were Germany has a lot of people and it is small so we import most everything and of course there was no money they had to fix the that's why after the First World War they had inflation they just kept printing money. I don't understand the whole thing but you have to have you just can't print money you have to have, Michael. Somebody came in.

Interviewer: You have to have the wealth to back the money they print.

Ragoish: So anyway well I think it was two years until they figured out what to do and then things got better because they could import stuff. And but anyway the 15th constabulary in town occupied we saw a lot of soldiers on the street and we saw their uniforms were so much different than the German uniforms. And I well the schools were closed the universities were closed they had to fix the books and the study material because they had to be de-Nazified. And so one great thing was if you worked for Americans you got lunch they fed you lunch. You had to pay for it but that was okay but you didn't have to give a ration card. So if you there was one person in the family that didn't have to be fed lunch with very short rations. So I worked first in the and I had school English which wasn't very good but better than some other people I guess they hired me in a library. It was a very little thing that they fixed for the soldiers it was in a private home two rooms and bookshelves and whatever. And I have to tell an antidote, when you learn a foreign language it's a foreign language. And its shit is a wonderful word especially when it's foreign. And so I had one soldier he was looking at magazines and I was putting away books and I dropped them and I said and he said ma'am that's not a good word to say if you are lady. And it made a big impression and I never said it again. And I believe he was a ____.

Interviewer: When did you decide to leave Germany? Did you come straight to the United States?

Ragoish: Oh now wait a minute the 15th constabulary left there was an opening for a switchboard operator so I took that job and that's where I met my husband.

Interviewer: Was he military?

Ragoish: He was military yes. I had one trunk if you know anything about switchboards where I plugged in anyway so that's where I met him. And but then he left and then it took me three years, I actually immigrated with papers so I'm legal.

Interviewer: Make sure I got everything. I think that's all I need.

Ragoish: It finally occurred to me watching my kids grow up, they didn't care except school and having a good time. And I don't like I ask you to did you pay attention to what went on?

Interviewer: Not quite so much.

Ragoish: Well we just live from day to day and do your homework, we had a lot of homework. Our schools are different I mean my time I don't know what they are doing now. And you know I watched my kids going through school I now what is that thing where multiple questions?

Interviewer: Yea multiple choice?

Ragoish: Never heard of it and I thought of something why I bet you we never we did essays a lot and teachers made test up. And because multiple what is it?

Interviewer: Multiple choice.

Ragoish: Choice takes a lot of paper doesn't it? All of your tests take a lot of paper and we were very frugal with paper. I remember the first time my husband took me to the commissary and we came home everything packaged everything inside paper, cardboard, and the pretty paper outside. And I said to my husband I didn't know you can't grow trees as fast as you are using paper and he said oh get off the

banana boat. So it's different here than in Germany of course during the war now see this is all the while I'm growing up five years of war, paper was very scarce. We saved every little because we went to the store and they weighted things not like our packages you get it. My mother would send me to the store for half a pound of sugar and during the war we brought actually if we had a sack we brought it and he would. They had these scales and they weighted it that was a new thing and of course bananas and oranges is import fruit. And we had lots of fruit growing so during the summer you eat a lot of fruit homegrown and in the winter you get special orange or banana. And I'll never forget coming home with a sack of oranges and a whole thing of bananas.

Interviewer: One thing I forgot to ask did you have any experience with Russians or were they other place?

Ragoish: Yes I do of course I was stranded like I said in the middle of Germany tooling the stay and it was American occupied. I worked on a farm I didn't know what was still standing in the south if I had any relatives or anybody there so at the time and the farmers needed help. So I stayed and a farmer took me and I worked for him and stayed there and a lot of people came through that little village fleeing from the Russians and telling horrible stories. Then we heard that they you know the ___ treaty that the Americans gave a lot of territory to the Russians. And where I was was going to be Russian territory so I became a refugee. It was almost on the boarder but before I left, and it scared me half to death because of all the stories you heard, I was sent to a sawmill which was actually the boarder eventually. At the end of season the farmers don't have enough straw to put under their animals and they use sawdust. And the farmer had already gone there and sacked them up and I was sent with a horse and wagon and he had gone by bicycle. So they loaded the wagon and he went home on the bicycle it was about six kilometers. And I was on a small road fields all across with the horse. I was sitting on the thing and I heard a car and that's we had only heard rumors that it was going to be Russian territory. And I turned around and it was a military vehicle and I turned around again and it had the star and sickle which the emblem of the Russian Army on the hood of the thing. And I was very frightened there was nowhere I could run to or do anything so I made room as far as I could get over and they drove by. And one rolled down the window and waved and after that I left so. And travel that's maybe interesting I don't know. There were some trains were going between bridges the Germans blew up bridges to slow down the advance. And everybody seemed to be on the road so many people were evacuated from cities that were bombed or went anyway if they had someone in the safer area. And they all tried to get home to see what was left. The radio and the news were nothing now I think they were American controlled I don't know but anyway. Well they signed off this is the thing it was the end of the war a different station would hear the troop the English the American the French advancing we're signing off. And then they would play the German anthem and that was so you know you didn't know what was going on. The mail didn't go either after the war and people carried letters. Somebody coming through the village and maybe begging for some food or whatever they were going there oh would you take a letter, that's what it is. Read *Gone With the Wind*, they had the same problem.

Interviewer: So communication was hard?

Ragoish: Well there was none there was for well for a few months you know if you lose you lose your government you lose I don't know they have to figure out how to. Anyway the trains and they would be full of people I mean standing room only including the toilet people would stand in it. Everybody was trying to get somewhere and again I was just me I found it was a great adventure. And onetime I did I climbed on top and you know this when you well wherever you grow up everybody is an authority figure I mean everybody. Your parents first and then the teacher, the waiter, the conductor everybody is

telling you how to behave. And here I was the thing was full and nobody could get in so I climbed up on the roof of the railroad and I thought to myself now that couldn't happen again could it. But it was scary getting under in a tunnel but I was holding on for dear life. It wasn't going very far fast so anyway. But you did all manner I road in the coal car it used to have coal in it and I finally got to some friends and they had hot water. It took two baths to get clean, you should have seen the ring around the bathtub. I mean this is what happens when. I am against war of any kind I hope they are talking and talking and talking about what is it in the atomic business, come on.

Interviewer: In North Korea?

Ragoish: No what's going on that they are talking? Where American and Israel don't want them to have an atomic bomb.

Interviewer: Oh in Iran.

Ragoish: Yes and I hope they talk for years and years.

Interviewer: Avoid the conflict.

Ragoish: Yes a war absolutely. And I don't understand I listen to book review and things on weekends on its CNN 2 or 3 and some of them are so hawkish is that the word?

Interviewer: I believe so.

Ragoish: I'm a dove so and I would like to tell it's no fun to sit in a cellar and hear the planes go over and not knowing and hearing bombs going off which I had several times when I was in _____. And you sit there and you think I should be on that wall maybe that one is safer. And ration shortage is on fun either. In fact this is after the war families were coming American families and they were interested in all kinds of things you would buy for in exchange for food. And I remember I was somewhere we were having well I was with someone and they had Crisco I remember. They had sold something to somebody some china or whatever and I licked it. Can you imagine licking Crisco? It was delicious you know when you are deprived of something like fat or sugar if there was sugar, it's you need certain foods. Anything else?

Interviewer: I think that's good. Thank you very much for your time.

Ragoish: I hope it helps some.

Interviewer: It does I really enjoyed listening to it.

Ragoish: Now that's a fancy backpack.

Interviewer: Thank you

Ragoish: Oh leather?

Interviewer: It is.

Ragoish: Very nice. Well you know this is something else when you start first grade you get it's a letter it's like and atisha case with straps. And when I started school speaking of paper we still we wrote on slate. We had a slate thing in there and we had a well what you'd call a pencil box but we had the things that you wrote on the slate with. And it screeched it made your teeth long you know like when you do on the backboard. Yes and on one side it had lines where you wrote and on the backside it had little squares for numbers. And they should do it now because if you do your homework and it doesn't look right your mother erases it and you do it over and you don't ball up paper and throw it in the basket.

Interviewer: I guess computers help with that in a similar way.

Ragoish: Oh God have mercy when do computers start in school?