Preface

This manuscript is the product of tape-recorded interviews conducted by John Cockrell for the Oral History Office on October 27, 1981. Margaret Reeder transcribed the tapes and Michael Tirpak edited the transcript. Larry Smith reviewed the transcript.

Larry Smith, raised in the farm community of Bismarck, Illinois, relates life on a midwest farm during World War II. Smith's father was English/German and his mother German. Larry tells of the effect these particular heritages had on the family's perspective on the war. He recalls German prisoners working on the farm and his mother speaking to them in their native language. He also remembers how, during the war years, all signs of German heritage disappeared from his household.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

Table of Contents

Larry Smith, Springfield, Illinois, October 27, 1981.

John Cockrell, Interviewer.

Q: Larry, I would first like to start out by asking a few questions about your personal background and your family background. Could you tell me your date of birth please?

A: August 12, 1937, born in Danville, Illinois.

Q: Were you raised in Danville?

A: I was raised on a farm outside Danville. Closer to Bismarck, Illinois, a little town close to which I grew up but I lived a little, really, on a farm.

Q: Bismarck, is that C-K?

A: That is with a C-K, Bismarck, Illinois. There speaks a German heritage.

Q: What was your father's name?

A: My father's name was J. Herbert Smith. J for John, and my mother's name was Emma Ingram Smith.

Q: Is your father still living?

A: No, he died in 1974. My mother is still alive.

Q: How old was your father when he died?

A: Seventy-four.

Q: So he was born in 1900?

A: Both parents born in 1900.

Q: What was their national origin?

A: My father's origin was largely English with some German tossed in, but principally English. My mother's origin were nearly a hundred percent German, both her grandparents were of German origin. Her direct parents were born in this country but their parents had been born in Germany.

Q: Do you know where?

A: No, don't have the vaguest idea.

Q: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

A: I have three brothers and a sister. Do you want names and that sort of thing?

Q: Names and if possible, their ages at the time of your birth or ages today, either one.

A: There is Howard Leland Smith. He's the oldest. He would be sixty-one presently. Next is Mary Ann. Her last name is Astell, now. She would be fifty-nine. Then is Herbert Dale. No, John Raymond is next in there, and he would be fifty-four. Then would be Herbert Dale who is forty-nine. Actually, he's fifty this year. I am forty-four. I'm the baby.

Q: Nearly a twenty-year span across these children, or nearly seventeen years.

A: A lot of years to be having babies.

Q: What was your earliest childhood memory?

A: I've been thinking about that. It was when my sister, with whom I was reasonably close, brought me a birthday present--and I remember the event but I wouldn't have been able to have told how old I was unless I asked her. She gave me a birthday present which I still have, a little tin wagon with a horse connected to it and she gave me that on my fourth birthday. I remember the event but I don't remember--I wouldn't have been able to say, "Oh yes, she gave me that on my fourth birthday," so she had to tell me. I can tell you a great deal about it, as a matter of fact.

We were sitting on the back porch and it was an August afternoon and my sister had a job at the time in Danville. She came home and had this medium sized package with yellow tissue paper with a yellow ribbon around it. I didn't even know it was my birthday that day, I had forgotten all about it. She gave it to me and told me it was my birthday and then I remembered, "Ah yes, it's my birthday," and from that point in the afternoon, birthday things happened. Birthday cakes appeared and ice cream got made that night, it was great fun. I think that's probably why I remember it. It was sort of a spectacular event after I had forgotten that it was my birthday all together. Which sort of thing I never do. I always remember when my birthday is. But I didn't then. My sister was considerably older and was already working at the time.

Q: She would have been about nineteen?

A: Yes.

Q: I'd like to know a little bit more about your parents. Your father was mostly English, some German. You told me an interesting

story the other day about the English side of the Smith family and I wonder if you could repeat that for me now.

A: Sure, about John R. Smith?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, it turns out that in the generations that my father and his brothers and a number of the Smiths--there was always someone in the family whose name was John R. and that caused them to think about why someone would always be named John R. The first name was usually John and the second name was often Ralph but not always, sometimes Raymond. Then somebody said maybe we were related to Captain John R. Smith, at which point an uncle of mine went about studying family lineage and got the people from Washington involved in helping with the family lineage. It turns out that we are in fact related to Captain John R. Smith, who with his liaison with Pocahontas--which was never blessed with marriage, it was simply some children that he happened to have as by-blows, that's what you would call them, with Pocahontas. So that my Smith family in this country is a result of John R. and Pocahontas, so we are on the bar sinister side.

Q: This brings a couple of questions, I think, to mind--and I have no idea how far or how deeply this subject has been studied by your family--but would you have any idea if John R. Smith and Pocahontas' children were raised by John R. Smith?

A: No, they wouldn't have been. They were abandoned. This was the nature of John R. Smith. He was not, quote, "the history book" sort of thing that was a hero sort of fellow--apparently he wasn't. I don't know much about him, except that I've learned he was--arrogant, and that he was a windbag and was not exactly too concerned about what he left behind. The children, two or three, the records are not clear--that he left behind were raised by Indians, and eventually became residents in the East--and the family developed. It's really very vague to me. I never paid much attention to it. The older members of my family, my uncles and the like, were all very excited about the story and I was too young for it to make an impression so I don't know much about it--except that John R. was our forefather, and that we were the result of children left Pocahontas. So she raised them.

I would be hard pressed to tell you who Pocahontas was beyond a sort of a dim vision in a history book. Don't know much about her. Rather disinterested, I guess you would have to say.

Q: Your mother was almost a hundred percent German or she was a hundred percent German, wasn't she?

A: Well I would say almost, because you never can be sure of it--but her heritage was German.

Q: The combination of English-German father and German mother, did they retain, would you say, any of the traits that you feel are characteristic of either one of those nationalities?

A: Well it's good you put it that way, because it's a very subjective thing, you know, what are the English like and what are the Germans like? It's never a one hundred percent case. But certainly my father was a very conservative, reserved, quiet man who knew precisely what he was doing but he was not demonstrative.

While my mother had many of the same characteristics, conservative and quiet, she had a sort of resolve that was unyielding resolve. She would make up her mind about something and that was the way it was, regardless of any facts you might bring her. But still, she deferred to my father's judgement. Wherever he was in the clear authority, she paid attention to what he said. I don't believe, however, she would ever have acquiesced in her beliefs. She may have done what he said was the correct thing to do but that didn't mean that she believed it. But because it was proper to do what the man said, she did what he said. But where she was the boss in raising the children or in anything having to do with the house or homestead, she made clear decisions, based on God only knows what--you never found that out. She made her decisions and once she made the decision, no matter how painful it might be, she adhered to it in the future. So she was very careful about saying--making remarks to us because she knew that when she made a remark like, "You'll pay for that the rest of your life," she meant it. So she was very careful about what she said and to whom she said it. Nevertheless, a woman of fierce resolve, incredibly strong willed, but you never quite understood where her decisions were coming from or what the motives were. But they were strong and resolute.

I guess that those are the things that I think of when I think of German. She shared my father's conservatism and quietness. Extraordinarily neat woman, which is a trait often referred as being German. In fact, compulsively tidy, compulsively orderly so that it got to be a terrible drag on the kids. You had to keep things in order. "A place for everything and everything in its place" was not just a motto, it was a reality. Any number of times when I've had to explain--for long periods of time, why I neglected to return a knife to a specific drawer--why it just went in that one instead of that one. I never could be sure whether she was punishing me or making me stand there saying this nonsense, or whether she sincerely thought that I didn't understand that it was to go in drawer x instead of drawer y. I put it in drawer y because I just was done with it and tossed it and she wanted to know why it wasn't in there [drawer x]. So in those respects she was German.

Another thing that I like to think is German is what was referred to as the dooryard. It was always very tidy and full of flowers. That area immediately surrounding the back door of the house had cement and brick inlaid, a tidy flower bed, all very colorful. Nothing extraneous in the way. Things were put away and out of sight so that around the back door and the back porch was always very clean and opened, full of color.

One of the ways--and she had a fierce temper which I'm not sure is necessarily German but it would come to the surface very quickly, and you could see her physically take control of herself because if she

didn't, she could do something fierce and awful. She would take a hold of herself and bring herself under this very tight control, in dealing with you. So as a result, because she had raised five children, me being the last one, she was a tense woman. She was never laid back and laughing, you know, very tense. Exerting will and control, which was phenomenal to watch. She still does it. She is eighty-two years old, has a birthday in October this month and she still exerts tremendous control over herself and over her children.

When you go to Grandma Smith's house--it's kind of an interesting thing, too. She prefers--prefers isn't the right word, but she certainly doesn't stop her children from calling her Grandma Smith. We do it because we are referring to her when we talk to our own children--"Let's go over to Grandma Smith's"--but even in her presence I've called her Grandma Smith and she doesn't correct it. Perhaps it's something with age or generation. Nonetheless, she doesn't. But even today she exercises control over her grandchildren and expects that you respond to that control. If you go to Grandma's house, you do what Grandma says. My kids don't like it a bit. They think it's just the worst kind of arrangement, and don't like to go visit anymore. They will only go visit her now because they know she's old and not going to be around much longer and so she deserves to be visited but they don't like it a bit. No soft ways. I can't--I wish I could say that she had soft ways but she doesn't.

Q: You mentioned a moment ago that in the areas of your father's responsibility, his word was the final word. In the areas of raising the children or things about the home they were basically, I believe you said, your mother's responsbility. If your father stepped in with the final word, would it in fact be the final word? Or is that something he wouldn't . . .

A: He didn't do that. There was a clear cut arrangement. Anything that had--I suppose it was a line of demarcation that I could draw on the back lawn--that would have said, "From this point on Pop's in control and from this point on my mother is in control"--because anything to do with raising children or anything to do with the house and in a large degree family activity, was governed by my mother. Whether we would go to a high school band concert or to the play at the high school or to a movie. Which we went to a lot. "Ma and Pa Kettle" movies. Those things were determined by my mother. When we would visit relatives was determined by her or if we were going to go to someone's house for Sunday dinner, it would have been an invitation exchanged between the women rather than the men. But anything with the vaguest domesticity attached to it, she was in charge of it.

He didn't step in unless she asked him to. You know, asked for advice. Which was something that we children didn't see. The communication between my parents was of a very most formal sort. The five of us have often remarked that we'd never seen--never did see, until my father was in fact dead--never saw our parents touch one another. They never touched. There was always a distance maintained in front of the children. Now clearly they did touch because there were five of us and they seemed to be a very loving couple, but it was never openly displayed at all. Partly to do with one, my father's

conservatism and my mother's personality. That was reserved for other parts of the house and it was none of our business so we never saw it.

But now and again she would ask his advice on something. We would pay attention to it. I don't know whether that's a German characteristic or not, but whenever my father spoke on a subject, whether you'd ask him or whether it was in his domain--that was law. You were in big trouble with her if you broke his law, big trouble. What he said went. That is still the way she maintains her attitude today. Not long ago I visited her and I did something to annoy her, and she went to great lengths to tell me how my father would not have approved of this at all. It was kind of interesting. She backed him up, whatever he said. That may be German, I don't know.

Q: You mentioned a while ago amongst the older members of the Smith family there was a personal pride about the John R. Smith connection and English background or perhaps the Pocahontas background, I'm not sure, or perhaps both.

A: I don't think Pocahontas as much as John R.

Q: Was there a feeling of national pride about the German background by your mother, father or both?

A: It's interesting that my mother who had a lot of German background, a lot of German heritage, was clearly proud of it--because she went to the trouble of learning to speak German in high school, and was very good at it. Her mother and father didn't speak German in the house. Although I think they could have, they didn't. But she learned the language, so there is some evidence that she was interested in things German. Knew a considerable amount about German history, and had in her arsenal of cooking a lot of German dishes that she had learned from her mother and her father.

My father, he never quite understood how he stood in relation to his heritage--he never bragged about it. As a matter of fact the only records is that I remember to his own heritage was sort of laughing and joking. My mother took it a great deal more seriously--and of course during the war this showed up, the way she dealt with it. (tape stopped)

One of the evidences that she was reasonably proud of her general ancestry was that--I was the only child of the five that showed any interest in her ability to speak German because she would speak and sing songs in German, recite poetry and even now and then when she would become frustrated or very happy she would say something in German. Why my brothers and sisters didn't seem to show any interest in that is beyond me but it certainly intrigued me. The fact that every now and then my mother would say something I didn't understand and so she explained that this was German and did I want to learn it and yes, I did. So she would teach me German. This would have been before I went to grade school so I was learning to speak two languages. I have to admit today that it is almost totally gone for reasons that we will get to and having to do with the war.

But the places where--and this is sort of--I'm sure there is a great deal of psychology behind this and I haven't stopped to figure it all out, but my mother was, as I said, a great one to keep the dooryard clean. She maintained an enormous garden by hand. It was better than a half an acre of vegetable garden which she maintained all by hand, however--she weeded it, down on her hands and knees. But she seemed to enjoy that enormously. There was nothing that pleased her more than to be outside raking the grass, cleaning up walnut trees, walnuts falling on the ground--and does that to this day. She'll go outside and maintains the place so that every blade of grass is just right where it belongs. That was part of my job. I always wanted to help her with that and I always looked forward to those occasions because I knew she would always be in good frame of mind--and it was then that I learned to speak what German I did learn.

Q: It was when you were helping her with these chores?

A: Helping with these chores, working in the garden, working on the lawn. But when she was in the house she didn't like it a bit. It was evident. She really didn't like things confined to a house, doing house chores. When she got outside she was a very much different person, a happier person.

Q: How large was the house?

A: Well, the house had nine very large rooms. A big house, a farmhouse, wooden clapboard house, drafty, old.

Q: How many stories?

A: Two. It was a pretty big chore, especially since I was supposed to have been a girl--and this might be of interest since I was the last and she was late before I was born. She was to that point where it was a little dangerous to be having a baby, going on forty. It was decided that I should be a girl. They already had three boys and a girl and so what they needed was a girl. So they picked out the name Loretta long before I was born, and when I was born and was not Loretta that didn't change matters a bit. I was called Loretta--so I'm told by my sister--until I was three and my hair wasn't cut until I was three, and I often was dressed in dresses until I was three, simply because I was supposed to be a girl. What great deep penetration that had on my psyche I don't know. I haven't experienced it yet but it may come out someday. But I was literally treated as if I were--and that's my mother's resolve for you--dammit, you were supposed to have been a girl, we will treat you as a girl! As a result of that, because my father had three sons to help him with the farming, I was really not needed, and I was converted into a houseboy.

That's what my childhood was, as a hand to my mother. So I learned to do all of the vegetable gardening and all the housework and I learned to can and I learned to bake cakes and I learned to cook and all that stuff because I was to have been a girl. So there you are. So when the question arose of may I take piano lessons, my father would have been violently opposed to that if it was his other sons, but because I was a different kind of animal it was quite all right, the music, just

because I was sort of a houseboy. So the fact that I sat in the house at a piano and practiced during the day was not regarded as anything foolish at all.

Q: How did your older brothers and sisters relate to this treatment of you?

A: They rather despised me because they said I was a spoiled brat. From their point of view I suppose I was. I didn't have to go out into the fields and do what they did. However, my sister was very close to me because we were sort of treated alike. She was a house hand and so was I. So as a result, there was a very close connection even though there was years distance in our age. There was a close connection between us because we were both housepeople. Learned to do the same chores. Even to this day, I'm still very comfortable with my sister and have a somewhat formal relationship with my brothers. Because they resented it. They didn't want to go out in the fields anymore than anybody else did, in the hot sun. Didn't like that.

Q: Do you have any idea whether your mother--you mentioned that she had an interest in German history. Do you have any idea if your mother had any interest in German national affairs prior to World War II?

A: I really wouldn't know. I know that there was certainly some after the war which we'll get to, but whether or not she had any affiliations or interests before the war I have no way of knowing. The closest I could come to that would be an answer like this--if there were other German people in the neighborhood, it was a community of German people. Not all German but many. I would think that had there been any sort of German sympathies before the war, that is to say social organizations or the like, those people would have been involved as well as she. I don't recall my mother ever attending anything, or doing anything that had a strictly German character about it.

Q: You would not know if she was aware of or had an interest in the fact that the National Socialist Party had come to power?

A: She barely knows who is president. That might give you an answer.

Q: And that was true at that time too.

A: Yes, it was.

Q: Not a very political-oriented . . .

A: She was totally unpolitical, not interested in any of this. She had a house to run and a family to raise and it's men's business to be interested in politics. That's still true today. She has a great deal of trouble with women's lib people. She said they are clearly abrogating their duties, turning them over to other people. It's, you know, kind of sad but in her time that was clearly the truth. Everybody had their work and it was clearly delineated and you did it. So she sees a great deal of difficulty with lines being fused today.

But my guess is that she didn't although I have no way of knowing whether she had any German interests prior to the war.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about your education now?

A: Sure. Started to school in a one-room school, which was the Grange hall community for that and had been the Grange hall for that community since 1909, is the date on the cornerstone of the building. Then when the Grange disappeared, the building was still there with the words "Grange Hall" emblazoned across the doorpost, so the school was called the Grange Hall School. Prior to that time school had been held in a wooden building called Price School. But because the community had enlarged a bit they went to the larger building and it was brick so it was a little better.

Q: You did not attend the Price School.

A: No, I started school with the Grange Hall School and there were twelve students the year that I started school. I was the only first grader in the first grade. Since the community was reasonably stable, still is a stable community, the only people that came and went were farm laborers who acted as hired hands to the large farmers and so if you started a grade with one or two people in it, it was very likely that you would graduate with those same number of people in it. Now and then people would come and go as a result of the itinerant laborers. That was the normal state of affairs.

However, when I was in the third grade the school district next to ours and ours consolidated--so that I would have been the first class to have begun with one person in the class, and not to have graduated with one. Turns out we graduated with seven in the eighth grade because of the consolidation. So the whole notion of the school system and its traditional behavior was broken when I was in the fifth grade, because of consolidation.

Q: How long after consolidation did you continue to attend at the Grange Hall School?

A: We did for one year. The consolidated school was separated into two buildings. One, the first through the fifth grades attended the school building of the school with which we consolidated, and sixth through eighth attended the Grange Hall School. So for one year I was at a school called Duncan during the--I guess--yes, the fourth year, I was at Duncan. Then that summer they put the Duncan School on wheels and moved it up to the Grange Hall School and attached the two buildings. So at the time I was in the fifth grade the two buildings were together.

Q: A literal consolidation. (laughs)

A: Quite literally. They put the building on wheels and moved it up there.

Q: How about after grammar school?

A: Went to Bismarck High School and there were 32 of us that graduated as seniors but I don't think the class was ever larger than forty. It was a reasonably small class. Something like a hundred and eighty in the entire school. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody knew each other and their families and brothers and sisters. Very tight. You didn't get away with anything. We had a German principal. His name was Ichen. He had been a captain in the German army during the second World War, and had defected and came to this country, and had a master's degree in education from Germany--it was a Midwest school but it was a German degree--and took the post as principal of the high school and believe me, that place was like a military camp. Of course, the German people in the community just thought that was the berries.

Q: Do you know if Mr. Ichen defected during the war or after the war?

A: It was right at the beginning, by way of England, and I don't know what his story is but he worked his way to the States.

Q: Your father was a farmer.

A: Yes.

Q: Owned and farmed his own farm.

A: He did. Well, he rented some farmland too but he owned a sizable amount of land.

Q: Was this a family farm?

A: I suppose--yes, it was. It was my grandfather's farm, his [my father's] fathers. The people by the name of Brown owned the farm before my grandfather did. Why, I don't know that this is the case but it is. My father was the youngest in his family. There was seven brothers and sisters in that family and none of them were interested in being farmers so when my dad came along, he showed interest in being a farmer. The farm was simply handed over to him. My grandmother and grandfather Smith moved into Bismarck and my grandfather became an insurance salesman. So in this case the farm went to the youngest instead of to the oldest, which is the normal routine. He was the youngest one. So he was born there, and raised there and was married on that farm and raised his family there.

Q: Did either of your parents have hobbies or interests of that nature?

A: I wish my mother were here to answer that question. She'd set you right, young man. There wasn't time for hobbies--because I've asked such questions myself from her, and that was the reply you got. There was always enough handwork to be done. There was no time for messing about with hobbies. My father on the other hand--he was very much interested in small groups--and as a result would become involved in small groups. Got himself on the school board. Got himself involved in farm organizations like--let me think. The name will come to me. Got involved certainly in church, but in the people who were

organizing and administering the church. So what I'm trying to get at here was he would get involved in these small groups so as to be bookkeeper, secretary, and he spent his time at home going over books of these little organizations that he belonged to.

He really enjoyed keeping books. That was one of the fun things about his desk is that it was always full of the most amazing ledgers and books, but I would get in big trouble for going and pulling out and looking at. But I recall one in particular of--when he was on the school board for Price School, an old ledger was showing what the teacher had been paid that year. It was incredible, because it was in grain and chickens and eggs and bolts of cloth and some money, but largely in goods, the teacher was paid. He would talk at great length about how that was far better than paying him in dollars.

But those were his hobbies to be involved in organizations of one sort or another. That was partly because he was so very good with people. He got along with people very nicely. He had a way of--with his quiet manner, I suppose you could say insinuating his opinion on others because somehow or another although he didn't talk a lot, groups would come away recognizing that what he'd say was very valuable so they'd pay attention to him. As a result of that he became vice president of a dairy, Producers Dairy in Danville which is--probably in the Prairie Farms Dairy now--and traveled to nearly every corner of the United States for dairy meetings of one sort or another, representing Producers Dairy. Turned down any number of invitations to represent Illinois and its dairy interests abroad for the simple reason that he didn't think he was smart enough to do it, but the truth of it was he was frightened. He found the idea of visiting foreign countries frightening. It made him a little nervous, so he didn't do that.

Q: Of travel?

A: Well, just of stepping off an airplane and not speaking the language made him very nervous. Besides, which he didn't see any need for traveling. Until he became a member of the dairy board and traveled all over the United States--which made him very happy--he didn't travel at all. A two hundred mile trip was an enormous trip for the family to have made. Then when he was on the dairy board, he and my mother would travel all over the place. They were in New York when the lights went out the first time.

Q: What about 1940, just using that as a benchmark? Approximately how large would the farm that your father worked how large would that have been?

A: It would have been about a thousand acres farm.

Q: At that time he had some sons to help him with the farming. Did he have any other employees at that time?

A: Well, now we get into Communism. (laughs) My father and mother would turn red and blue in the face when you talked about Communists or when Communists were mentioned, because those were the awful, hateful, terrible people that were destroying the world. But the

interesting thing about that was that they had participated in communism as long as I can remember, in the sense that his brothers--and to this very day my own brothers--worked their farms as if they were state farms. They'd buy machinery together, they'd share each other's time. It's the good of the farm that is at interest, not any of them individually. So I always had this political problem when I was a kid because the schools were teaching us what a terrible thing Communism was and what Communism was made of and then I'd go home and look it straight in the face because the practices were one hundred percent communistic, commune-istic. Things were shared, things were owned by a group not by individuals, and it was the good of the farm not the individual that was at stake and if those aren't communistic views (laughs)--I didn't see the point.

Q: And who was it that your father practiced this type of arrangements with?

A: A couple of his brothers who then--had become farmers later in life, had started their own little farms, were having trouble because machinery was expensive, and so he cooked up this bright idea--"Well why don't we buy machinery together, and then we'll help each other do the work." So it was nifty, they did that.

My brothers today, three of them, who run the farm now, do the very same thing. They have one combine which they've all bought and one corn picker which they've all bought. The smaller pieces, some of them are owned individually like tractors and plows and the like. But sometimes this even goes down to small things like hand tools. Rather than buy a bunch of cheap hand tools, they'll go buy some very expensive hand tools and then they are the property of the family, not the property of anyone in the family and sort of kept in a central location where you go and take them if you need them, and put them back when you're done. It's interesting to note that one of my brothers who's not greedy, he's just careless--and he takes the tools and forgets to put them back or takes his time putting them back and the other two get very upset with him. They'll go reprimand him for being slow to the mark in putting the things back where they belong so the next person can use them because it's causing inconvenience to the group communism!

Q: Was your family religious?

A: Very. They were members of the Disciples of Christ Church. Attended religiously. You had to have a very good reason if you didn't attend. It was not a terribly formal church . . .

End of Side One, Tape One

A: . . . nor was it a very radical church but it was a simple country church where you went Sunday mornings praised the Lord, sang songs, took communion and went home. The teachings of the church were clear, straightforward, and you didn't ask questions. In fact, there was no intellectualism involved in the church, you were not to use your mind.

You would simply believe what was told to you, and your life would be cheery and happy, as a result. It's pretty much that way to this day.

Q: Would you describe this as a fundamental type of religion?

A: Fundamental--well, in the sense that they were Bible thumpers, but not radical Bible thumpers. But if you got into an argument with them they simply handed you the Bible and said, "Well, here it is. All you have to do is read it." It never occurred to them that there might be an interpretation different than theirs. If there was one it was wrong--or misguided, or the handwork of the devil.

Q: Did your family read the Bible at home?

A: It was not allowed. It was not a family activity to read the Bible. We did a lot of church hymn singing at home because my mother was a very good piano player, and so we did a lot of that, but not out loud reading of the Bible although it was assumed that you did it privately.

Q: Assumed by your parents?

A: By the parents, yes. There was every evidence that they did. The Bible was always open in their bedroom. But you didn't have religion shoved down your throat. It was a simple matter of, this is right and that is wrong and you don't need to be told in any other words but those. That's it. If you choose to go to hell, great. Good. So in that way it's very refreshing if they are absolutely--absolute adherence to a set of principles but they don't force them on you. They simply tell you, "These are the right ways and if you don't believe it, too bad." I rather like that. Well certainly, in that sense it is intellectual in that it leaves it up to me, I have to make the decision. No one is going to pester me about it. What's interesting is that people in the community, and there are some, just simply refused to have anything to do with it and they are regarded as--outcasts, they are treated badly, they are regarded as evil--but then they will turn right around and say that the Lord tells you that you mustn't mix with the evil. So there they are. Incredible amount of faith involved there.

Q: So, yes, religion was that?

A: A big part of the family although it was not harped upon to any great degree at all. It was only in, oh, after the war--I don't know what that has to do with it, but after the war--maybe even in the fifties, the questions about playing cards and going to movies and watching television as it came along, whether or not these were good things. My parents did all of those things. My mother was the best euchre player I ever met. Which is a German game. She can beat you. Anybody playing euchre. She's a good card player. Loved movies, played the piano, knew how to play all the popular songs of the day, could rattle them off real good. So there was a nice mixture of secularism and christianity.

Q: I'd like to move back now to--perhaps a discussion of politics, in a sense. Prior to America's becoming involved in what was then a world war, were your parents paying attention to the European war that was going on? Or do you know?

A: I really couldn't say that I have any idea. As I'd said before, my mother certainly showed very little interest in world politics--until Stalin. Stalin got to her. I remember how she would go on and on about what a horrible creature he was. My father, however, was more aware of that sort of thing. But the only kind of politics that I ever heard anything about when I was a child was Roosevelt politics--because of the--well, the farmers in middle America were hurt pretty severely by the depression. Didn't have a hell of a lot, and the New Deal was exactly what they were looking for. So as long as Roosevelt was alive he was guaranteed a vote in Bismarck, Illinois because of his support there. There was never a question of that. He was a godsend. That's very interesting, too because that very sort of person--my parents and their associates were the very first sorts of people to mistrust the wealthy, or the city slicker--all of which Roosevelt was. But he had won their hearts.

Q: Seems an interesting dichotomy between Roosevelt, politics and your mother and father's conservatism--and anti-Socialist attitudes.

A: Well, you know, they were just not demonstrative people.

Q: Did you family subscribe to a newspaper?

A: Yes, the Danville Commercial News and the--weekly or monthly--Prairie Farmer.

Q: Now, was that a newspaper or . . .

A: Well, it was a tabloid sort of newspaper which was for farmers and farm information and agricultural information--but it was more on the order of a magazine.

Q: Did they subscribe to any other magazines?

A: Life magazine, finally came along but that was the first magazine that came into the house on a regular basis aside from the Prairie Farmer and the Commercial News. The reason that I remember that, though, is that when I was six--because I was just starting school--my aunt for a birthday present gave me a subscription to a Donald Duck comic book and my mother wouldn't let me have it because it was not the sort of thing she thought should be coming into the house. So she didn't cancel the subscription. She simply pilfered it at the mailbox and burned it and informed her sister, my aunt, that she wouldn't do any foolish thing like that, please, again. So what came into the house in the way of reading material was selected very carefully. There is a joke which is told, which in my case is not a joke, it is one hundred percent true--of the book salesman who comes to the door and wants to sell books of one sort or another. I vividly remember my mother standing in the doorway saying to him, "We don't need any

books, we already have one." (laughs) Well, the reading material was very carefully selected.

Q: Did your family have a radio?

A: Yes. We listened to the WLS station. It was permanently tuned there. For a while it was a battery-operated radio because we didn't have electricity. We got electricity when I was in the second grade. So my first year of school was spent learning to read by candlelight. I vividly remember learning to read by candlelight and as a result even to this day when I am reading in the evening at home, now and then--maybe it's just because I'm getting old and my eyes are going, but the words on the page will dance just as they would when the candle would flicker--and the words sort of dance because the light is not even on them. So that was when I was in second grade. That would have been--like 1944--we had electricity. So we had a battery-operated radio, we had an icebox.

We didn't have hot water in the house. Although we did have a bathroom in the house because there was a reservoir in the barn hayloft which held water, and there were long pipes all the way from the barn to the house. The bathroom was operated by gravity, the water was a gravity system. Until electricity there was no way of heating that water. So taking a warm bath was a miracle. As a matter of fact, I can remember my dad once sticking his finger in the bath water that I was about to use and giving me so much trouble because it was warm. He told me I was a terrible sissy and this was nonsense having hot water to take a bath. (laughs) So we had a radio, listened to WLS--particularly on Saturday night. We would all collect around the dining room table and listen to the "WLS Barn Dance."

Q: Do you have any idea how your parents found out that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor?

A: Only by them telling how it was. I don't recall hearing the news. But that it was a shock on the same order as Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds." You'd hear this on the radio on a Sunday and you simply don't believe it. However, you keep listening to it all day and all day and finally it dawns on you that the fact the Japanese have attacked, and an enormous number of people are dead.

Q: So they heard it by radio?

A: Yes. It was a thorough shock and outrage that such a thing--not that--and I don't think that I'm putting words in their mouth--not that America is now involved in the war, but that anyone could do that. That's sneaky. To this very day, any oriental is sneaky. You can't trust them, becuase they'll pull a trick like that on you. So you know (chuckles) that's it, Orientals are sneaky.

Q: You were four at the time. Do you remember hearing about it happening--in an immediate sense?

A: Pearl Harbor? No. When you ask me that question, I want to respond yes but I think it's only because for years after that

happened my parents talked about what a terrible filthy thing that was to do. If you are going to fight somebody you tell them you are going to fight them and you do it out in the open. You don't send in this early morning stuff, sneaky attack. So I really can't say I have any memory of it all.

Q: At the time that Pearl Harbor was attacked, do you know if your family had any friends or relatives in America's armed services?

A: Not at that time. But my mother's brother was soon destined to go.

Q: Do you know if anyone from your local community was killed at Pearl Harbor?

A: No, there were none. See, I suppose in a twenty-mile radius of which my home is the center, there weren't more than fifty families.

Q: Do you remember whether there were any special gatherings as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor, ceremonies or services?

A: The only thing I remember in that regard is the end of the war. I remember that pretty well.

Q: Then we'll cover that.

A: But nothing at that point. I suppose there were people that got prayer groups and that sort of thing together but I don't remember.

Q: Did your parents' interest in following national events change when the war began?

A: Interestingly enough, my mother's interest in it did because as I said, she had a brother that went to war and I don't know whether it was because of him or what. Yes, she was interested in where the fronts were and what the progress was and as a matter of fact got involved in the Red Cross, and did a lot of knitting and bandage-making. You know, there are any number of pieces of psychology to explain why she did that.

Q: Do you have an opinion as to why?

A: I think it's very interesting. It was her brother Herman who went to war. He was on the German front and she didn't particularly like her brother Herman, never had. Thought he was a drunk and a layabout which he was. So her sudden interest in him and his part in the war always kind of confused me because up to that point Uncle Herman was someone you avoided assiduously. You stayed away from him because he was no good. But the fact that she had many German ties--I can't help but think that she was simply intrigued by the fact that we were at war with Germany. I don't know--is now the time to go into all of her behavior regarding that? For instance, her interest in Red Cross I've always felt to be rather suspect.

Q: What do you mean?

A: My mother was not a social person at all. A very rigidly stay-at-home sort of woman. But during the war she was right off to the local Red Cross center in Bismarck, knitting up a storm and making bandages. Well, now it turns out she wasn't even a very good knitter. My sister had taught her to knit, she didn't know how to knit. So why all the sudden interest in making bandages and knitting and socializing with bunches of women that she really didn't care that much about? In fact, I've never been able to help but think that it had something to do with her being a German--because so much of what was German at home disappeared when we were at war with Germany. Any lessons that my mother and I had in learning the German language disappeared, didn't exist. I didn't know German and she didn't know German and that was the way it was going to be.

Q: Did she tell you that?

A: Yes. She actually lied to me when I said, "Why don't we talk that language anymore?" She said, "Because we don't know that language. What language are you talking about? We don't do that." So it was never--don't you see what I mean, it was sort of a kidding me. It wasn't as if it never really happened--"Don't believe that it ever happened"--but it was, "What are you talking about? I don't understand what you are talking about. What language?" It didn't take very many of those rebuffs for me to learn that we weren't going to talk any more German. I'm not even sure that at the time I knew it was called the German language. It was just a language that my mother could speak and sing in and recite poetry in and I thought it was great, and I was learning to do it too.

Q: Sort of a secret little code between you and her.

A: Yes, but a man lived down the road from us who was a bachelor, he was also kind of a crazy man and he was a German. His name was Walker Hasselbring: "to bring trouble." That was exactly the way my mother referred to him, as Mr. Bring Trouble. But they both spoke German, he and she and they didn't speak any more German when the war got going.

Q: He stopped also.

A: He stopped, and she stopped, and anybody else in the community that could speak German stopped. I don't believe that there was ever any fear that the same thing would happen to them that happened to the Japanese on the West Coast. I never heard any such talk if there was any such talk--but there was certainly no open pride in being German either, in the community. Now that's not to say that the things that were German didn't go right on, like the tidy dooryard and the tidy house and everything else. But any outward display of Germanness disappeared, including chicken and noodles--which was referred to as dumplings in our house. They disappeared.

Q: Back for just a moment to the Red Cross. You say you suspect your mother's motivation. What do you think she was atoning for?

A: For being German. It seems to me that she was trying to say, "Look, I'm the whitest one among you." I suppose that could be tested

by finding out how many other German women in the community did the same thing and that I couldn't say--except to note that Mary Batawits was there--and Mrs Cunningham was there, and they were German families.

But that's the feeling I got, because my mother was not a social woman. She did not go out of her way to club meetings and ladies' aid and that sort of thing. You know, I just have that trouble in my mind. Did she really get so involved in America winning the war that she went off and knitted and she didn't know how to knit very well and she went off and socialized and made bandages for our boys overseas--or was she in fact doing it because she knew she was a German and was worried about it, or a combination of the two? I can't help but think that the fact that she was German, sort of atoning for her being German was part of the reason that she got involved in this sort of thing, because normally she did not get involved. It took a pretty big explosion to get my mother to move out of the house and become involved in anything except home and church--that was it. The war may have been that thing. It could very well have been the thing that got her excited. But I can't help but think there was something German in it.

Q: You mentioned a moment ago the relocation of Japanese-Americans into relocation centers, that perhaps your parents never really feared that. Do you know what their attitude was about the fact that Japanese-Americans were relocated?

A: Unfortunately, I do because they still speak of it today. While my father was alive and my mother is still--while they understand that is not a very nice thing to do, it was the best possible thing to do then to those sneaky Japanese. I think there is something rather telling, that--I should hate to think my mother was proud of it--but whatever Hitler did, he told you in advance he was going to do it and he often told you how he was going to do it and that was appreciated far more than having someone attack you early Sunday morning--without any warning. That's always been the attitude that my mother and my father have had. If you are going to do something, let them know you're going to do it and then do it. So their feelings about the Japanese was that they deserved it. They deserved to be locked up because they were sneaky. You couldn't trust them.

Q: I realize I'm digressing frequently here, but nonetheless I'd like to go back for a moment. You mentioned about your parents, after hearing on the radio about the attack of Pearl Harbor, staying fixed to the radio and picking up hour after hour of more news and finally becoming convinced this had happened, however shocking. Do you know whether or not they had listened to a broadcast or a rebroadcast of President Roosevelt's speech to a joint session of Congress asking for war?

A: No idea on that. My guess would be to say yes, they did, because they were devotees of all of Roosevelt's radio addresses. We always turned in to hear Roosevelt speak. So if they knew he was going to speak I'm sure they were listening, but I don't know what they did.

Q: After the attack on Pearl and the war has gotten more involved--you had mentioned that you have an uncle who joined, or was in the service. Do you know whether he was drafted or whether he enlisted?

A: No I don't, I have no idea.

Q: Do you know if your family had other friends or relatives who became part of the service?

A: My brothers didn't. They were working under the Farm Release Act, so they weren't in the war. No, there can't help but have been, this family is so large. But the only person that was brought to my mind was Herman, my mother's brother. I'm sure there were others.

Q: You mentioned the farm deferments for your brothers. Did your family see that as quite right?

A: Of course they did. (pause) There is no great nationalism in my family--and war kills you, they know that. So it was a great relief to them to discover that their oldest son in the beginning was going to be deferred because of the farm occupation--and then my next brother, who would have gotten in on the very end of it, would also be deferred because of that. Now, that's not to say that my father didn't know people on the draft board, because he did. Like I said before, he was a person who loved to deal with groups of people. I can't say that he did but I wouldn't doubt but what those farm deferments were partly due to his being able to talk a good story.

Q: Do you know whether your older brother was actually engaged in the practice of farming at the time the war broke out?

A: Oh yes he was.

Q: I realize that this was a farm community, but in every farm community there are people who are not farmers. Do you have any idea whether there was any problems in the community about farm deferments?

A: All of this is secondhand. Farm deferments were--because it's a farm community--were regarded very highly. You have got to eat, got to feed those boys. The fact that no one was going to shoot at you while you were out plowing the corn didn't get talked about a lot--but the fact that you were doing something that was in fact for the war effort, was regarded as respectable. How anyone else in the community who weren't farmers felt, I couldn't say.

Q: Prior to the war what type of crops was your father raising on his farm?

A: The standard three grains. Corn, wheat and soybeans. Only not so much soybeans. Soybeans was a product, a crop that got very very big after the war. But it was also a dairy farm, so we had a lot of dairy cattle. So it was a dairy farm and grain farm.

Q: Prior to the war, did your father have any major contracts for marketing his products?

A: He did, yes. (laughs) I never thought of that. I'm not sure I'm going to answer your question but there were some things that he raised--is that what you mean? What do you mean?

Q: Well, feel free to go on.

A: What you reminded me of was the fact that he grew hemp for the war effort when it was--and I wouldn't be surprised but what this was before we were involved in the war, but growing it for export to England and wherever else it was needed. Which is nothing else but that good old Cannabis sativa . . . which--he always liked to--the story he always liked to tell. He had about fifteen or twenty acres in hemp and it was difficult to grow because you had to cut it by hand, and there was no machinery designed specific for that that we had. So it was a hand crop and difficult to do. But there was a notice that he saved for years. I suppose if I looked through his desk I might still find it but I rather doubt it--a note from the U.S. Department of Agriculture admonishing him never to smoke this stuff because of the deleterious effect that it could have on his system. Which idea would never have occurred to him, of course, unless the government had mentioned it. So there were some really buying parties (laughs) as a result of this.

Q: Is that right?

A: Oh, yes. Because any form of authority, particularly the government, we regarded to be kind of silly and maybe a turkey and oppressive . . .

Q: By your father?

A: Yes, any person in that community. The government, what the hell do they know? You know, look at the way they are running things. Well, come on, I mean, that's standard kind of practice in the farm community.

I'll tell you another story regarding that before I tell you the first one. My father has kept agricultural tracts from the University of Illinois over the years that he has been a farmer and he's watched them go from saying, "Don't do this," to "Do this," back to saying, "Do what you were doing the first time," in complete cycles. He just flushes those out like a deck of cards and says, "Take your pick. Here's what the authorities think, they are clearly silly. Pay no attention to them." He felt the same way about the federal government, when they told him not to smoke the stuff, that was the first thing he did was smoke it. It was really very funny because that community in the early forties was not making a big practice of it, but they knew how to smoke dope. They knew what it was all about.

So when I came home in the sixties from college--and in the fifties, but in the sixties when it was happening, going out on my father's farm where I knew he had planted hemp, looking to see if there were

still any old plants growing and there were. When I'd be smoking the stuff, he would give me this real long hard lecture about what kind of a person was I smoking that stuff, and then would tell me that he too had done it, simply because he was told not to. (laughs) So that was--they had one kind of contract he has to grow that but they had--farmed out to other organizations like the Stokely Food Company.

Q: This was prior to the war also?

A: Yes, prior to the war and after the war. As a matter of fact, there are some in that community who still do that. You know contract with Stokelys, VanCamp, to grow x number of acres of sweet corn for them. The company provides the seed and I don't know if they still do, but at that time they did--the fuel to get the crop in, and then when it came time to harvest it, they would send out a group of harvesters to bring the crop in. So what you had done was to loan them the use of your ground and you usually received a fixed fee--ten or fifteen dollars to the acre for each acre you gave them, and all the sweet corn cans you could eat. We would get cases of the stuff back home. So it was pretty lucrative. We got a little money for it. It didn't cost you anything to put it in or harvest in and you got all the sweet corn back.

Q: Did the crops change after the war? You mentioned the three basic grains.

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Did you continue to raise those three grains?

A: Oh yes, far less wheat and more soybeans. Wheat which was seemingly more adaptable a little further west--did better west and soybeans did a lot better here. It was a crop that you could get a very good price for and a somewhat more--regulated price. You could pretty well be sure that the bean price would be a good one because of the interest in plastics.

Q: Do you know whether or not your mother corresponded with her brother Herman during the war?

A: During the War? A couple of times, letters would come from Herman. His parents and her parents were both dead and my mother and one older sister were the oldest in the family, so they were sort of regarded as the parents. So he would write to them. When anything happened with the other kids they would consult my mom or to see what should be done but they were the head of the family. It was interesting they were both women, too. But since they were the oldest they were deferred to. So yes, Herman would write and I remember . . . the fact that the letters were always so very late--I could never quite get that through my head because I was young.

The very notion of a place called Germany, a place called France--not to mention Africa--was mind-boggling to me. Just as the notion of people speaking different languages was mind boggling. It finally began to dawn on me after the war that I had been learning that

language of the people that we were fighting, which was astonishing to me! I thought everyone spoke English. That was how really very isolated the community was. You didn't worry about the rest of the world. It will take care of itself. You take care of yourself. So the fact that his letters would sometimes take a month, a month and a half to get there, I couldn't figure it out. How could it take so long for his letters to get here? Our mother would try to explain that they were coming from a different place in the world. The world, what is that? That kind of stuff. So yes, we got letters from Herman. He largely was just telling us what he had been up to.

Q: And did she write back?

A: Yes, she would write him. I don't think if I can remember her writing the letters. I don't know what was in them but she would write a letter. Even sent him a box of cookies once.

Q: Once.

A: That I'm aware of.

Q: Do you remember V-Mail?

A: No, you mentioned that the other day and I really don't remember it. At first I thought I did but what I thought you were referring to was the funny kind of envelopes, the air-mail envelopes, which were in use then which were sort of like the European notion of an air-mail envelope now--which we didn't see very much of then.

Q: What do you mean? Could you describe it?

A: Just one piece of paper, you wrote on one side and folded it in. It was just a piece of paper which was the envelope and the writing paper both. Very light. But after the war, you didn't see those.

Q: Very lightweight, you say?

A: Yes, very, very--it was onionskin sort of paper. It was largely European. But now you get them here, the same kind of envelope. That's what I thought you meant by V-Mail.

Q: Can you recall, during the course of the war, whether there was anyone that your family knew or anyone from the community who was wounded or killed?

A: None that I know of. There may have been, but I don't remember. The war was . . . a very interesting thing, was the war. It was something we worried about, but something that somehow didn't impinge on us. It only began to impinge on us when--I suppose if I had been older it [this certain thing] would have impinged more but it certainly didn't at that age--was rationing books. I remember having to hassle with damned rationing books and that when you would go to buy gasoline in a filling station or food in a grocery store, you had to sort of sit up and be counted. Yes, indeed, there are so many of us. See, here we all are and so we get that much gas or we get so

many pounds of meat or whatever. But at that point we were still largely self-sufficient for food and things like that. Lived on a farm, did our own slaughtering, raised our own vegetables, did all the canning so the food supply was never a big problem. Sugar supply was. We went through that whole business of being worried about having sugar and using white Karo syrup in its place and pouring Karo syrup on corn flakes. You ought to try it, it's a real bummer. (laughter) The corn flakes turn into a big wad.

Q: Sugar was rationed.

A: Yes. Butter was rationed and you got margarine with little colored pellets in it. Did you see those? You'd get a pound of margarine and it would look like lard. It wasn't cut, it was just a solid white pound of margarine and then there was a little capsule with food coloring in a dot. You put the margarine in a big bowl and break the capsule over the margarine and mix it up and make it yellow. That was a way of them saving time and energy in the factories, not coloring it for you. So of course no one colored the butter. You got the margarine and you threw the capsule away. As a result of that there are any number of people, myself included, who had lard sandwiches without knowing it. You ran into the house and put a little margarine on a piece of butter and it would be lard because they looked just alike and there would be lard sitting in the icebox. It's not tasty.

Q: Do you know if the war was discussed in your household amongst your parents and your older brothers?

A: I remember--I know it was discussed, but I cannot see the older brothers standing around in the conversation. When it was discussed, it was usually my mother and father who discussed it. I don't remember who was present, but I was.

Q: Do you remember what kinds of things they discussed? Just the latest developments?

A: Yes, more or less. The only thing I remember clearly was being frightened. What they had to say never made any sense, the names of places, the progress of this or that company, this or that in general was totally foreign to me. I didn't have any idea what they were talking about. But the fact that there was danger was what I recall.

Q: And who was frightened?

A: I was frightened. That's all I remember from those discussions was whenever they started talking about that stuff, it got very scary because it was clear that that was dangerous stuff they were talking about. But I wasn't certain what it was. I knew there was a war, we would go to movies so we would see newsreels, the news of the week (hums triumphant-sounding newsreel music), that sort of thing. So you would get an image of what war was and I'd see cities that were all bombed out, and you'd say, "Hey, this is not nice," and so when I would hear them talking about war it was very scary.

Then there came a period when we were doing what were called rural blackouts--for reasons that I don't know. I mean, I can't imagine why we're doing them. But we were. I can understand why a city like London or a city like Chicago would practice blackouts, but why it was important for a farm out in the middle of noplace to put blankets on its windows and nail them down and keep the lights shut off--why that was important, I don't know. But scared the bejesus out of me.

Q: Did that go on throughout the war?

A: Well, it went on for at least one winter, near the end of the war. Every airplane that went over, of course, was Germans or Japs or somebody coming to bomb the hell out of us. So here I was literally scared to death during that period. Because if we had covered up our windows clearly those turkeys are up there, going to get me. So all that the war was to me was something to scare me. I can't say I'm proud of that, going on six years old--seven years old--not knowing what the nature of war was, but I didn't.

Q: Do you know whether or not your parents were aware of German concentration camps prior to or during the war--not after?

A: I couldn't say. I don't know. I know they were after but I don't know if they knew about them during.

Q: Other than the attempt to . . . conceal, perhaps, their German ancestry during the war, do you know whether there was a change in their pride of German ancestry during the war?

A: It would have been totally on my mother's part if it was and something that I only--I learned much later about, something that she had done regarding Germans and the war. She started me on the piano, learning to play the piano when I was three. So when we were fully in the war I had been playing the piano for three years. Some of my piano books disappeared. You know, it never occurred to me for years why those--I mean it was just always a mystery, where did those go?

But I found them one day in the box and looked through them and was shocked to discover that they were German composers. It was very difficult for--I mean, I can imagine it was very difficult for my piano teacher and my mother to pick music for me to play, because the Germans and the Italians were the great masters in that sort of thing. So I must have been playing a lot of French and English piano music but a lot of American. John Thompson too, but I didn't play any German music during the war. After the war was over they just never were brought out. I may have forgotten them but that was certainly the case. That happens to be the case on a great to a larger scale than just me. American concert audiences preferred not to listen to that music during the war. Beethoven and Mozart were relegated to the library until the war was over.

So in that way, yes, I suppose--we were, you know, what was my mother doing? Was she ashamed of it, was she frightened? I don't know. I just know what happened. I really don't think she was frightened. I really don't. I know my mother when she's frightened, and I don't

think she was ever frightened that she was going to get carried away and be put in a camp. But I think she just had the sense to know that it was not very bright to go around flying the German . . .

End of Side Two, Tape One

Q: I would like to ask you some questions now relative to life on the homefront. You already touched on something a moment ago that I'd like to go back to and that was that you saw newsreels at the theatres. You indicated that your family went to the theatre a lot, and enjoyed the films. Do you remember whether during the war you saw films about World War II?

A: You mean, the films that England and Hollywood were making about the war? I can't say that I remember seeing any of them but I have a feeling I did. Because, well, like I just have a feeling I did. That's very hazy. I can't remember if those were films after the war when war films were still popular but I certainly remember a lot of guys in uniforms. But what we went to the show for was to see "Ma and Pa Kettle" and, oh what was another one. Well, those particularly. Was "The Egg and I" a film that came out during the war? No, I think that was after the war. But if "Ma and Pa Kettle" was within twenty miles we drove to see them.

Q: Do you remember things such as posters during the war era, let's say, "Uncle Sam Wants You?"

A: I sure do. I remember that poster very well, with a finger pointing straight out at you and it was always around the post office. I thought they were the ugliest things I ever saw in my life, and scared me to death. Because I was beginning to understand what it meant--that I could be picked up and hauled off to this place and people would shoot at me and drop bombs on my tail. I didn't like that idea a bit. So yes, that and I remember Red Cross posters--mostly because they attracted me visually. I wondered what the big red cross was about. Still don't know. What does Red Cross got to do with anything, its logic on a white background? Yes, I kind of remember those posters and they were nice heavy cardboard too. None of this flimsy paper stuff.

Q: Can you remember any other posters?

A: I wish I could say that I remembered the English poster of the Red Cross—it had a beautiful lady on it—but I can't. I've seen it. I've forgotten whose work it was. It was gorgeous. It was a poster that apparently was regarded as one of the best of the war. Elegant woman standing there with her red and white uniform but I can't remember that.

Q: Do you remember anything else other than films, newsreels, posters that might be classified even nicely in the sense of war propaganda? (pause)

A: That's hard to say. Not really. We were out on the farm, I wasn't in an urban center at all. The only time that we went into town was maybe once a week to do the shopping, what shopping there was. So I didn't see much of that stuff except around post offices and banks. But none of the--if you are referring to the sort of vicious propagandistic literature, I didn't encounter any. As a matter of fact, I can recall being rather surprised--oh, in fifth, sixth grades when I began to read about it and say, "Hey, I don't remember that." But--you know, the kind of literature that England for instance put out about how awful the Hun was.

What I do remember and this is interesting--sort of shows you a little cultural lag. Like I said, my mother was a very good piano player and we did a lot of family singing and during the Second World War, First World War sheet music was pulled out. We sang a lot of First World War songs during the Second World War because that's what we had and that was war songs so we sang that. So my memory of music, for instance, during the Second World War is mostly First World War stuff.

Q: Do you remember any of the titles?

A: Yes, one as I recall is "Country Gink," is the name of it. "He was just a long tall country gink from way out West where the hoptoads wink," and on and on. About a young man going off to war. The part that had to be--I remember how funny it was that there's a part in it where--this guy that's going off to war is promising his girlfriend that he'll bring home the Kaiser's hat for her and it had to be explained to me that, well, those were the Germans that we were fighting so don't worry about it. But I somehow got the Kaiser confused with the Second World War (laughs) when he was in fact part of the First World War. For some reason we only had First World War sheet music and later on we began to get sheet music. "When The Lights Go On Again All Over The World" was a Second World War tune that we didn't sing until much, much later. A very sappy, romantic--did you ever hear it?

Q: No.

A: But the stuff that I remember was First World War and English stuff. "It's A Long Way to Tipperary" and something about "Broadway Rose." First World War song. So there's a nice piece of cultural lag in a rural community. But we sang them, nonetheless, with just as much vigor.

Q: Were there in your community or did you run into in Danville what you might describe as war rallies, military parades?

A: The only one that I came close to--well, saw as a matter of fact, was right after the war was over. There was a military display in Soldiers Field. My mother went to Chicago to visit her sister and her sister's husband was in the Red Cross and he took us to a military display there. That's the only thing that I was ever close to. I was pretty impressed by it, let me tell you. My God, people all over the place, tanks and field guns.

Q: How much after the war, any idea?

A: Oh, it would have been two months.

Q: What about scrap drives?

A: Oh boy. Scrap drives. Yes, we were involved in all kinds of scrap drives. I saw something the other day on television which really breaks my heart. I don't know whether there is any truth in it or not but you ought to find out. We were collecting the pots and pans and then they just threw them in a heap and said, "To hell with them." Well, God damn it! We handed over our best pots and pans to these turkeys, really! That was apparently a crucial thing to--every scrap of metal that you could find on the farm that was of any value--get it together and give it to the war effort--and we did, including some very good pots and pans. When I saw that thing on television that said they just sort of tossed them around--at least in England, tossed them out and forgot them--I thought, "What a terrible waste. If that was all for morale, no thanks." But we did--it's not unusual on a farm to have a lot of heavy machinery that's served its time to just get hauled off to some end of the farm and left to rust. Those were all collected and hauled into town, iron and metal.

Q: Who collected them?

A: We did. We simply hooked tractors and whatever we had up to them--had to take them to Danville, that was the closest scrapyard. Paper drives, so we saved papers. Then I mentioned to you that we also collected milkweed pod in grade school--because the milkweed pod seed is impervious to water, and they were used as stuffings for life jackets.

Q: The seed, not the little filament.

A: Not the whole pod, but the little white stuff inside, that the seed is attached to, which carries it in the wind. That stuff was used to stuff life jackets. That was particularly for the air force we collected those, because they were so very lightweight, they were lighter than whatever else they were using. So we collected that stuff at school--one day a week, we had school, went off with our onion sacks and gunny sacks and went out in the fields in October and collected milkweed pods. Sent them off by the great carload to be used for floatation devices for the air force. So those were the kinds of collections that I got involved in, scrap and paper and milkweed pod. I never pass a milkweed pod today though that I don't think of collecting them for the war. (chuckles) Those we hauled in to the county superintendent of schools and put them in his office. We'd go in on Saturday and dump our load of milkweed pod in his office. Lord knows whatever happened to them.

Q: You mentioned that your mother had a very large garden and you were raised on a farm. Were you aware of the phenomena, so to speak, of victory gardens?

A: Not really. I heard it, but it was sort of regarded as ridiculous where we lived because--maybe this was standard behavior but whenever the people in the city decided to do something which the people on the farms already did, it was big news. We always would react by, "Yeah, you dummies, why haven't you been doing this all along?" This is just smart to raise your own food. That was largely the way the victory garden notion was regarded. Well, yes, if you had been smart you'd have been doing this all along, war or no war. So it was kind of a joke, the fact that all these city slickers were getting into the act and planting their front yards full of cabbage.

Q: We've talked about rationing, a number of different items. Do you remember the rationing of shoes?

A: No, can't say I do.

Q: Do you remember the rationing of any clothing at all?

A: Were shoes--leather rationed? Were they? I don't remember it. That was something we didn't do very often on the farm was buy new shoes, so it may not have made that much difference. But certainly the food items, the sugar and the butter, and gasoline.

Q: Why do you think it was on the farm you did not buy shoes often?

A: Well, you had two pairs. They were both good--that is to say, they were strong. One you worked in and one you wore to church. So the ones you wore to church literally never wore out, you had to grow out of them. The ones that you worked in were just very good and lasted a long time. The buying of shoes--it may have been a problem, but I don't remember it if it was.

Q: You mentioned blackouts earlier, and putting blankets up to the windows. Do you remember any other civil defense type activities?

A: Yes, one I don't understand why it was, but I remember we did it. We did it at least twice. That was--apparently a signal came on the radio or something where everyone knew it was going to happen but you'd all get in your car and see how fast you could drive to Bismarck, which was about five miles away. Everybody in the community would all drive to the town. I suppose if some disaster had happened we were all to be in a central place, is all I can figure out. But at least twice we did that.

Q: What did you do when you got to Bismarck?

A: Oh, we sort of sat around and talked to people and then went home. It was clearly something to do with the war. The only thing that I can figure out was--I supposed I could have asked but just never occurred to me to ask until you made it. But that was something we did at least twice and I have a feeling that it was something to do with evacuation, if such a thing would have been necessary, they could have had us all in one place and got us out. That's all I can think. Now that's kind of bizarre, but there it was.

Q: Was there perhaps air-raid shelters in Bismarck?

A: No, I don't think there were. As a matter of fact, that was something that we were all--most of us had a better supply of out on the farms. That was something we were aware of, that our cellars should be used in the event of an air raid. That was all pretty make believe. There was very little chance that someone was going to come over and bomb Bismarck.

Q: Did your family experience any shortages other than butter and sugar as a result of the war? Any hardships along that line?

A: I would have to say no. It's not because I don't know, it's because we didn't. When you lived on a farm you had plenty of food to eat, and clothing wasn't important. I mean, whether or not you were--because it was a different age. If you weren't in the latest fashions, so what. Gasoline would have been the only thing and that's a possibility, you know, but I couldn't say. But getting gas to put in the crops may have been difficult, but I certainly don't recall them ever reverting to horses to get the job done. We'd long since given up horses.

Q: Do you recall whether you began traveling less?

A: Yes, we certainly stayed home more. That's a pretty sophisticated measure, let me tell you, because we didn't travel much before the war. But now and then there would be a trip to Chicago or Gary, Indiana to visit my mother's relatives--which were pretty much suspended during the war. They just didn't do that.

Q: Why?

A: Couldn't afford the gas to get there so I guess in that sense, yes, there was--in terms of gas that would have been the major shortage. Another thing was tires, too. Now that one I do remember, my dad always worrying about were the tires going to last for the car, because they were really tough to get. That was another reason for not going on trips. You didn't want to wear the tires out. It's amazing, the sorts of things you begin to remember. That was another one, rubber tires. Of course at that point, the wheels on the farm machinery were steel. Some of ours were steel.

Q: Did you ever encounter, either on your rural farm location or in Bismarck or Danville or anyplace else--did you ever encounter American soldiers?

A: No, German soldiers.

Q: German soldiers?

A: Didn't have American . . .

Q: How did you encounter German soldiers?

A: Well, I mentioned earlier my father grew sweet corn for Stokely VanCamp Company which was in Hoopeston, Illinois and is still there, still is a food processing plant there. If you contracted with them to grow sweet corn they would provide the seed and the fuel to put the seed in and to get the ground ready and then they would also send out harvesters to harvest the corn. Prior to the war, I'm told--I don't remember it, I remember it after the war--prior to the war they used Mexican labor to harvest the sweet corn.

During the war they used prisoners of war, German prisoners of war and as a result of that, on one occasion that I recall--there may have been more but I don't remember one--German prisoners of war arrived to what was called jerk the sweet corn. They did the whole process by hand. The prisoners were located, were held, incarcerated at Hoopeston, Illinois, under federal protection there and then were farmed out as they were needed--as the corn was ready to be harvested, to a specific area. They were brought in the morning and collected in the evening and there was never more than two guards with them all the time. Of course they were unarmed.

Q: The prisoners were unarmed.

A: The prisoners were unarmed. If what I'm told and what I remember is correct, they posed no threat. They weren't interested in causing anybody any trouble. As a matter of fact, they were probably reasonably lucky--they were being fed well and doing what amounted to rather simple labor. But they appeared one morning very early on the farm because you jerked sweet corn in the very, very early hours of the day because when it's moist is when it's harvested pretty easy. So it would be harvested from, like, three in the morning until ten o'clock. By that time everything would dry out and didn't harvest very well.

I recall being awakened in the middle of the night, and my father saying, "Come outside, there's something you ought to see." I went outside and there were these young men in our front lawn, and my mother was speaking to them in German. I am suddenly having this strange kind of reaction because here is this language that she wouldn't talk to me in anymore and spoken to these guys. Although I could understand a little of what she was saying because she was talking loud enough, there was nothing--it was just instructions, "Here is what you are going to do, and you are to report here at noon and here at eight o'clock for breakfast and here at ten o'clock to go home," basic instructions about what they were supposed to do for the day. She tells me--I have since asked her if they just talked about what was going on and she said yes, they did. She wasn't very open about it. She won't tell me what they talked about.

Q: Who is they?

A: My mother and the prisoners. You know, I had asked, "Did you talk about anything besides just what their instructions for the day were?" She said, "Yes, we talked about other things," but she won't tell me what the other things were.

Q: You asked her and she said no.

A: Yes, she just said, "Never mind--it's of no concern." That's not to say she was giving them any messages or anything but I happened to think that she was inquiring how were they, and what was life like and were they having any trouble. But all that was far too much, too deep into the language for me. I couldn't understand it.

Q: Did she carry on this discourse with them in German every day they came?

A: Yes, they arrived for four days, it took them that long to get out something like eighty acres or so forth. She was there every day, talking to them, making sure they were--that everything was right. But she did not like it a bit that I was there listening. I only went out to see them once, was only permitted out there to see them. I would look out my bedroom window and see them, and see her talking to them. But it was--the once when my father brought me down was the only time I was right there and saw them. The rest of the time it was clear that I was not to be around.

There was no great--we felt no great threat by them being there. As a matter of fact, some of it was very interesting. After the war, they reverted to using Mexicans. My family had far less regard for the Mexicans than they did for the German prisoners of war. I don't know why. That may have been (chuckles) yes. Well, it's possible that it had to do with color--or the fact that Mexicans are supposed to be lazy and no good. But whatever it was, they didn't have the respect for the Mexicans that they did for the Germans.

Q: How many of the German war prisoners would you estimate were out there on your front lawn that morning?

A: Oh, fifteen. A nice little bunch. They were young. That I do remember. God, they looked young. And they were. I had a brother who was seven years older than I and they looked younger than he. They looked young. I don't remember a mustache or a beard in the lot. Their blonde hair was just absolute sterotype of young Germans. Rosy cheeks, blue eyes.

Q: Healthy?

A: Very healthy. For all I could tell, very happy. They were sort of lying around on the grass listening to my mother talk to them and they didn't seem to be surprised by that, either--that she could speak their language. They were just sort of having a congenial little chat.

Q: They conversed with her also?

A: Yes, the interesting thing, though, that I do remember that they would--when I recall these things I'm aware of how far back into my life my interest in communication has gone, because it was clear that whenever they would address my mother they would first regard my father. They would look at him as if to say, "Is it okay if I talk to

her?" My dad was not picking up on this very much. There would be these sort of stumbling moments where they would want to talk and knew that they should talk but couldn't because they couldn't get his eye to say, "Is it okay if I talk to your wife?" But he finally caught on. They were very deferential. I suppose I would be too, if I were in someone's country and was a prisoner. I'd be very careful (chuckles) what I did and how I did it.

But I was enormously intrigued by the fact that here were actual Germans sitting on my lawn. It was then that the pictures and pieces of the war began to make sense. I began to understand what this was all about, and was happy and proud to know that the Germans were being treated very nicely. Because the atrocities that had been spoken of, and that I heard spoken of, that the Japanese performed were the only ones that I heard about. Maybe you asked me earlier about that.

Q: I asked you if your family was aware of German concentration camps during or prior to the war?

A: No. They were certainly aware of the nasty little numbers that the Japanese would pull and those got talked about a lot. Bamboo shoots under the fingernails, if you don't mind. Other awful bits of torture, without ever mentioning the Germans camps.

Q: Do you think they were truly unaware of German atrocities?

A: I don't know, I think it's still . . .

Q: Chose not to accept it, or not talk about it.

A: It would have to be that they chose not to think about it. That they felt like being nasty about the Japs because the Japs were being dirty, so they deserved to get--I just can't believe they were that selective and didn't know that the Germans just as well had centers of concentration. That they were doing a number on the Jews. I can't think that they wouldn't know that. That's not to say that my family had much respect for the Jews, unfortunately. I mean, very Christian people can't be too concerned about a couple of Jews that get done . . .

Q: Is this an assumption, Larry?

A: No, not really.

Q: You think you've heard that attitude expressed?

A: Well, I still hear that attitude. My family is as likely to crack a bad joke about Jews as they are about Negroes. They sort of are two of the same sort.

Q: Do you think that they are simply ethnic jokes or do you think that there is meaning behind it?

A: No, they are people that killed Christ.

Q: When you say family, could you expand on who you are talking about?

A: My brothers and sisters and my parents. The Jews were not nice people. They are almost on a par with the Japanese, a little greasy and not quite to be trusted. I'm sorry to say I was raised in that atmosphere. It took me a long time to get over that one. (chuckles)

Q: Back to the German war prisoners on the front lawn again. How were they dressed?

A: Dark, of course. But it looked like fatigues. Blues. How were they dressed? It looked like fatigues. The sort of fatigues you see in contemporary soldiers. When they're English it's loose trousers, combat boots.

Q: They generally left the farm by ten o'clock or so in the morning?

A: About ten o'clock. They came and went in trucks with sideboards on them. One fellow driving the truck who had a rifle, and another fellow standing on the sideboards that had a rifle slung over his shoulder, both come and took them away. So one truck was all they needed, to stand up in. It's interesting--when I first moved to Springfield eleven years ago, I've forgotten we had driven out of town for something and we were driving back in and here came a truck out of town with sideboards on it with the back full of guys all standing up and that image just flashed in my mind. I haven't any idea what this truck was full of people, but there it was. It's a kind of, not a very nice picture, because if you are raised on a farm you know what a cattle truck is for.

Q: Is that what it was, a cattle truck?

A: A cab truck--with cattle sideboards on it. So you knew what that was for, that's for cattle. It's a little shocking to see people wedged in it. They weren't wedged in like a tuna-salad sandwich. But they didn't belong in there.

Q: Were you instructed to stay in the house until ten o'clock after they had left?

A: Yes. It was the summer months, of course, when sweet corn is picked, so I would have been home and I was under pretty close surveillance. My greatest desire was to come out from under my mother's thumb and to go out in the field and watch them, but it was not permitted. The closest I ever came to them was there on the lawn once, and then I had to watch them through the windows from then on.

Q: What about your brothers and sisters?

A: My brother who was seven years older was also restricted. The others were gone about their own business or not up yet, because they had business to go attend to later that would keep them in bed at that time. So my brother Howard was the older one and Mary Ann was the

second oldest--would have either been probably in some sort of summer work, well very likely working at Stokely VanCamp which they did. They would take summer jobs up there. So they may have been there because the factory worked all night long, through to about one o'clock during the day. So I just have no memory of them being around them at all. My brother who was next to me was also restricted. He wasn't interested, it turns out. Just not interested in them at all. I kept trying to get him to help me get out of the house so I could go--he wasn't interested.

Q: Your older brother was away working at the factory then.

A: Summer jobs, working at Stokely VanCamp.

Q: Why do you clarify that as far as summer jobs?

A: Well because they would have either been in high school. John Raymond and Mary Ann would still have been high school age or thereabouts. So it wouldn't have been full time employment.

Q: Where would Howard have been?

A: Well, of course he was helping doing the farming so he may have been out there with them, as far as I know. Or like I said, still in bed waiting to get up and do a day's work on the farm in some other aspect. But I don't recall any of them being in contact with the Germans except me--and my brother not wanting to. Oh, I was pissed off at him. He wouldn't help me get out of the house. (chuckles)

Q: Is there anything about that particular experience that you can think of that we haven't discussed?

A: Well, the only thing I haven't said anything about is, as I said I began to understand what the war was about but in the most amazing sort of miraculous way. Here, people that I had wondered about--as I began to understand that we were at war and with people who didn't speak our language and did things differently than we did--sort of miraculously, they turn up on my front doorstep. Something that I had been wishing for.

There were two things in my life that I wished for. It's apparently a part of my life. Two things. When you are a kid you always wanted an airplane to crash on your property so you could go out and look at it--or at least I did. And the other one was that when I began to understand that there was a world out there beyond Bismarck, I wanted them on my front lawn. Well, the Germans showed up right away--and two years ago an airplane crashed in my mother's pasture. The helicopter didn't crash severely, but it did come down and had to be repaired and towed away and I was pissed off because I wasn't there. So those two things that I had always wished for in fact did happen on that farm. That was the thing that I hadn't said anything about yet was the miracle of these Germans showing up on my front--and it took a long time, it was long after the war that I understood why they were there. I didn't understand the whole business of prisoners of war being put to work in various kinds of labor. I didn't understand it

at all. I was frankly not very inquisitive about that sort of thing. The thing that I was always interested in was the more magical and romantic aspects of what was going on and as a result was a child that didn't know much about the world for a long, long time. In high school, before I became to be worried about the world, I was like that.

I wish I could tell you a great deal more. As a matter of fact, over the weekend, talked to my mother by phone, and simply confirmed a lot of things so that I was sure I wasn't making them up. I would simply tell her, "This happened, didn't it? This happened, didn't it?" She would say, "Yes, that happened, yes, that happened." She still wouldn't tell me what she talked to them about. Now so many years later, she's still not interested in telling me what she said to those guys besides, "Here is what you are supposed to do today." One thing I do remember, they were not surprised that she spoke the language but they were certainly pleased that she did. My father remarked that it was the cleanest job of picking corn he had ever seen. I can't help but think that it was either one, the fact that they were Germans or two, that they were simply pleased that someone had spoken to them. Because their guards, none of them spoke to them. It was really rather crude.

Q: I'd like to ask you some questions now regarding the end of the war and a period shortly following thereafter. Can you remember the event as it happened or as news of it came of the atomic bomb being dropped?

A: Yes, I had no idea of the enormity of the thing except that we had bombs that would really do a big job.

Q: You didn't know that prior to it being dropped.

A: No, all we knew was that it was important, and as I heard the family talking about it, this put an end to it. I'm certain even today if I asked my brothers, they couldn't tell me the major known mechanics of the atomic bomb, simply what it is and they certainly didn't then, but it was a bomb that was going to put "paid" to the whole affair. That was generally the way it was touted.

Q: I'm sorry, a bomb that was going to do what?

A: Put "paid" to the whole affair. Just put "paid" down. Done It was going to end it. There was no great anticipation about it. As a matter of fact, there doesn't seem to me that there was much foreknowledge of it, not until the job was done. We knew the job was going to be done--but then when it was clear that had done the job all hell broke loose in terms of celebration.

Q: How did you hear about the bomb being dropped?

A: Me, by way of my parents talking about it. I presume they heard it by radio. The radio ran--to this day, my mother turns the radio on first thing when she gets up and it's the last thing that gets turned

off. The radio and the lights, when she goes to bed. The radio ran constantly. WLS. But any news that came over WLS they heard.

Q: Can you remember whether or not you were asked to listen to any news broadcasts or news events, yourself, or did your parents want you to sit down and listen to the news, for example, about the bomb?

A: No. Unlike what I have done to my own children, they didn't. When we landed on the moon--I got my kids in front of the television set. I said, "You are going to watch this and you are going to remember." They barely remember it. They remember it only because they had to get up out of bed and do it. My parents didn't do that. It wasn't that it wasn't good for you, you know, it just wasn't important.

Q: What was your family's attitude about--the nature of dropping such a bomb?

A: Perfectly all right. Still is. Ask them today if it's still the right thing to do. They totally do not understand any questions about us dropping the atomic bomb on Japan. They simply do not understand why that question should come up. (tape stopped)

Q: Do you know whether or not your parents were aware, or your older brothers and sisters--that we were in a race with Germany to finish the bomb?

A: No, I didn't know that myself until I was much older, let's say, past high school.

Q: Any interest on your parent's part, this is digressing back into the war for just a moment, any interest about the landings on D-Day?

A: No, can't say that I do.

Q: Do you remember how you found out about the end of the war in Europe?

A: Yes, there was a celebration in Danville, when the European aspect of the war was finished. Nothing like when the war was over. There was a celebration in the square of Danville called Reddin Square.

Q: Which your family went to.

A: We went to it.

Q: Did you know what you were going to?

A: Yes, I did. I thought the war was over. It took a lot of explaining yet that no, those nasty Japs are still the enemy. But there was all kinds of circus-like nonsense going on. One of the things that I recall was the flagpole was greased, and the object of the night was to try and climb the flagpole. Which was hopeless, of course, but it was great fun to watch. You know, I thought the war was over, that's why all of this was going on. It took a lot of

explaining to say, no, that's just the European part of the war. The Japs still had to be beat.

Q: Is there anything else about that particular celebration that you remember?

A: Yes, it was crowded. I mean, it was pretty unusual because it was night. I mean really, for a farm boy to be taken into town at night was just strange. We never went there at night except to go to a movie, and that was on the outskirts of town. But to go to town at night and get out in the middle of the street with a bunch of other people and walk around, lots of people climbing flagpoles and fireworks going off here and there, was pretty strange. I mean, that was really bizarre. I'm certain that's one of the reasons that I remember it. It just was not the normal kind of behavior.

Q: Was there bands playing?

A: I don't recall a band. Radios. Radios were playing and people were around this Reddin Square--the bank, the dime store and the courthouse. People were hanging out the windows of the second and third floors of those buildings sort of waving flags, and it was pretty strange.

Q: Were there speeches?

A: I don't recall any speeches. I hope there weren't any speeches.

End of Side One, Tape Two

Q: Sometime prior to going to this celebration in Danville that was a celebration of the end of the war in Europe, you had evidently heard that some part of the war had ended. Do you remember hearing about that?

A: Well, like I said, I was under the impression that the war was over.

Q: You remember hearing that.

A: Yes, you know, "The war's over, the war's over." What I wasn't picking up on was that it was only one part of the war that was over. I remember my father correcting me on that on the way home because, I was so happy that the war was over. He was explaining to me that these dirty Japs are not yet licked. We're going to deal with them yet.

Q: When you were hearing, "The war's over, the war's over," was it your father telling you this?

A: No, this was a child not listening, to what they were saying. All I was hearing was the war was over.

Q: Do you remember how you heard of V-J Day?

A: The end of it all.

Q: Yes.

A: That's interesting, my mind is a blank from there until V-J Day, when we are back in the same square, only this time it's quadrupled. The streets are flooded. The buildings are lit with lights, people are all over the place. Flagpole climbing. Carnival atmosphere with vendors on the street with things to sell. I mean, it was just like an incredible circus. It was all at night. It went on and on and on. I remember not remembering the end of it, waking up at home, in bed. You know I had clearly fallen asleep in the middle of it all. But there was an atmosphere of just absolute hilarity. People were hysterical. You couldn't move. You were just jammed in the streets. The reason that's interesting is that square has four streets which feed into the circle and the feeding streets were packed and the circle was packed. There's a flagpole in the middle of it, with young men trying to climb it. Strange. Just absolutely packed. I remember understanding that this was the end of the war. You know, I thought, well war must be a pretty jolly thing, if this is the way they carry on. Can't be all bad. Because as I recall I got some hot dogs that night from a vendor along the street and then I went to two or three other things. Got something to drink.

Q: You mentioned the vendors. I was going to aks if the vendors were food vendors, or whether there were souvenir vendors?

A: Mostly food. I doubt, although I wouldn't put it past them to have things to commemorate the end of the war already. Because this was like the day it had happened, incidentally but there was certainly people out there selling ice cream and hot dogs, which is the standards of American fare.

Q: Do you remember your parents acting hysterically?

A: Yes, they were the happiest I think I've ever seen them. Like I said, they are conservative people, very quiet. But they were part of that celebration. They were out there jumping up and down and yelling. You know, just yelling, just whooping, "Hoo, hoo, hoo!" shouting. Nothing in particular, just jumping up and down and shouting. It was astonishing. The first time in my life that I recall toilet paper had been thrown out of windows. Rolls of toilet paper would just stream across from one building to the next and under normal circumstances my mother would have just read bloody hell to them for doing something as foolish as that. She was the one that couldn't wait to see another one go flying over. Yes, happy occasion.

Q: Do you remember whether alcohol was served at either one of these celebrations?

A: They may have been but certainly not where we were. Alcohol was a work of the devil. No alcohol, thank you very much. I'm sure that

the bars were open. Undoubtedly, they were open but we certainly didn't have anything to do with it.

Q: After the war, there were war crime trials. Do you remember whether your family had any reaction to the fact that there were trials of this nature in the first place? (tape stopped)

A: I don't know that they had any reaction to the early war trials because the only ones that I remember them reacting to were the Nuremburg related trials. As well as the collection of Germans hiding in Argentina, wherever else they may be. Reactions to that. They sort of reacted to them--well, I should say that our mother has never a part of any of this. She has nothing to say on the subject. My brothers and sisters I am talking about now. They sort of take them one at a time. Rather intellectually listen to the particular trial and say, "Well, yes they're guilty" or "No, they're not." It's never a, you know, "All of them fuckers are guilty." It's never that. My mother never responded to any of it. I don't know how she feels about it. The thing that does surprise me is that they do believe that the vigilance on the part of the Jews hunting down war criminals is as bad as the Germans or the Nazi actions. This is inhumane. I don't know how I feel about that.

Q: What about your father? Do you have any idea what he thought about the fact that there were war criminal trials?

A: I hate to say I have no idea.

Q: Do you have any idea of what in this order your father, your mother and your brothers and sisters, thought about the revelations that came out as a result of the Nuremburg war trials?

A: I think that's why my mother has--well, I should say my father first--sort of a begrudging admittance that this was pretty awful and those people ought to pay for it.

Q: Why do you think it was begrudging on his part?

A: I wish I could say, but there it is. Not exactly reluctant, but--I think it has to do with this. The war was awful enough, it's over with now. Now you mean we have got to live through this? Seeing these people brought--you know, this is worse than living the war over again. I think that's the way he felt about it. Let's just not do this. My mother wanted nothing to do with it, has never uttered a word on the subject as far as I've ever heard. My brothers and sisters, as I said, sort of took them one at a time, saying, "Well yes, this one is guilty and that's one questionable--"But I think I'm--for certain on my dad's part that it was, "My God, we've got to live this thing over again? We just got rid of it."

Q: But the things the trial brought out--were your brothers and sisters surprised?

A: Yes, I think when they would have to face the full revelation of what went on in concentration camps and how people were treated--yes,

they were shocked. It was really not very believable. The way that I know this to be the case is my sister was not much of a reader but read some. Oh, when I was--as a matter of fact, I was away as a freshman in college. I went home to visit her and she said she had just read a book and it was very interesting. It was The Diary of Anne Frank. She was telling me I really ought to read it, it was really a very charming book and I said, "You know that's real." She said, "Oh no, it's not real." I said, "Come on, this is real. This is that child's diary." There was still a reluctance on her part to admit that. That what was revealed about what was going on inside Germany and under German domination were in fact true. Did this have something to do with the fact that we had a lot of German in us or was it that we were isolated and naive and couldn't believe that people would do that? It's a little bit of both. Just can't believe that someone would do that.

Q: Well I haven't asked you you're perspective at the time. By this point you would have been ten or eleven, twelve years old. Were you aware that the trials were happening when they were happening?

A: Yes, and felt that they deserved whatever they got. Because by this time I was a little more enlightened about what the war had meant. I have to admit to being really in the cheering section--you know, get every one of those guys. Every one of them. Nail them on the wall. Every one of them. You know, the typical pre-adolescent sort of ballgame reaction, that all these guys have got to be got. So yes, I was gung ho. I thought it was the best thing ever. Mark them up on the wall. There's another one--get him. Then to add to that, the fact that pre-adolescent boys are a little ghoulish and so all this stuff that was coming out was marvelous, to get them fuckers.

Q: When the war was over, did your family engage in any activities that were related to the fact that we had been in a war?

A: Yes.

Q: Would you tell me about them?

A: Yes, the one that I have the best memory of--I wish I had more detail on it. But apparently after the war there were efforts--perhaps by the way of the Red Cross, I don't know--to send clothing to Europe. My mother had a trunk. A new one, by the way. She bought a new trunk for this. Where she got it I don't know, but she had--it wasn't the old stagecoach sort but it was a nice big steel trunk--that she commenced to buy clothes for and to make clothes for and simply kept putting them in there for--oh, a good length of time. Six or eight months.

During that time, she made a jacket that I was thoroughly convinced it was for me. It was a blue jacket with red buttons. I remember it vividly. That crate of clothes got filled up and I was vaguely aware that that was going to Europe--Germany, specifically. Because I could hear her talk about some little German girl will like that and some man will like these bib overalls or whatever she was putting in there, and the trunk was full and the coat was finished and she took it off

of me and folded it and put it on top of the trunk and said, "Some little German boy will like that coat," and closed the lid. That really got me. I wanted that coat something fierce because it was a nifty little coat. But I think somehow she did it--she sort of led me on to believe it was mine so that I would also feel somehow the need to be giving to somebody else.

But the trunk of clothes was clearly destined for Germany. How it was that she was going to manipulate that, I don't know. If there were agencies that would send to specific countries or what, but that one was going to Germany as far as she was concerned. I've often wondered if it did and I'd like to meet the kid that got the blue coat. Because I would like it back, thank you very much. Yes, she was involved in that. Clothes was the only thing I recall. I don't believe food was any item. However, I do recall there were church collections for money that was to be sent to Europe. I would have a guess that that was by way of Red Cross, I don't know.

Q: Is there anything that you would like to talk about at this point that we haven't already discussed?

A: What haven't we discussed? It seems like we have gone through everything.

One thing that I should like to sort of draw your attention to. . . . A farm community is an isolated community. I say that perhaps in my defense, I don't know, but throughout this tape I have sort of off and on mentioned that I really was not very aware of what was going on. Now, this was partly to do with the fact that I was never older than eight. You know, I was always younger than that throughout this whole thing. But somehow I can't help but think that children who are eight today are more aware of what is going on. Maybe they're not. Maybe it's because we've got more coverage, television is blasting day and night, and the radio is going and everybody is talking. But I was totally unaware of the magnitude of what war was during the Second World War.

It wasn't until high school and college that I began to read history and reflect back to know that I had been a part of that. The fact that I was a part of it when it happened was immaterial, unimportant. Somehow, I know that children my age in Europe certainly recall the war differently than I do. I guess I feel slightly guilty, that I don't have the memories of the Second World War like some of my European peers do. This was because we were not that involved in it and certainly out in the country where we were, it was remote! It was very remote. None of my immediate family were affected--you know, we were all protected by deferments of one sort or another.

So it was really very much like a movie. Sort of off in the distance, you sort of titillated yourself by it, but the reason I say all this is because I want to bring your attention to the Korean conflict. When it was clear that we were in that one right up to our armpits, and the day that my brother--the one that was seven years older than I--received news that his National Guard unit would in fact be going to Korea. That entire day, I relived all of the Second World War.

All of it had had time to coalesce, to become a reality for me, and I said to myself, "Here we go again." That was the day when it all came back and was real. It had never been real up until then, until the Korean War and then it was real. Because the fear and the frustration and the doubt and uncertainties of all kinds rose to the surface and they were very very frightening. I remember being in a depression for a week or more. Just--not because of my brother, who was a buddy of mine, was going to be gone, but because this was war again. I had a feeling that this time I would be closer to it. Turns out I wasn't. I wasn't any closer to it than the first time, except by ear. This time I had to watch it.

But surprisingly enough, when Vietnam came along, I was again almost disinterested in it. There I was. I had gotten it out of my system with Korea and when Vietnam came along I thought, "Oh yeah, another one of those." That's all!

Q: Larry, thank you very much for taking the time to conduct this interview with me.

A: Had fun.

End of Side Two, Tape Two