

DP-48  
THERESA BAHRKE  
BIRTH DATE: 1920  
INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 2, 1989  
RUNNING TIME: 50:00  
INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT  
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: ST. FRANCIS, WI  
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GERMANY, 1925  
AGE 4  
PASSAGE ON "THE BREMEN"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Mrs.  
Theresa Bahrke. Is that pronounced right?

BAHRKE: Theresa Bahrke.

DALLETT: Theresa Bahrke. And we're going to begin this interview  
on Thursday, November 2nd, 1989. We're starting the interview at 2:15 PM.  
And we're going to be talking to her about her immigration experience from  
Germany in 1925 at the age of about four and half. Can we start back at the  
beginning of your story, and can you tell me where and when you were born?

BAHRKE: I was born in a town called Miltenberg am Main.

DALLETT: Can you help me spell that?

BAHRKE: (She laughs.) (Phone rings.) Okay. Miltenberg.

DALLETT: That's M-I-L-T-E-N-B-E-R-G. And how did you pronounce it?

BAHRKE: Miltenberg am Main, which is a German pronunciation. It's Miltenberg. And "am Main" is added because the, it's on the Main River.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. So it would be E-N, M-E-I-N-E?

BAHRKE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: En Meine?

BAHRKE: Uh-huh. It's about forty, forty some miles southwest of Frankfurt. It's near Frankfurt. So--

DALLETT: Okay. And the year, again, sorry?

BAHRKE: (She laughs.) I was, when I was born?

DALLETT: Yes.

BAHRKE: In 1920.

DALLETT: And do you remember your childhood in Miltenberg?

BAHRKE: Uh, no. I was much too young. The only thing that, uh, I can relate are things that, uh, I was told by my sister. Uh, Which isn't very much. Not as far as Germany is concerned. All I can remember, well, my dad was here, came here earlier. And then, um, after he was settled here in the United States. In Milwaukee I have a, uh, an uncle who lived here, and probably, and I'm assuming that's why my dad decided to come here to Milwaukee. And then he sent for my mother and my sister and brother and myself.

DALLETT: Do you know how long after he had been here that he sent for you and your mother and brother?

BAHRKE: You know, I can't, I was trying to find that in some of these papers that I have, and I really don't know. Uh, a year? I'm

assuming, perhaps.

DALLETT: Do you know the circumstances under which your, I guess  
it would be your uncle, then, was it your father's  
brother who was here in Milwaukee?

BAHRKE: Yes, yes.

DALLETT: Um, do you know anything about why he came, or when he  
came?

BAHRKE: My uncle? No, but he must have been here much earlier  
than my dad. Uh, my cousin is about as old as my sister, so that would be  
seven years older than I, and actually she was born in the United States, so  
he had to be here a number of years before my dad was, because he married an  
American and he had three children, and all born here.

DALLETT: Do you know what kind of work he did when he came to  
Milwaukee?

BAHRKE: Uh, I don't know what kind of work he did. He worked at,  
uh, was he doing welding? He was, he wasn't doing  
welding. He was a foreman in someplace. He was a

foreman in a plant that he worked at. Just which one it was, I don't know. My dad was a cabinet-maker and learned his trade in, starting at nine years old. I believe that's the, when those years ago the, uh, children that went to school then also learned a trade at the age of nine. So it's like our apprenticeship. So he went into cabinet making.

DALLETT: So he left, let's say, it must have been, uh, how long after you were born? Would it be when you were three, if you came here a year later, maybe?

BAHRKE: I'm not sure. Uh, maybe when I was three, something like that.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. Do you remember anything that your sister has told you? You mentioned that she passed away recently. Any stories at all that she related to you about growing up in Germany, or around that period in time where your father joined his brother here?

BAHRKE: I don't even know why my father decided on, to come here. I really don't. My mother was a nurse in Germany. Her, why he left I really don't know. I, we

were not, I believe it was a family, you know, children should be seen and not heard. (She laughs.) You know, they, all the families at that time, you know. So I don't know, uh, know too much, or why. He was in World War One. He won a, or he received, an Iron Cross given to help by Kaiser Wilhelm for bravery. And, uh, I don't know what happened to that Iron Cross, but I know he has it. So, uh, I didn't know whether it was the politics, but they were never, he was never involved in politics. And he had a business out there. He made caskets. And as far as I can remember, we were well-to-do out there. We lived in a big home about, that had a, what do you call these cellars that they're used for defense? No, no.

DALLETT: A shelter?

BAHRKE: Like a shelter, uh-huh. And that was in, put into a, uh, mountain.

DALLETT: The house was built into the side of the--

BAHRKE: Yeah, to a side, and the shelter went into the mountain.

So, safety, I think there wasn't any worry about that. Maybe he just wanted a change of scenery. (She laughs.) I don't really know. I wish I did. But then when my mother and my sister and my brother and I left, at that time, of course, we had quotas. And, uh, the quota was already filled for Germans. And I know, my sister told me that my mother begged everyone she could out there to get on the boat, to get over here to the United States. And with the quota filled, it was hard to do that. But my dad had a cousin who was married to a French diplomat. And my dad was born in Alsace Lorraine, which is, was the big wars between France and Germany constantly. And she married the diplomat and the, um, I believe that she probably, or he helped to get us over here. Of course, on the papers, their papers to the United States, coming here, they were to come on a French, they were considered French, of German descent, because they were born before World War One.

DALLETT: When you say "they", who--

BAHRKE: My brother and sister.

DALLETT: Okay.

BAHRKE: And I was born after World War one. They were born in, my brother was born 1913, my sister in 1914, and I was born in 1920. So they were born in Alsace Lorraine, which then became French, so they were considered French of German descent, and my mother and I were both German. So we were supposed to come here on separate boats due to that. And so I guess this, uh, diplomat that my father's cousin married, helped us get us together, on the same boat, the U.S.S. Bremen.

DALLETT: Now, was your father's family still in Germany and your mother's family, your grandparents?

BAHRKE: I, nobody else that I know of, besides my Uncle Fred, and my dad, were here. I don't know of any other Schaefer from that particular family that was here. And he had--

DALLETT: Everyone else was still in Germany?

BAHRKE: Yes.

DALLETT: So your father and your mother would have been bringing

their children and saying "goodbye" to their parents.

BAHRKE: Right.

DALLETT: Your grandparents.

BAHRKE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Do you have any recollection of your grandparents?

BAHRKE: No, I don't. I think, if I'm remembering stories correctly, I think my grandmother, uh, my mother's mother, owned a shoe manufacturing business out there because she had borrowed my father the money to start his business out there, this casket business he had. But other than that, and I think that was probably near Berlin, if I can, if I think of it, from what I was told. I think it was near Berlin. I really, I have, I know I have my mother's birthplace. Now, if I can find, look on a map to find out where that is, I would know where she was born and where it was.

DALLETT: Well, we can, we'll go through the papers maybe a little

later and see if we can come up with that, and some of the spellings.

BAHRKE: Right. Her birthplace is there, where she was born.

DALLETT: Okay. Tell me, what is the first memory that you have around this sort of early immigration experience? Anything about, I don't think, I didn't get the impression that you remember actually leaving Germany.

BAHRKE: No. As I said, we were--

DALLETT: Anything about traveling to this country?

BAHRKE: Uh, I know I caused a ruckus on the U.S.S. Bremen. (She laughs.) Uh, of course, to begin with, I was a spoiled brat, probably. And after I caused, I learned how to calm down after that. But, uh, in order to keep me quiet, now, I, think it was, it was ,probably stress. It was, you know, my dad wasn't there, and all this going on, I didn't know anything that was going on, or why it was going on, and probably everyone around me was, oh, busy, you know. And I didn't get the attention I should have, probably. I'm. it was logical of what could have happened. But, uh, I think to keep me quiet, my sister always said, "All we had to do to keep you quiet was to put a nipple, that you buy in the store, and douse it in sugar

and stick it in your mouth and you'd shut up." (She laughs.) And I think that nipple was lost on the way over here on the boat, and I cried and cried and cried. And I think from what she, my sister said, they were ready to turn that boat around and go back. (She laughs.) But we got here okay. But, uh, I know we, we were, we had to stay at Ellis Island overnight because they were unsure of my mother.

DALLETT: How do you mean unsure?

BAHRKE: Well, she was a very heavy, it doesn't show that in the picture, but she was a very heavy person and she had a double hernia and she didn't want anybody to know that. So I guess they were unsure as far as her health, probably, or, other than that her health was fine. And they finally decided to let us through.

DALLETT: Ant recollection at all about Ellis Island? Anything that you remember, or that your sister told you about it, or your mother, or what it was like to stay over night?

BAHRKE: No. But, um, my sister told me too, that on the way to Milwaukee after leaving Ellis Island, we had these name tags. And, of course, none of us could speak English, so we didn't know what in the world

was going on. But everyone was so kind, my sister said. They gave you chocolates and an apple. Of course, we didn't realize that we had to pay for them. We thought, "What a beautiful country we're going to." You know? (She laughs.) But everyone was kind, and we found our way here.

DALLETT: So your father hadn't come to Ellis Island to meet you, you had to come out to Milwaukee. Do you remember anything about that?

BAHRKE: I wish I did.

DALLETT: You weren't meeting your father for the first time, were you?

BAHRKE: Well, that I know myself, no. I can remember running to him and he grabbed me, and holding me up. That I can remember. I was only four years old then, four and a half. That's all I can remember of that. I can't remember much, and I don't know why I don't, because I've heard people talk about their early experiences that they remember, and they remember so well. I don't. (She laughs.) I get angry at myself.

DALLETT: What was your father, you said he was a cabinet maker and a casket maker in Germany. Did he continue with that tradition here?

BAHRKE: He just worked as a cabinet maker.

DALLETT: A cabinet maker.

BAHRKE: Here, right. And then, of course, uh, we, weren't her very long and the Depression hit, so here he was without a job, which wasn't easy.

DALLETT: He was living in Milwaukee?

BAHRKE: Oh, yes. Uh-huh.

DALLETT; Do you remember, once your memories begin, as you grew up, what kind of community was it that you lived in? Were there other Germans?

BAHRKE: Well, first of all, we, I know we moved to Wauwatosa because we were living on the same street that my uncle and aunt lived on. And, of course, this was before the Depression years. So, uh, we lived in Wauwatosa. As a matter of fact, we lived on 68th. And at that time the street was called Auburn. And since then that Auburn avenue has changed names. But it's, uh, I think everybody in Wauwatosa would know it. It's

near State Street. And it was, we lived above a store. I can recall that until my father bought land in Milwaukee, Bay View area, and I know when we first moved here there were no homes around us. We were, uh, of course, my dad and mother had met other Germans that came from Germany at that, between these years that they were here. And, uh, the, each one of them bought a lot on this particular street, which was Brust Avenue. And each one had a lot that they purchased, or two lots. And all of us were just in one row of the street in Bay View, Brust Avenue. Nobody else was. Uh, let's see, from Clement Avenue to, uh, where the railroad is, must be about eight blocks, nine blocks. No other home. Just a spattering of homes. One, one way on the west end and Italian families on the very first street after Clement Avenue. Otherwise, other than that, we started building there. My dad did. He built the home. So, uh, that's, after that, of course, as I was growing up, period.

DALLETT: Did your mother, you mentioned she was a nurse in Germany. Was she a nurse here?

BAHRKE: No, no. No, she didn't work at all when she came here. And she, uh, her heart started failing. As I said, she died, I was thirteen when she died. So I didn't have much of a childhood there, you know, within, with the parents. Especially with my mother. When I needed her more, most. I had just started high school. That was a bad time.

DALLETT: So when you first came as a little girl, you had learned German, right?

BAHRKE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: And when you came here you were out into school at what age?

BAHRKE: Well, we went to the International School, all three of us went to the International School to learn how to speak English.

DALLETT: Tell me, what do you mean by the International School?

BAHRKE: It's called The International Institute. It's International Institute of Milwaukee County, where a lot of the people go to learn English. Really, you should go to learn English, how to speak English. But I still had to speak German because my mother could not speak English. So at that point I kept up with my German, because I took German in high school, too. Straight A's all the way through, of course, which is natural. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: Did your father also continue with, you spoke German in

the house?

BAHRKE: Yes. Well, he could speak English, very brokenly, of course. My brother, till the time of his death, spoke broken English. But, uh, my sister spoke English very well. But all, the three of us kids all went to, uh, this institute to learn how to speak English.

DALLETT: Huh. How do you explain that, that the two girls, and you were of differing ages, your brother was the oldest?

BAHRKE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Yeah. How do you explain that he held onto his German longer than you did?

BAHRKE: I don't know.

DALLETT: His profession, or--

BAHRKE: Probably. He started his own--

DALLETT: What kind of work did he do?

BAHRKE: He was a welder. He started working for my, uh, the same place my uncle was in. But, um, I don't know.

DALLETT: Was it a very strong German community that you lived in as children?

BAHRKE: Oh, yes. Uh-huh. It was a, it was just a little burg, little town, very small town. And the center of town was where everybody gathered at this round, it was like the center of a, of the city. And we used to call it the Schnatter Loch [ph], the gossip hall. (She laughs.) In Miltenberg, where everybody gathered. And I can recall, um, the first thing that the people did in waking up was go out and sweep the sidewalks. Not sidewalks, they didn't have sidewalks as such, the, little places in front of their homes was always swept, always clean.

DALLETT: Who would do that? The women?

BAHRKE: The women. The men, of course, had to go to work.

DALLETT: And then they would meet at the, what did you call it?

BAHRKE: Schnatter Loch [PH].

DALLETT: Schnatter Loch [PH].

BAHRKE: A gossip hall, yeah, is what it is. There was also a, there was a very strong Catholic community, although my mother was strict, very, very, strict Lutheran. But there was a, what is it, it wasn't a convent, it was a convent, yes, it was a Catholic convent, but it was a, uh, it had different names for different, anyhow, my, I know my sister went to school there, to this Catholic, convent? Church? Whatever it was, I don't recall. But she, and she naturally wanted to become Catholic, become a Catholic, and of course my mother, oh. My dad was Catholic, but then he changed to Lutheran for my mother. But she was very, my sister was very strong, strong-willed. And she ran away a couple of times. She always, she got angry at my mother because my mother said no, she couldn't change religions. That's one of the big things that happened out there, oh, boy. And that was a dangerous thing, really for, you know, at that youthful stage. When we were, not youthful, but I should say in the '20's and '30's, there was, you know, you don't have that sort of stuff now, what goes on here. But I had an interesting life out there. I've often wondered what it would be like if I would have stayed out there, if we would have stayed out there rather than come here. I don't know. I'm kind of glad I'm here.

DALLETT: Do you ever think there are some ways of life there that maybe it would have been better for you, or--

BAHRKE: I don't. I don't know. You know, after going through World War Two and seeing all the, oh, and being involved, because at that time I was eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. And, uh, ah, this is my country I wouldn't, I got angry, though, because people were leery about me because I was German, I was born in Germany. And hey were leery, you know, the first thing you think of, "Ah, she's, (she laughs), she's a spy." Whatever. But, uh, I kind of resented that, that feeling, because this was my country. I didn't know anything about Germany. I was too young to know, or to care. All I was concerned about was here. So that kind of angry at me and, uh, of course, I think that helped, later on in life, with this, with the problems that the blacks have and the problems of the Jewish people and, you know, it's, uh, I met plenty of people and I thought that I became good friends with them. So that kind of, uh, attitude change, I think I prefer. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: So people expected you to be somebody because you were German, but you--

BAHRKE: I think so. I really think so.

DALLETT: How did that make itself felt?

BAHRKE: Well, the very bad part of this whole thing, I worked in a defense plant, my girlfriend and I worked in the same place. And we worked second shift. We'd be going, we'd go out together and double-date. And, you know, cigarettes or film was very hard to come by. So we always would stop at this particular drugstore on the way to work and ask, "Hey, when are you going to get film in? Are you going to get any film in?" And we were there so often, I guess, they, he just put some film aside for us that one shipment that he had received, and he did. Well, we happened to stop there on our way into work and had these film with us. And somebody stopped us at the door and refused to allow us to go through because we had this film. We didn't have a camera, but we had the film. And we explained how we got them, and why we had them. It was our only way. And we can't, by the time we leave here the drug store is closed. So that gave me a little, kind of a, I was shook up a little bit about that. And I felt, "Come on. I'm probably a better English, better American than you are, you know?" (She laughs.) But that was a, that was the worst feeling, you know, that I've had about that. Otherwise the other stuff doesn't bother me.

DALLETT: Did your, uh, you mentioned that your mother and father

held onto German in the home. Was it a German community that they lived in here, that all of you lived in here?

BAHRKE: All, yes, all of, um, as I said, this block that we lived in, they were all German. We had, and then friends that she knew in Germany lived on the north side, which was Hampton Avenue, around that area. And, uh, that was a German, entirely German community. Which, of course, is isn't now any more, but it was at that time. And because there was no buses or, there were buses, but no automobiles, and we didn't own a car. It was very seldom that we got to see these people, but we managed to see them and other than, that was an entirely German community. But other than that, well--

DALLETT: So your mother was able to pretty much keep up her German traditions, and cooking, and language--

BAHRKE: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

DALLETT: --culture, here in Milwaukee.

BAHRKE: Uh-huh. Sure. Taught me German cooking, crocheting, all the stuff that she did.

DALLETT: What other kinds of things?

BAHRKE: Not very much, because she became ill when I was still very young. So there was, the communication between the both of us was getting less and less because she was so ill. But, uh, I know I did learn, I did learn cooking. Not that I cooked after, or she told me how to cook, I think it was a matter of remembering the cooking rather than doing it while she was still there. Because I was probably not, I was playing, or at school. But I remember a lot of the things that were cooked, that we had, that she learned, and taught me. Or, rather, told me how to make them.

DALLETT: Tell me about some of those things that she told you about that you remember.

BAHRKE: Sauerbraten, and that was, oh, that was the thing. And I will not go to a German restaurant and order sauerbraten, because it's just not the same. And, with dumplings and red cabbage. That was a full dinner. During the Depression years where there was very little food, and we had to do with what we could get, my father

and mother both were rather, well, you don't beg. You don't ask for food. That's a no-no. And I can remember a girlfriend of mine whose father was a, uh, builder, and he owned, or a contractor. And finally I think, just as we were leaving the Depression, or the country was going out of the Depression years, he got some homes to build and he hired my father for twenty-five cents an hour, and I can remember that to this day, twenty-five cents an hour. But my dad went, rather than go to county aid or, he said, "Uh-uh. We got too much pride for that." So we learned how to eat, uh, I had made rice. I made rice quite a bit, with cinnamon and sugar, ate it that way a couple of nights a week. Oh, we made a green bean casserole, which was healthy for you. You just cook green beans, or a carrot casserole, same thing. Uh, probably the day that, when there was some money, we had pork chops, breaded pork chops, which was a delicacy at that time, then. I remember my dad making rolls and baking rolls.

DALLETT: I'm just going to flip the tape over.

BAHRKE: Okay.

DALLETT: Uh, that's the end of side one of Interview Number 422  
[DP-48].

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 422  
[DP-48]. So you were talking about how you got  
along during the Depression years.

BAHRKE; Oh, yeah. Mainly by eating these kind of nutritious  
foods. I would be able to go through another Depression if we ever had one  
without starving to death, I'm pretty sure. But at that time it wasn't so  
funny. We managed, we managed well. We came out of it probably a better  
person. I sometimes say to my Grandchildren, "You should go through a  
Depression like I had to. You would be, you wouldn't be begging for money  
so much and spending like you do." (She laughs.)

DALLETT: So you think your experience really shaped your values.

BAHRKE: I think it did. I think it, even now, I think twice

before I purchase anything if I don't need it, well, we can do without it. I like nice things, but I think that what I have is nice.

DALLETT: Did you see a big shift from your generation to your children's?

BAHRKE: Not, not--

DALLETT: Or more to your grandchildren.

BAHRKE: Grandchildren. I have, we have one son. But the grandchildren, my three grandchildren are, there I can see the shift. I can see the, uh, there's no values, no money value. In other words, they'll do things first and then finally decide where their money's going to come from to pay for it. This I found, I know. (She laughs.) Why they do it, I can't, it would bother me. It would bother me so much if I had a debt that had to be paid. And the minute a bill comes in here, it goes out, and I write a check for it and get it out of here and I, it's the way I was brought up, I think.

DALLETT: So that's a value that you saw in your family that you imitated.

BAHRKE: Uh-huh. Yeah.

DALLETT: Did you speak German to your son?

BAHRKE: No.

DALLETT: He didn't learn German from you.

BAHRKE: No, no. after my mother died when I was thirteen, then I,  
the only time I would speak German, at home, to my  
dad, was if I wanted something very badly. I needed a  
dress for something. And when I spoke German, well.  
(She laughs.)

DALLETT: So when you really needed to communicate you'd speak in  
his language.

BAHRKE: Oh, yes. And he loved to hear that. This was his  
language, original language. And I think everyone feels that way. Every  
once in a while I'll, uh, I'm thinking of some German. Lloyd knows how to  
speak German too. He probably speaks better German than I do. (She  
laughs.) But, uh, the words will come back. Or if someone speaks slowly I  
can understand it. But I think if I would converse probably daily, it would

all come back. I don't think you really lose it.

DALLETT: You seem, you were very, uh, you looked forward to talking about your experience as, coming through Ellis Island.

BAHRKE: I would like to know, I would like to know more.

DALLETT: You're very curious about it, huh?

BAHRKE: Yeah. I would really like to know more about it myself.

I would, that's why I'd love to go back, but I wouldn't know anybody there, to Germany. I wouldn't know anybody, I wouldn't know who to find, who to look for. So I would really, what, it wouldn't do me any good to go except to see where I was born. But outside that, in order to get ant, um, background of my family, I wouldn't know where to start, or go, which is a shame. What are you going to do?

DALLETT: Anything else you can remember, or that your brother or sister would have told you about those early years when you had settled in this country and, it must have been very difficult for your family, for your mother and father with the three children.

BAHRKE: Well, it was. It was. I think, um, I think my sister had to become an adult in a hurry because she became more of a mother to me than a sister, because she had to take care of the family at thirteen years old, now she was thirteen. She had to take care of the family, and even from what she told me, from the train from New York to Chicago or Milwaukee or whatever, uh, she had to do all the thinking and all the doing, because my mother was, she said, was no help at all. She just wanted to get here, to see my dad. So she had to become an adult in a hurry, you know. And I, we had fun growing up. Uh, we did, whenever we did dishes we'd sing. We'd always have a songbook, you know, on the kitchen sink, and we'd always harmonize, we'd always sing. So those were good times I can remember, even during the Depression years. Those were still the good years. I think it was, you become a closer family when you have problems, and I think that's what happened then. I don't think the families are as close as they used to be, which is a shame.

DALLETT: So as you grew up did you feel, you mentioned that, you know, you said during World War Two when you worked in a defense plant that you considered yourself a better American than some other people. Did you grow up feeling a sort of dual loyalty?

BAHRKE: Not to Germany. I didn't have any loyalty to Germany.

No, I was too young then. And, uh, I didn't, when I came here I started my first grade of school here. So from there on I, Germany faded more and more, and especially after the death of my mother. And, uh, it just faded completely then. It's just the thought, every once in a while you think, "oh, would I love to go back."

I'd love to see where I was, just vacation or, but I don't know whether I would go, when the time came. I really don't. Because this has become the, you know, everything that I can remember is here. Nothing is over there. And I don't have relatives any longer. So this in itself, you know. I never knew the relatives.

DALLETT: When did you become a citizen?

BAHRKE: Well, when my, before I was eighteen, uh, my dad became a citizen. And at that time, I was allowed to become a citizen when he was. Then I finally got my own papers, and that is when I discovered that I couldn't have gone out to Germany or anywhere else out of this country until I had my own papers, but I never knew that. So I finally got my own.

DALLETT: Which was when? Oh, I see. This is 19--

BAHRKE: '75.

DALLETT: 1975, yeah. December 14, 1975.

BAHRKE: '79.

DALLETT: '79.

BAHRKE: Uh-huh. And all the while I thought I was a citizen. Because wherever I went, even when I got this job in the defense plant, I carried my father's with me, just to prove that I was a citizen, you can verify it, at that time a citizen, you became a citizen if you were not eighteen. If your parent was a citizen you became one. And that's why I always had his, carried his with me. My Impfschein, at that time we didn't have birth certificates. We had Impfschein.

DALLETT: Impfschein.

BAHRKE: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Spelled I-M-P--

BAHRKE: The vaccination shots.

DALLETT: --F-S-H-E-I-N. So you have a series of papers here, you have a series of papers here. The Park Service is interested in keeping documents that people have, you know, ship's tickets, any kind of documentation that people have. And I see here you have your citizenship papers and your vaccination card there, and copies of--

BAHRKE: Well, this is from the family Bible of the three, the three of us, the birth of the three of us, from the family Bible. And it was translated from the Bible, uh, at this institute, the International Institute of Milwaukee County. And it was translated for the sole purpose of getting our own citizenship papers. My brother became a citizen when he went, during the service. He was in the Air Force, the United States Air Force. He became a citizen then. My sister got her own paper and, of course, now I've got, I finally got mine. But that's why we have to have this translated from the family Bible so that all of this, that's the original and this is a copy of it. And I also have, from the Bible, I have the birth certificate. This belongs to this. Uh, not birth certificate a, uh, marriage license from my father and mother's marriage license. Not the license itself, but, uh--

DALLETT: Right.

BAHRKE: Copy didn't turn out so very well. It's, where does it say she was born? Oranienburg, Preusen. I've never heard of that town. That's where she was born. Now, wherever that was, it must be near where my grandmother had her shoe manufacturing. I kept all those. Now, what is this? Department of Justice, that's when I got my papers. I was told to come there with my marriage license. I had to have that, copies of that. That's really all that I have.

DALLETT: Okay.

BAHRKE: I don't have any memorabilia, and I wish I did, because I have nothing to remember family by. So--

DALLETT: Have you ever been back to New York and seen Ellis Island from a distance?

BAHRKE: No, and it's too bad, because my son had worked there at Javits Center. He was one of the, I think it was Operations, or some bigwig, because he does conventions centers. And he worked there and, uh, I just didn't have a chance to go. We don't do much travelling.

DALLETT: Would you like to go there someday?

BAHRKE: I'd love to. I'd love to. I really would.

DALLETT: Do you think that might remind you of anything that happened there?

BAHRKE: To see the Statue of Liberty. I'd love to see the Statue of Liberty, especially now as it's , and that was one of the things that, that what I really wanted to go, to see the Statue of Liberty.

DALLETT: Well, we're trying to get people who participate in this Ellis Island Oral History Project invited to the opening, so I hope--

BAHRKE: Oh, that would be beautiful. One thing my sister also mentioned to me, but this is strictly off the wall, and I don't know the truth of it, but on the U.S.S., not U.S.S., on the Bremen, the boat that we came on out of Hamburg. Before it landed, before it came to Ellis Island, it had, someone jumped overboard, as I understand it. And it was somebody that the police were looking for. And he just decided to jump. So it was held out, away from shore. I don't know whether they ever picked him up, or the facts about it, I don't know. But this is something that she mentioned

to me, that this had happened. It was interesting.

DALLETT: I'm just curious. Just, I don't mean to, when you talked about, when you worked in the defense plant, and the film incident where, you know, why were you bringing the film in, um, I'm just curious about that point in time when the U.S. was at war with Germany and you're working in the defense plant. And you had mentioned you had no divided loyalty as you grew up, but you mentioned that one incident. Were there other, um, you know, was that a really active topic, a thing that people were really talking about during the war here in Milwaukee, since there was such a big German population.

BAHRKE: I think so, I really do. Um, just like the Japanese, same thing on the West Coast. There is another case where I don't think that should have happened to these Japanese people who lived there. You know, we all get, I think we all begin to get our loyalties. You know, when you think about it, and I've thought about it, was I'm in this country now. I'm not going back to Germany. I live here now. I think what angers me more than anything else, just the other day when I, I know they have been

following this, the FBI has been following this man around because of spying for Russia. That makes me angry. Or the, is it the Walkers, is that their name, in California, that were caught for spying? Here these people are living in this country, with this freedom, and they do things like this. I just, it angers me, when people can do that. This is my country. I don't want, I'd love to go to Germany to visit, yes, but I still want to remain here. This is my country. And I don't, I don't know if I would feel that way if I would have been twenty years old or thirty years old when I came here, I don't know. But I know so little about the country that I was born in that it doesn't matter.

DALLETT: Right.

BAHRKE: But no other--

DALLETT: Did you have other friends that you were sort of, it was the same case for them, that you could talk about this with, because it must have been, you know, you must have felt pressure.

BAHRKE: It was just this--

DALLETT: --when you felt people were, you know, treating you not the way you wanted them to.

BAHRKE: Well, I don't, I don't know because at that time, you know, eighteen years old, there isn't very much you could do, or go. Because you couldn't go to any bars until you were twenty-one. But, uh, went dancing quite a bit. I don't know whether I told anyone that I was German or not because from my speech itself, you couldn't tell. I pride myself on my English language, on the, as a matter of fact, I'm a member of SPELL. So I do, I always have pride in myself on the use of the English language. So I feel sometimes I can speak better than those who were born here.

DALLETT: Anything else, you're writing some notes over there. (Referring to Mr. Bahrke.) Anything else you think she should be remembering to add? (Voices garbled.)

BAHRKE: He's writing--

DALLETT: I see you have a wine cellar down there.

BAHRKE: Yeah, the German, in Germany.

DALLETT: Was that in Germany?

BAHRKE: Uh-huh. I believe, from what my sister told me now, that this place, this home that we lived in is now a restaurant and the shelter is now a wine cellar.

DALLETT: So she went back?

BAHRKE: Yes, yes.

DALLETT: Did your brother also go?

BAHRKE: Yes. Both of them went at the same time. My brother always had a friend whose father owned a store where they sold men's suits. And that's the, he went there to visit, but his friend was the owner of the store, was out of the city. So she, he could not see him, and didn't see him at all. Spending that time, you know, to go there. And he did want to see this friend because they grew up together, up until the time we left. But, I know, when, my sister also said that when we finally left, when we left Miltenberg to come here, the whole town came out to the station to say farewell to us. It was the whole town, the mayor and everybody was there. Did she say there was music, they had a band? I think so. They had a band

there, too. I don't know. I'm beginning to wonder, were they glad to get rid of us? (They laugh.)

DALLETT: Did people join you from that city here in Milwaukee? Do you remember other families coming?

BAHRKE: No, no. Oh, wait a minute. Uh, yeah. The Hulls are from there. One of the families that lives on the northeast side, lived on the northeast side. Yes, they'd come from there. My mother--

DALLETT: Do you know if your father and mother corresponded with them and maybe helped to guide them into Milwaukee and onto your block?

BAHRKE: I don't know. No, I don't know if they were here before we were. I don't know. But I know, at that time, you know, you had to have a sponsor before you could enter the country so that you would not be any liability onto the country itself. And I still think that should go on now. Even when it comes to refugees, somebody should be sponsors for. I really do believe that. I think it helps, it's better for the country in the long run.

DALLETT: So your uncle was really the sponsor for your father.

BAHRKE: He was our sponsor, uh-huh. So if my dad couldn't find a job or something, he had to help him out. That's the way it was.

DALLETT: Okay. I think we've covered what we need to, unless you want to add anything else.

BAHRKE: No. I think I spieled it all.

DALLETT: (They laugh.) Okay. Thank you very much. That's the end of Interview Number 422 [DP-48], and it's about ten past three.