

DP-60
CHARLOTTE YOUNGS
BIRTH DATE: 1914
INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 1989
RUNNING TIME: 1:00:00
INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
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GERMANY, 1925
AGE 11
PASSAGE ON "THE AQUITANIA"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett, and today I'm speaking with Charlotte Youngs on Friday, November 17, 1989. We are at her home in Tucson, Arizona, and we are beginning this interview at 9:45 in the morning. This is Interview Number 434 [DP-60] for the Ellis Island Oral History Project, and we're going to be talking with Mrs. Youngs about her immigration experience from Germany in 1925. Okay, let's start back at the beginning of your story, and could you tell me where and when you were born?

YOUNGS: I was born in Essen.

DALLETT: And when was that, what year?

YOUNGS: 1914.

DALLETT: Can you talk a little bit about your childhood in Germany?

YOUNGS: Uh, we had a lot of relatives. My father had a lot who are mainly now on the east side and my mother's were mostly on the west side. We went to my mother's relatives quite a bit, especially my grandmother and my grandfather because they lived close by. And, uh, we would have Christmas there and holidays, things like that. And then every August we took a vacation. My father would take his vacation and we would go to his relatives. His mother and, his father was already dead before I remembered it. And, uh, spent the month going around to all these cities where I visit now when I go over.

DALLETT: And how big was your family?

YOUNGS: Only my sister and I, father and mother.

DALLETT: Your sister was older or younger?

YOUNGS: My sister is six years younger than I and she lives in

Ohio.

DALLETT: And how did your father make a living?

YOUNGS: My father came over to this country in 1923 at Christmas, 1923, and he helped lay the first blueprints to the diesel engine. And that's what brought him over here to Hamilton, Ohio where the Hoover-Owens Rentschler Company was starting to make diesel engines.

DALLETT: So he was an engineer in Germany.

YOUNGS: Yes. Uh-huh. But he only lived ten months after we got here, then he died of cancer. And then just my mother and my sister and I were alone, and my mother had to go to work, and things were pretty rough. Because, see, we came without money when we came, because the big crash in Germany left, you know, they carted around their money in wheelbarrows and bought nothing for it. So when we left we came really on loan from a man by the name of, I forgot what his name is. And then she had to pay that back, and she went to work. So, although my father had taken care of quite a bit of it already, but none of us could speak English when we got here. So she went to night school. She got a job already before my father died, and we were only here three months and she worked in a paper mill, which was a big

letdown for her because we were beamten, what you say beamten in Germany which means sort of the better middle class. And then she had to go to work in the factory, which was really bad for her. So, and she, well, my mother was only thirty-two and he was thirty-five when he died, so she took it pretty hard, left alone with two small, I was eleven, my sister was five. And, um--

DALLETT: Tell me a little bit more about that period when you were still in Germany and your father was an engineer. Can you describe Essen for us before--

YOUNGS: We didn't live in Essen. I was only born there.

DALLETT: It was just where you were born.

YOUNGS: Uh-huh. We lived in Mulheim A/D Ruhr. That's M-U-L-H-E-I-M, and then A/D. That's the only way to spell it. And Ruhr, R-U-H-R, the river. So we lived there, we lived two places that I remember. One place was across the street from a Catholic school, and I remember my father and mother were very active in politics. And I can remember that I had to help pass out little papers that said, and everybody was yelling, "Centrum, centrum. I didn't ever did know what that meant. (She laughs.) So, uh, and then we moved because they had built, the factory had built houses in a

sort of exclusive residential area, and then the factory owned the houses. So when my father left, of course, we had to move out. And we went to my grandmother's. And we were there a year and a half before we could come over because as soon as my father went out he, the quota came on. See, he got in under the quota, and then the quota, and they said women and children first. But it took a year and a half before we could, and in that time he got sick here. And we lived at my grandmother's and I went to school there. And I have an aunt over there whom I just visited. I just came back in September. And she and I went to school together. I mean, not together, but we went to school. And, of course, she ignored me. I was much younger, four years difference between us, but she was in her last grade. But I went to see her just now. And she's the only one that's left. My mother's family, they had twelve children. Six died at the age of two, every one of them, with diphtheria. And then she was the first one they were able to pull through. And from there on there were six more. So you can imagine my grandmother? Golly. She was a lovely woman. She was so kind and so good-hearted.

DALLETT: So when your father came to this country he was coming for a work opportunity, to work on the diesel engine.

YOUNGS: Yes, right, on the diesel engines, and to show them how the blueprints had been laid out, help with that. And so he--

DALLETT: Did he intend, then, to stay here, or to work here temporarily?

YOUNGS: Oh, yes. Oh, no, no. He came here to stay. He was going up in the company and he was going to, he was a real smart man.

DALLETT: And the plan was that he would then send for the rest of the family.

YOUNGS: Yes. We were coming, to come over as soon as we could, and we couldn't come before the quota number came up, which was a year and a half later. So we came in May of that year, and we got here on a Tuesday night. Wednesday noon he dragged me off to school. (She laughs.) Forgot to tell me where I lived, though. When school was out I didn't know where to go. All the kids, you know, they all came running out, and by the time recess was over I knew how to say, when they said, "What's your name?" I knew how to tell them, and, "Where are you from?" "Germany." But then they all came round, and a whole bunch of them took me home. And we got a place, and finally they said, "Well, where do you live?" And I says, "I don't know." (She laughs.) So they, we just, I just went along. Some of them would drop off, you know, and I would just go along with the rest of them, and I thought they might take me home. I didn't know that they didn't know

where I lived, because nobody could talk and English, you know. So I was just up, the street had sort of an incline, and I was at the head of it, and all of a sudden I heard my mother yelling and I turned around and I said, "Oh, I live down there." (She laughs.) They were ready, they were waiting for me to go downtown, and they couldn't understand why I wasn't home. It never occurred to them that nobody told me where I lived. So that was really a joke. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: And during that period when your father had come to this country, you mentioned you lived with your grandparents. Do you remember that period of time? I'm sure your mother had to take of all the arrangements, but when she realized that she had to wait for the number to come up in the quota system, how was she able to support the family then? I don't know. I mean, it was after the war. I know that things were rough because my grandfather was already retired from a, what do you call it, a mine. He was a miner. And evidently he got a rather good retirement, but they retired him early because he was already ill. He had something wrong with his legs. I never knew that. So he was always at home. But somehow, I guess we must have had some savings that my mother contributed to the home, because there were teenagers in the house there, with my mother's brothers. She had one brother who was in the Navy. He was gone, but he had left a wife and little ones. And those two little ones and we two, and an aunt who had left her kid there. There were five children. We were quite a

little gang. We didn't, we all played together, except I was older then, and I had my own friends going to school, of course. My sister and this little Hildegarde was the little cousin's name. And they came over afterwards too. Their mother, her mother grabbed her up finally, six years old, and took her over here, and she never knew what happened to her. (She laughs.) People just do things, you know. They explained nothing and just. But my mother went and took some English lessons then, there, over there already. But, uh, I don't think it did much good, because I know that we were always running around saying, "Give me a ticket to New York." That was the one sentence we all learned. (She laughs.) So--

DALLETT: Now, was there any plan for your grandparents to come to this country?

YOUNGS: No, no, no. None of them wanted to come. And on my father's side was only his mother, and they were all older. His mother was much older. Well, anyway, she seemed that way to me. And we went around and visited all the family on his side and said, "goodbye" in that period. So, no. Then soon after we got here, then both her father and mother died, and a brother was killed in a mining accident and left two little girls. But outside of that, why, that's the way we came over here.

DALLETT: Do you remember that period when you were actually

packing up and going around saying goodbye and planning to come here? Had you had any, this is sort of a double question, but had you had letters from your father that might have prepared you a bit for what to expect?

YOUNGS: Oh, yes. My mother had lots of letters but, you know, in those days you didn't share anything with your children, so we never knew what was going on until the day came and we were going. And packing, I think she had done earlier from the house that we left, and packed with the idea of going soon. Because at that time, you know, she felt that we, it was no time we were going to be going. And then when we got to my grandmother's, of course, she had enough room, fortunately. We all doubled up. I know we always slept two or three in a bed. (She laughs.) But the big boys, they had an upstairs third floor place, and the big boys were up there. So they were out of the way. It wasn't bad. But, uh, the day we left, I think they went to the, not to the plane. We went by train and we went to the ship, to the boat that took us over to the ship. And there they left, and we just said "goodbye" and that was it.

DALLETT: I'm just wondering, for a little girl at this period, had

you, had you known other people to come to this country?

YOUNGS: No.

DALLETT: Had you said "goodbye" to other friends who had come here?

YOUNGS: No, no. We didn't know, I didn't know anybody that was going over. It was a time when things were still pretty shaky in Germany, you know. Hitler hadn't come around yet, and money was no good. So nobody could afford really, to go, you know, unless they had something like my father had. So nobody, and we knew no one over here either. They all came after we came.

DALLETT: So can you remember at all what some of those feelings might have been for you as a child?

YOUNGS: Well, I was never, I came from a peculiar family. I mean, I was never allowed to say much of anything. I kept everything just inside, and watched everything. But, uh, felt, gee, we were going away, and my grandparents were all I knew. After I came here, then I was more aware of what had happened, than while it was happening, it was all excitement and getting on the boat and it was fun on the boat, you know, running around and

playing, and they did things for children there. Of course, it took ten days on the boat.

DALLETT: Do you happen to remember the name of the boat, by any chance?

YOUNGS: Yeah, the Aquitania.

DALLETT: And can you remember any of the things that happened on the boat?

YOUNGS: Yes. My sister had a birthday on the boat. She turned five, and she got a great big orange, and I didn't. (She laughs.) I don't know whatever happened to it. I don't remember ever having eaten it. Or when she ate it, I don't know, but it was a great big beautiful orange. You know, oranges were very scarce at that time. I mean, I don't think anybody knew anything about oranges then. And a steward came around and brought her that orange. But I remember there was lots of food all the time and good food. I, uh, always had real fresh fish for breakfast, which was so strange because I didn't know that much about fresh fish for breakfast. But it was delicious. I still think of that. I remember that as always being, but there was the best fish. I'm not that big a fish eater, really. But the food was good. And there was lots of play, and there were toys, and you

could run around the deck all over and not worry about were your parents worried about where you were, you know. So that was kind of fun. There were other children there, of course.

DALLETT: Did the ship make stops at various ports, or--

YOUNGS: Yeah, we stopped, I think, at Le Harve in France, and I don't know if we stopped in England. At Dover, not at Dover, somewhere. I don't recall that, but I know we made a stop in, oh, and then we, on the way, the ice, we ran into icebergs, and the whistle blew, and everybody jumped out of bed and, uh, they just said, "There are icebergs if you want to see them," and my mother said, "Do you want to get up?" And she wrapped a blanket or something around me, and we ran out to watch the icebergs. And it was so cold, I wanted to get back to bed. (She laughs.) I wasn't that much interested in an iceberg. Probably more scary than anything else, you know, these huge things coming up in the ocean. So, but that was something that I remembered later, you know, that I did see the icebergs in the ocean.

DALLETT: Do you remember when you came into the harbor, or--

YOUNGS: Yes. Of course, we all stood at the rail and there was the Statue of Liberty and we were already dressed and everything, and packed. My mother always was ahead of schedule. You know, she was one, she

was a worry-wart and she was a very nervous person. So we, when we got toward that, you know, then, well, everybody was shouting, "The Statue of Liberty." And clapping and carrying on. And then we had to go to Ellis Island and then mom wasn't so enthused any more because then when we got there it was an altogether different story. First of all, you got off the boat, you went into this gangplank, you know, that was into the building, and you walked into those narrow little, um, trails where there were gates, iron gates in front of you, and iron. So they opened up and let so many people through, and then they clanged shut. And then you went another piece, and clanged shut. And then you looked and you saw all of these gates, you really thought, "Boy, we're in a prison." You know, and mom was real upset. She just really got upset. And we just stood around and went, did what you. But then, at the end of that, you know, we got examined, the doctors examined us, and then they discovered I had some problem with my eye. And, uh, they, a couple of nurses, or a doctor, came and said, "Bring her to that room." I couldn't understand anything, but he pointed, you know, to that room. And my mother and my sister were still between the gates. And, uh, and they said, "Take her over there." And they took in there. When they took me in, I saw my mother and sister standing over there, I screamed bloody murder, because I didn't know what they planned to do with me, not being able to understand anything, you know. And they didn't talk German, you know, either. You know, you would think that some of the doctors could say something to you. But then I realized they wanted

to, somebody said something, probably somebody who knew something said about my eyes, and they wanted to examine it. And I had a lazy muscle, I don't see on that eye. And I had had surgery on it twice already in Germany, and then twice here. Excuse me. And, uh, they looked, and it was okay, and then they sent me back to my mother. (She laughs.) And then we went on, from there we went on to New York. And there we took the train, and there we had all kinds of adventures.

DALLETT: Before we go on to the train, just, I just want to see what else you can remember about the Ellis Island. That must have been very frightening, obviously, when they took you away from your mother. How long a period did you spend on the island?

YOUNGS: On the island? Oh, I'd say, uh, it must have been two or three hours, because we, we still had to wait, well, we still had to wait in New York for the train, but there it was till everybody got through. They sent, would send so many people wherever they had to go, to New York or whatever city they were going to go to.

DALLETT: So the delay then was just due to the problem with your eyes.

YOUNGS: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DALLETT: There were no other difficulties after that?

YOUNGS: No, I, they looked at all the vaccinations. And on the boat we were vaccinated, for some reason or other. There was some kind of sickness, maybe. I don't know why, but I remember they vaccinated me in the back of the leg here. And there I got, and I vaccinated on my arms.

DALLETT: Above your ankle, you're indicating.

YOUNGS: Yeah, uh-huh. Which was, I thought was a strange place because we always had them in the arm in Germany, you know. Because I had all the vaccinations, so nobody was a problem. But I think my sister and I were, I don't know if mom was or not, but we were vaccinated on the back of the leg.

DALLETT: So as far as you know, then, there wasn't a translator or an interpreter. Someone to really help to--

YOUNGS: No. Maybe there was someone who talked to my mother and told her why they were taking me away because, of course, she was concerned, you know. And then hearing me scream bloody murder she was--

DALLETT: Do you remember what you screamed?

YOUNGS: No. I screamed. "Ahhh." No, I just screamed. I wouldn't scream for mom or dad. We didn't have that kind of relationship. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: Okay. You were just about, before I interrupted you were about to take the train to--

YOUNGS: We took it over to New York. From there we were to take it to Ohio then. And there was a big mixup there, with a misunderstanding with the people. My mother was just about fit to be tied. She was going up and down that waiting room and everybody was trying to placate her. And she, there was a problem with, uh, the train was to get there at six o'clock in the evening. And they told her it was going to be two o'clock in the morning. And she said, "I'm not staying here all night. My husband made reservations, and we're supposed to be there at six o'clock." And this was through the middle of the day, you know. "No," they kept saying. "Everything is all right." And then finally she made them send a wire to my father. And--

DALLETT: I'm sorry, where was your father now?

YOUNGS: In Hamilton, Ohio. Hamilton, uh-huh. And the wire came back and said yes, at six o'clock she would be at the train. But they kept telling her in, at 2:00 a.m. or two O'clock. "Two o'clock," they kept saying. She would be going. And she said, "That can't be, that can't be." So she, the lady that said she could speak German, well, she could speak some, you know, a little bit. And finally as the time advanced, they found a man who could really talk German. And the problem had been that they told her, two o'clock instead of two hours. That she had to wait two hours and not till two o'clock in the morning. And that's what upset her. She thought her husband would be there, you know. So then we sat around and waited a while, and she was, while she was going back and forth, a little colored boy came up and wanted to shine her shoes. (She laughs.) And we had never seen any colored people, never, until we got there. And, uh, she kept swishing her feet away and no, she didn't want that. And he evidently told her he would do it for free. And she didn't want that. No, no, no. And so she would walk backwards and he would follow her trying to clean her shoes. (She laughs.) And we would laugh, you know, because she was having such a time. My sister and I, of course, thought that was funny. So that was the whole thing there. And then we got on the train finally. And they had put us on. They were glad to get rid of us. Oh, my. (She laughs.) After such a time. (A telephone rings in the background.)

DALLETT: Okay. We'll just pause here for a moment.

YOUNGS: All right. (Break in tape.)

DALLETT: All right.

YOUNGS: And we got on the train. And in front of us was a big, fat colored lady. And she was chewing. And my mother kept watching her and never saw her put anything in her mouth. And she looked and she looked and she watched. And we didn't know that this, mon didn't say anything, you know. And when we got to my father, the first thing she said, "That lady was eating all the way coming home and she never put anything in her mouth. What was she chewing?" And he said, "She was chewing gum." (She laughs.) And gum hadn't been over there yet. She couldn't get over that. And it was so funny. She was watching this lady, and never saw her put anything in her mouth, and didn't have anything on her seat. So then we got home. My father was there, and took us to where he was, he had rented some rooms. And that lady had made coffee and she had a cake that had icing and pineapple on it. And we had never eaten pineapple, so we didn't know what that was. And all that sugar on top, we didn't have that either, you know. Well, Herta and I thought, my sister's name was Herta, thought that was great to have all of that lovely sugar on top. (She laughs.) We just fell too. But, uh, and my father had gotten me a pair of skates and my sister

got, I don't know what she got. She might remember what she got for a coming here present. And then I learned to skate real good. That was just about it. And the next day I went to school.

DALLETT: The very next day.

YOUNGS: The very next day. I couldn't speak, didn't know where I lived.

DALLETT: So the only expression you had was? What was it?

YOUNGS: "Here I am."

DALLETT: And 'ticket to New York."

YOUNGS: Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: How was your father doing with the English language?

YOUNGS: He was doing quite well. He already was. And he had lots of books. He went to school, night school, her right away, and he met the teachers and they were German and they came to the house to get acquainted with mom and told her to come to school. And everything was,

they brought me some kind of a sucker, and my mother saw me eating that and she says, "What have you got there?" And she looked at it and she threw it over into the next empty lot. I was mortified. I said, "Oh, my gosh, mom. They gave that to me." She said, well, she didn't want me to eat it. She thought it was something bad. It was one of these caramel suckers, you know, that last a long time. We had never had anything like that.

DALLETT: So was your father able to help you to sort of get acclimated to--

YOUNGS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Sure, sire. He was, at that time, as soon as my mother got off the train she said, "Oh, my gosh, what's the matter with you? You look sick?" And he said, "Well, I'm having some stomach problem." "But," he says, "when I eat your food, it will be better. It's all this eating out." And the doctors did say the change of climate and the change of food made him ill or made him have the cancer. But, uh, he was so healthy when he left. I mean, he was head of the turners in the city where we lived and we went hiking every Sunday morning, 5:00 a.m. I had to get out of bed, little as I was, and go hiking. My mother stayed home with the baby, of course, or she stayed home otherwise, you know, and cooked. But I always trod along. Oh, we had a great time doing it, and so I was sturdy. That's why I'm still here, I'm sure. Sturdy and strong, you know. Always got a lot of fresh air, did a lot of walking. Always did

walking because when my sister was born there was no milk and, uh, I had to take a long, long walk. I mean, after all, I was only six years old, and I had to get the milk twice a week. We got, I think, a pint. And my mother was nursing her, but she was having problems because there just wasn't enough of everything, you know. And so those walks, my goodness, I keep wondering, now that we're so worried about, well, and we have to be, you know, our kids to go out. My land, I went, and sometimes in the winter, it was winter, and the snow was up to my hips here, I had to go and I had to walk. Because, and I never said anything either. You know, I went. That's what you had to do, and you did it. And, uh, we went, I went up to this country place, and sometimes they had me stay for dinner. That was nice because they had, they had a meal that was vegetables and ten, it didn't have much meat in it, but I never cared for the meat anyway, but it was flavored with meat, and it was a vegetable. And they don't have that here. I don't know what it was called any more. Stielmuss, yeah, stielmuss. And, uh, I loved it when they asked me to stay. And then in the summer they had big fruit trees. They sold pears and apples and everything. They had great big huge pears, and then they would let me help with that, and then they'd give me one. They were about this big, huge pears. They were delicious. So I had, you know, they had geese and I watched them fatten them up for Christmas, you know. I had a good time going up there, so I never really minded taking the walk up there. I would get away from my mother.

DALLETT: A good reward. Okay. I think we're just going to end this side of the tape and turn it over. Okay, that's the end of side one of Interview Number 434 [DP-60] with Charlotte Youngs.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: Uh, this is now the beginning of side two of Interview Number 434 [DP-60] with Charlotte Youngs. Okay, so I think we're just up to the point where you've arrived and--

YOUNGS: Went to school.

DALLETT: I'm sorry?

YOUNGS: Went to school.

DALLETT; Went to school literally the next day. Tell me what some of the early first impressions were. Everything must have been so very different from what you were used to.

YOUNGS: That's right. I, you know, the food, of course, was the main thing. Everything was so different. The bread was different. There wasn't any good bread. And we had to eat white bread, and we'd never eaten white bread.

DALLETT: Tell me about the bread you were used to that you preferred.

YOUNGS: A regular rye, you know. It was really, something with a lot of meat to it, you know, a lot of body to it, I should say. And good crusts, you know. And here was this sloppy bread that stuck to the top of your mouth. And, uh, so my father and mother, that's when we went to town that day. We went to look for bread and fruit. And then we had all this fruit and, uh, bananas, and oranges of course. And we came home and, uh, we weren't so enthused, and my father couldn't understand why we didn't just fall all over the fruit, you know. But children have to learn, you know. So that was the same way with watermelon, cantaloupe, all of that stuff, corn. We didn't know any of those things. And the lady that, from

whom my father rented, of course, she was the lady then that helped my mother with the funeral and went to the court and got everything organized because mom couldn't talk. And this lady was a German lady. She was from Hesse-Dramstadt. And she worked in the paper mill too, but she worked in the Champion. And then she soon retired and then took care of my sister when she'd come home from school so that we had really as babysitter right built in. And, uh--

DALLETT: Was it largely a German community?

YOUNGS: Yes, uh-huh. Lots of German people all around. And, of course, Cincinnati is right there, and that was fifty percent German at that time. So we had, but, of course, we didn't get around that way at all yet because we had no car, we had no phone, we had nothing, you know. We just had a house, or rooms over our head, and that was it. And my mother went to work. And my mother didn't allow herself anything either. You know, she wanted to pay off, first of all pay off all the debts, the funeral and all that stuff. The church helped us out. They came soon after my father died and brought a lot of food and things and all kinds of things we had never seen or heard, and didn't know what to do with, didn't know what they were, you know. But she was mortified because she, and I was running back and

forth and I said, "Oh, there are lots of boxes coming yet," and my mother, boy, she let me know that, "We don't take charity, and this is not a great occasion." And then it dawned on me, "Ah, yes," see, I had to learn that we don't accept things like that. I mean, we were so poor that we had to accept something and we'd never been poor. We always, you know, I had, and I thought nothing of it. I just thought people were nice and they were bringing us all these things. So then, of course, when she said that, well, then I realized that okay, this was going against her, you know. She was proud, after all, and she was, she had, I don't know if she had, yeah, she had a job by then because she was already working. But, uh, they realized that we couldn't talk yet much, you know, so she had to go to work in months, and she hadn't been out of the house much except with my father, at the table my father would always say, "What is this? This is a knife, fork, spoon." We all had to go through all that at mealtimes, though. Which was good, and that's the way, those things she learned then. But, of course, we were out. My sister went to kindergarten, I went to school. So we were able to go out and learn much faster. And, uh, I went to school that month.

There was just about a month left of school, and then summer vacation. Well, my father went to school, got all the books for the next grade, and all summer he taught me, and I had to learn all that stuff. But when I went back to school they put me back two years because, and I could speak perfect English by that time. And I raised my hand, and the teacher said something, but I went with my class that I had been with, I went to the next grade.

And the teacher, she could speak some German, and that's why they left me with her. Well, when she came, she went like this, and I had to go back. And I was never one to say anything. I just went. That's what they did, and that's the way I was raised. I mean, I was never allowed to say anything. So I went to, and I thought, "Gee, these are all little kids. What am I doing here?" And I was in the sixth grade when I came over, and they put me back to the fourth. And, uh, and, of course, because I was so far behind I was kind of smart after that. And, well, it wasn't a very good idea. And then I grew tall. I was tall, and I always felt very badly, you know. But my father, they had promised my father that as soon as I learned they would put me along. Well, he was sick by that time. See, by that time it was three months, four months later, and he was starting to get pretty sick. And so he didn't go back to school, and my mother wouldn't go because she couldn't talk anyway. You know, to explain all of this. So nobody paid any attention to me, and I was just stuck there and nobody cared. And so, but later on I know that my English was so good that I had to write compositions and I read them in all the other classes because they were so good. And I thought, yeah, what am I doing in this grade then, you know. But wouldn't dare say anything. So, in the meantime, that was, left it like that, you know. Nobody did anything about it. Even afterwards, they should have put me at least one grade ahead but, well, in those days they weren't, they had, evidently, a lot of immigrants at that time and with some of them they might have had more problems, you know, that they couldn't learn to

speak as quickly as I did. But because I had the kind of father I had, well, we really, my sister and I both, you know, she didn't get that much, but I was, every day I had so many hours of lessons and had to read and do my arithmetic. (She laughs.) So.

DALLETT: You mentioned before that when you were leaving Germany it was all excitement and it was all wonderful, and that it wasn't until you got here that you realized what a change it was going to be and that your grandparents weren't going to be here.

YOUNGS: Yeah. And none of my aunts and uncles. See, I have a little problem on my mother's side. They didn't like me.

On my father's side they liked me very much. So then when, after I got here I thought, oh, they're all over there and I'm here and nobody here cares, you know. And we didn't have anybody, you know. We didn't know anybody, and then I missed all those people, you know. I would, my, when my father was still alive he would make me write to my grandparents and, uh, then after he died, well, my mother had so many problems, you know, she did the writing and all that. We didn't do any of it. And furthermore, we always spoke English at home. When my father was still living he said, "When you get home you speak German. When you're in school you speak English." And, of course, as soon as he died, that went out the window. We just, my sister and I both, we just talked English but, of course, mom

always talked German to us. And so we kept our German, at least I did, And my sister taught German and she's a school teacher in high school, and she has German and Latin classes. And, uh, but I kept my German so when I go over it's just like I never went away. And why, I don't know, because for years I never heard or spoke German, you know. But I guess I was well grounded, and we always had to speak correctly too. I mean, no slang ever. And I always had to say "grandmother" and "grandfather." There was no "grandma," "grandpa," nothing like that. They were very strict in that. My parents were very, very, strict. So I missed then all then. And then I realized that I was there all by myself and nobody that I could turn to. Because mom, she cried a whole year. A whole year we weren't allowed to laugh, we weren't allowed to sing or play. We, every time we did a little fussing around, you know, oh, boy, that was too bad. And she just sat around and cried. Although she went to work, she cried there too. And I don't know how somebody could have that many tears, but I remember that first years she did nothing but cry. And then finally, you know, she got more or less over it and the lady that we lived with, she got to be, they got to be real friendly. They finally, in the end they finally cooked together and everything. And she took care of my sister when she came home from kindergarten and, of course, I was in school and when I came home I'd do all the work. I'd fix the potatoes and the vegetables and all that, and the lady would put the meat on so that when my mother came home it wouldn't be too long and we could eat. Well, that was fine as long as we were just

the three of us. And all of a sudden we took in boarders. People came from Germany and they would write my mother and say they're coming-- (Break in tape.) Any way, they would write to my mother and say they'd like to come over and if they came over could she find them a place to stay and stuff like that. So, of course, we had boarders. We had two men that their families came over, and it never took that long for their families then to come over. I mean, it took quite a while, but not as long as it took us. And, uh, so then my mother's youngest brother, he was nineteen, and he wanted to come over. So, of course, he came and stayed with us. For a while we had three men. I had to darn all their stockings. I had to cook, I had to clean and wash and do all that stuff. And I wasn't very old yet. So life was kind of rough. And, uh, by the time they got out of the house, well, then I was there for a short time more and then I went out of the house because I went and a got a job for a while. And then I didn't like that, and then she let me go to business college.

DALLETT: How long would you say it took you before you began to feel comfortable in Hamilton and you--

YOUNGS: Oh, I guess it took me eleven years because after eleven years I went back to Germany to see, yeah, to see if the things I remembered as being so wonderful as a child were still as wonderful as when I was twenty-two years old. And, uh, it was. Can I say something without picking

it up?

DALLETT: Yeah, sure. (Break in tape.) Okay, we're back on the tape now. And you were talking about wanting to go back to Germany to see if it was as wonderful as you remembered it as a child.

YOUNGS: And it was. This was 1936 and it was just when Hitler had made Germany, you know, productive and there was money and everything was going great. And war was just sort of nebulous. And I was there till '37 because I had surgery over there for my head. I had a sinusitis condition, that's. So I had the surgery in Berlin and then I decided I shouldn't go on the boat. I was to be there three months, June, July and August and the doctors decided that I had better not go on the boat because I might get seasick and it would rupture. And so I stayed until February and then I went home. So everything was like I had left it, at that time. It was beautiful where my aunt lived. That's where I went, you know, and stayed there. And then went to visit all the relatives on my father's side, and the relatives on my mother's side were in one spot and I went there, you know, and stayed with all of them. My grandmother died just shortly before I came over. And oh, I know I walked into the house and just burst out in tears because it was so short if I had only gone a little earlier, you know, I would have seen her yet. And I didn't and she was gone and the house was still there and the daughter-in-law from the son that had crashed in the

mine lived there with her and took care, had taken care of her, and I stayed with her a couple of nights. And the other aunt, the young, my mother's younger sister, she lived not far away, and she was married by that time and she had a little girl. So there were, and another brother lived in the area, too, and the other brother and aunt, they were over here. So I saw them.

DALLETT: Did you, so when you went over it was really for a visit.

YOUNGS: Yeah. It was just for a visit and to see, well, it was really to ask about how things had transpired when, before I left. And, uh-

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DALLETT: Did you think about staying on in Germany then, or--

YOUNGS: Yes, I did for a while. I, but I think it was only sort of to spite my mother. (She laughs.) Uh, but no, I don't think I had even planned to stay because I didn't like when you had to say, "Heil, Hitler." And that was already against the grain for me and I said, "Nothing doing, I'm not going to stay here because I don't have to do that in America." And as much, no, I realized right away in America it was much better and I was, by that time I was twenty-two and had some sense. And, uh, but it was nice being there because everything was going good. They had enough to eat and

could buy and before all the crash, you know. And that was after the crash that we left had really, everything had picked up and it was very beautiful where I was and the countryside was lovely. And I remembered the places I had studied in geography. Well, afterwards when I came back everything was changed. I don't know where anything is now, and they talk about these places and I'm, where's that. So it's quite a change, you know. But, uh, I was, and I had to go over as a German citizen.

DALLETT: Yeah. I was going to ask you about that.

YOUNGS: Yeah, well, I shouldn't have. I was an American. My mother had made her citizenship while we were still minors. But the courthouse in Hamilton was kind of behind the times and so they, when I tried to get my passport they said I wasn't a citizen. And I had to go on the German passport. So I didn't think about it. I mean, it just never occurred to me, you know, at that time, and I went over on the German passport. And coming back, of course, I wasn't allowed to get off the boat till everybody was off the boat. And then I was also out of money, and my mother had to send me some money, and she sent it to the boat, and I got it there. And then I was allowed to go. And they looked through my luggage, and I didn't have anything, and I was, you know, just gifts and stuff like that, that people had given me over there.

DALLETT: So this was just a pier in New York? Was this a--

YOUNGS: Yeah, just a pier, then. And I could go on to the train.

And it seemed like there was no problem, you know, at that time, except that I had to wait until everybody else was off, which was strange to me. Then when I, excuse me, got back to Hamilton, my sister wanted, said, "Oh, I'd better do my--" Oh, I made my citizenship then. I went to school and, to that school that they had for that, and made my citizenship. And when my sister got there to make hers they said, "Well, you've been a citizen all along. Your mother was, made citizenship while you two were minors." And I said, "Well, gee whiz, I went through all of that." I said, "That's all right. I know what questions they asked, and I knew the answers to that." Because I had gone to school and learned it of course. So she didn't have to make hers, so we were citizens since then, So that made me, mine shows 1939 on my citizenship papers when it should have shown maybe 19 what, '31 or two when my mother made them. She'd have to be here five years. So-

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DALLETT: Did you have, um, any sort of problems or discrimination or anything about your being German during World War Two?

YOUNGS: Yes, yes. During the World War Two I lost my job. I was working as a secretary for an engineer who was also a, had lots of patents. But he was a Swiss, but of course he talked German. And I worked for him, and he was with the railroads. He, they installed the diesels into the railroad at that time, and he had the patents for this. And I, this hullabaloo with the war and everything came on, and I went on vacation. It was time for me to have two weeks vacation. In the meantime, my mother said I got a letter from, she opened it and read it and said that I had lost my job, that they closed the department down because they said he had a picture of Hitler in his basement. Ah, he had no more, I worked in his basement after I came back. He said, "Gee, I'm sorry you lost it on my account, so you come to my house and earn some money and do my letters and stuff." Well, there was nothing in his basement, absolutely nothing, you know. It was just all excitement and, you know, somebody trying to make something out of it. And the whole department had closed down, and my mother said I

didn't send the letter forward because I didn't want you to feel, I wanted you to enjoy your vacation. So she, but when I came back I had no job. So it was, and I went back there to ask and I said, well, "I'm a citizen, and he didn't have anything in his basement, he didn't do anything." Well, that's the way it is, and they closed down the department, and they didn't have any opening right now, so that was that. And that, of course, hurt because when I went to get to the, what do you call it before you go to ask for a job, the city place where you ask for a job, I, you know, I had to say why I didn't have a job. And, uh, I couldn't even say, well, I could say I was fired, but I really, I think I got my, what do you get, your pay through that, for that time, because the whole department was just dissolved. So then I looked for a job. I had a job in Cincinnati for a bit. I couldn't get anything in Hamilton then.

DALLETT: Because you were German?

YOUNGS: Yes. Uh-huh. And there was lots of fuss about, you know, people didn't dare say much of anything. So I went to Cincinnati and got a job there for a while, and that was just temporary.

And then I came back, and then I went to Dayton and applied there, and that's where I got a job, and there I worked for five years before I came to Tucson. Then I got a job at Duriron Company. They made metals. Metal stuff. Duriron Durimet. All that sort of stuff. So I got along there. But in Hamilton it was pretty bad. We had a friend that opened his mouth too much, you know. And they, they were really blackballed. And they had a bad time for a long time until it all died down, the war was over. And then, but we learned from that to say nothing, you know. Well, there was nothing for us to say. I mean, we didn't have, we didn't like Hitler to begin with because we knew right away that that was bad stuff over there. So, and my relatives wrote too, and said, "This is not good. There's nothing we'd better say in the letter, because everything is watched now." But, uh, and a lot of friends that were where my aunt lived, where I lived there for a while, they were taken away and nobody ever heard of them. And they were lovely people that I really adored, you know. They had been so nice to me when I was young, and I knew them then. And they weren't more the wealthy people, you know, and disappeared. One man was in the city where I lived, real good friends of our. That man committed suicide because he was head of a paper, a newspaper, and they were ready to get him and he said, "Forget it." And I know his daughter had a bad time too going through the period, because I visited her at that time. She lived down in a little basement room. And they were wealthy when I was, you know, and I couldn't understand. There she was with a little kid in a basement room where it had

nothing in it. And I felt so sorry because it was all this propaganda and stuff, you know. That just, there was nothing to it really. Because they didn't like Hitler to begin with, but he probably was aware of that. So--

DALLETT: And then that period, that sort of hysteria died down and you were able to get work again.

YOUNG: Yeah. Well, I stayed in Dayton then. I stayed there because I liked the job I had. And, uh--

DALLETT: What kind of work did you do there?

YOUNGS: I'm a secretary. I, that's all I've ever done. Then when I came here I came with a girlfriend who was very sick with arthritis. And, of course, I had my sinus. They didn't tell me I should go there. I mean, I didn't come because the doctor. I went to the doctor and said, I had had a lot of surgery then, and I said, "Will I be better over there?" And he said, "Well, it will never heal but," he said, "at least you'll be up and around if you go to Tucson whereas if you stay here you'll be in bed most of the time." So she and I came over. We didn't know a soul here. We went to Tombstone, then, to live for a while. (She laughs.) Because she was able to get, she was supposed to come and rest and I was supposed to get the job. Well, when she got here she couldn't stand not going to the school

board and saying, "I'm here and eventually I'm going to work." So they had a job for her right away to go to Tombstone. They couldn't get a first grade teacher. And she said, when she came out of the office I was waiting for her outside, she says, "We're going to Tombstone. I got a job." I says, "You're kidding." I said, "I'm not going to Tombstone. What would I do?" "Ooh, well, just go along anyway, and let's see how it works out." I said, "yeah, sure." Well, there was nothing I could, we were staying at the El Presidio Hotel, you know. There was no cooling in our room. Oh, all night we stood at the water fountain. We were so dehydrated. It was a hundred and five in August when we arrived that night. So the next day we went off to Tombstone. And we lived in a little apartment over a, over a garage. And, uh, the little Mexican kids could never understand how we could walk on top of peoples heads. So after she started school, you know, I went ahead to school with her because she couldn't walk. I had to get her out of bed every morning at five o'clock, put her in the bathtub, drag her out and walk her up and down the room so she could get exercise. And then I went with her and I did the writing on the board for her for a while until she got a little better. And these little kids, they couldn't understand that we could live upstairs and walk around on other peoples heads. So a few at a time would come, and we'd show them. They'd go up the steps, and they'd walk in the room. They couldn't see any heads. And that struck them so strange. They could never understand how people could walk on other peoples heads upstairs.

DALLETT: They had never seen a two-story building.

YOUNGS: Never seen a two-story. Uh-uh. I was the only one. (She laughs.) And that was real cute that way. But, that was funny. But then I stayed up there. Well, we made a deal. She and the lady, the gal downstairs was also a teacher. She was a home ec teacher. And she had the apartment downstairs. Then they decided, oh, I said, "I got to leave. I've got earn money. I can't hang around here." And then they decided that they would support me if I would do the cooking and the cleaning for them. And that worked out just great, you know. Well, in the meantime I used to sing. I could sing. My mother cancelled that, too. So I sang in the choir in the mornings, and in the afternoons I sang solo for the Episcopal church up there. You know, that's the oldest Episcopal church that they have, in Tombstone. A beautiful little church. And I sang at two o'clock every afternoon. And for that I got, I think, two dollars, every Sunday. So that was my little pocket money then. And then I got a job with, at the school, later on, at the, uh, for the, to work with the superintendent, or the principal, whatever he was. And, uh, took care of some of the office work for him. And I worked so many hours a day. And in the morning I went to school with the kids for the Spanish lessons, and I started to learn Spanish real good. Could conjugate everything, you know, it was great. And then I left and it all fell apart because by that time I said, gee, I've got to,

this is enough. I think I stayed there a year and a half probably, and I said, I've got to really earn some money, and my life has to go on. And by that time she was much better. She was able to walk and do everything herself. And so I said, I'm, she said, I said, "Are you going with me?" And she said not, she'd like to stay another year. So I said, "Fine, you stay another year, and I'll go down to Tucson. And I got a job at a church here as a secretary. And from there life went on.

DALLETT: Well, I think we're just about to run out of tape here,
so--

YOUNGS: Good.

DALLETT: And I think I've asked you what I need to, unless there's
anything else you want to add.

YOUNGS: No, that's about it. Then, now I'm retired. I worked for the V.A., Veterans Hospital for twenty-six years. After I tried various jobs down here, well then I got to Vet's and that was great because they, I always liked working for the Vets, although you couldn't have any great aspirations, and you couldn't have any great deals about what, how you'd like to do things because, you know, you had to stay in that little rut. But I worked for a wonderful man. He was a paraplegic. He was in a

wheelchair. And I worked for him for seventeen years and he, I just got a little note from him. He's sending me grapefruit for five months. But he was, he was a psychologist. I worked in the psychology department and he was a, just a wonderful person. He had a lot of dealings with Washington, he would go to Washington all the time. And I ran the office for him then. We had students who did their last year of training by us, and I ran herd on the students so they got their hours in and they got their work done.

DALLETT; Well, you're in a lovely spot here at the base of the Catalina Mountains in Tucson. And I'm going to ask you to give me a little tour of your patio out here.

YOUNGS: Okay.

DALLETT: So that concludes side two of Interview Number 434 [DP-60] with Charlotte Youngs, and the time is ten to eleven.

YOUNGS: Oh, my, five minutes to eleven.

DALLETT: Okay. That's the end of that tape.