

EI-427

ANNA DAIBERL NEATHERY

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 26, 1918

INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 1994

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

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GERMANY, 1922

AGE 4

PASSAGE ON "THE BREMEN"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: BREMERHAVEN

RESIDENCES: GERZEN; TILLMAN (PALM BAY) FL

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Neathery is the niece of Louis Daiberl, Interview EI-429. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 2/2/1996

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Anna Neathery in Florida, in Palm Bay, Florida. It's February 17th, 1994. Mrs. Neathery came from Germany in 1922 when she was four years old. Well, and you came with your mother.

NEATHERY: I came with my mother.

LEVINE: And thereby hangs the tale. (she laughs)

NEATHERY: Right.

LEVINE: I'm very happy to be here, and I'd like to start with

EI-427/NEATHERY

your giving your birth date and where you were born.

NEATHERY: Okay. I was born in Gerzen, Germany. That's G-E-R-Z-E-N, Germany, in, in Bavaria. Gerzen is in Bavaria. And...

LEVINE: Your birth date.

NEATHERY: August 16th, 1918.

LEVINE: And did you live in Gerzen until you came to America?

NEATHERY: Yes. I lived with my grandmother in Gerzen until I was four years old, and Mama came over here. She was a mail order bride.

LEVINE: Now you, you lived with, was your grandfather also in the house?

NEATHERY: Yes. Yes. I was his pet. My cousin Pep [PH] tells me that Grandfather, since I was his, I was his only granddaughter to start with. But he just, according to cousin Pep, I was something different, special. And he would give me candy when I was old enough to have candy. And then when Grandfather wasn't looking and I

EI-427/NEATHERY

had my candy, cousin Pep, who also lived with Grandma and Grandpa, would sneak around the corner and take my candy, and then I'd be crying my eyes out. And Grandfather would come running. "Was ist los?" Well, and I'd say, "Peppy [PH] took my candy," in German, of course. And Pep would say, "No." And he'd shake his head "no," you know, because he said he'd hurry up and eat it real quick. So I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now what was your grandfather's name?

NEATHERY: Stefan.

LEVINE: Stefan. And his last name?

NEATHERY: Daiberl. D-A-I-B-E-R-L .

LEVINE: And your grandmother's name?

NEATHERY: I believe it's Theresa. I have that in an album. I could get it if you want.

LEVINE: Well, why don't we at the end we'll check up on it.

NEATHERY: Okay.

EI-427/NEATHERY

LEVINE: Now what do you remember about your grandmother and or grandfather from the time you were in Germany?

NEATHERY: The only thing about Grandpa is that he would carried me around. He was, you know, he was very, very good to me. And Mama, she had to work out in fields, so I don't remember Mama that good. And Grandma, well, I went to some sort of little kindergarten or something. And when I would come home, along her fence she had these geese, and they didn't like me. And they would chase me. And then she would have to come out and run them off. And that's about all I can remember. I know that my bed, back then they had long pillows, oh, maybe six feet long, and about eighteen inches wide, stuffed with real feathers. And then that was your feather bed. And you laid out on the floor, because you didn't have a bed. And my aunt Katel [PH] who lives in Grandma's house, and she still lives there now, she said that right behind in Grandma's bedroom, behind the door, that's where, on the floor, that's where my little bed was. And then over in another corner, that's where cousin Pep who also lived there, he's two years older, and that's where he slept. But that's basically what I remember. I know they had the indoor,

they had an outhouse, but it was really indoors, that, you know, because you couldn't, it was so cold you couldn't go out. And I saw all that when I was there in '85.

LEVINE: Oh. Wonderful. And so essentially you were an only child...

NEATHERY: Yes.

LEVINE: ...of your mother's.

NEATHERY: Hmm-mm.

LEVINE: And you, and your cousin Pep was an only child...

NEATHERY: Of his, yeah. And his mother is my mother's oldest sister. And they're both, she's gone also.

LEVINE: So, let's see. So, you, do you remember anything that you did, or any experiences you had with your mother before you came to...

NEATHERY: No. See, she had to go to work. So she was out working in the fields because she wasn't married. And

so did my Aunt Theresa. She also had, so that's why cousin Pep and I were at Grandmother's house. And eventually Aunt Theresa got married over there, and her husband adopted cousin Pep. And he still lives in Munich.

LEVINE: Were you very close with Pep, or...

NEATHERY: I had forgotten until I saw him in, we had gone over to Europe on a tour in '85. And I had written to them in English, because I didn't know how to write German, and told them we were coming on this trip, and that on this certain day we were going to be in Augsburg, Bavaria, and then one of the three days there 5we were going to, the bus load was going to Munich, and was there any way that maybe we could get acquainted, you know, at least say hello if he was interested. Well, he has two daughters, Irmi [PH] and Barbara, and they can read and write English, and talk it. So they wrote back and said, yes, tell them what days, you know. So I xeroxed the whole trip and sent it to them, so they knew exactly where we were each day of this two week trip. So that the day we arrived in the afternoon in Augsburg, Bavaria, we had just gotten our luggage. And they said, "Throw the luggage in your room and come

down. They're having a party for all the new people that came in on these two bus loads." So we're down there, and we're watching what's going on in this German party, and I'm drinking some beer and having German pretzels. And I said to one of my girl friends, "You know, if I was cousin Pep," I said, I'm sentimental. "It's forty miles from here to Munich, I would drum, I'd drive up here and take a look. And if I didn't like what she looked like, I would just go back home." And then later, and a few minutes later, I'm talking to a couple, and I'm telling Gladys the same thing. And I happened to turn. We're in this humongous hotel with this big, beautiful lobby. And right across from us, way across the lobby is the elevators, and I looked over there and I said, "I think that's cousin Pep." It looks like, you know, his stature, we'd had exchanged photographs. So I says, "I'm going see." And as I went down these two, three little steps to go across, he had turned, and he goes, he spreads out his arms and he says, "Nanni?" And I tell you, I will never forget it, it was like I had found home. And we, we just, it was like we were, we belonged together, like we were, you know, like brother and sister more than, because we think alike, I think we look alike, and we just, well, Ray was along, and we

went out to eat. We left the party and went with them a the Swabian Restaurant that cousin Pep knew about, and, because he had worked all over those areas. And then we took a cab to the restaurant, but then he said, "Do you like to walk," because he had learned enough English that we could manage. And I had learned enough of my German. And so we said, "Oh, we'd love to walk."

So Ray and Irmi, they walked behind, and cousin Pep and I, we walked hand in hand, and oh, it was the most wonderful experience of my whole life. It truly was. And suddenly we've kept in touch, and I've been back over. In '87 I took my son over for them to meet. And we had a great time.

LEVINE: Wow. Do you, do you think you have maintained any of your German beginnings that you carry...

NEATHERY: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: ...carry on?

NEATHERY: I'm very much German.

LEVINE: How so? What do you...

EI-427/NEATHERY

NEATHERY: Well, I love German food, and just the way that I have to keep house, and how thrifty, and so many things. I think I'm just like Mama, and Mama was a hundred and three percent German. I did, I don't have the accent Mama did. She didn't, because when, when my step father died, she could neither read, write or talk American. So she learned as I was starting school, then she would, when I'm doing my homework, then Mama would do, and this is how she learned it. And, but she kept the, the accent. And I thought it was lovely.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else that you remember about Germany...

NEATHERY: About Germany.

LEVINE: ...before you came.

NEATHERY: Just...

LEVINE: Any people, or things that you did, or...

NEATHERY: No.

LEVINE: ...holidays. Anything?

NEATHERY: No. Apparently we didn't do anything, because they were very poor. And my grandfather and grandmother had had like, I think fifteen or sixteen children, but they all died very, some in like almost childbirth, or when they were very, very young. In an album, after we met cousin Pep, and we walked back to the hotel where we were, I thought, gee, this has been so wonderful. Well, he, you know, and I thought well, this is it. And he said, no, that could we go back to Munich with him, and, you know, just leave the tour for, while they're in Augsburg. Well, we couldn't, because we hadn't even unpacked anything. But, so he already had a train deal, schedule all made out, ready for us to catch an express train into Munich the next morning. Saturday morning. And he would meet us there. And he did. And they took us around Saturday afternoon all over to some different castles and things. And then on Sunday morning we got up, Irmi and her father, and Ray and I, we got up real early, and we left Munich. And we went to Landshut where my mother had lived and worked. And we went to Fields Bieburg [PH] which is another little community where my mother had lived and worked, while, you know, while I was at Grandmother's. And then we went to Grandmother's house. And it's

EI-427/NEATHERY

just like it was except they had a new fence and a new front door. And probably a coat of paint, but it was Grandma's house. And I got...

LEVINE: Did it come back to you, what it looked, what it looked like?

NEATHERY: Oh, I had always known in my mind what it looked like.

LEVINE: Can you describe it?

NEATHERY: Well, it's a two, just a two story house, very plain, with, you know, just little windows, nothing elaborate. And it has the big, big front door. And it has a pretty fence around it.

LEVINE: What, what is it made out of?

NEATHERY: Hmm.

LEVINE: Is it stone, or is it wood?

NEATHERY: (to Mr. Neathery) Ray, what is her, Grandma's house made out of? (voice off-mic) Stucco. And you walk in, and there's a little living room. Very,

everything's still very, very plain. And then there's this kitchen. And she still has everything just, you know, very, from way back. I can't think of the word to describe it. Then they have bedrooms, one or two down and one or two up. And then, of course, this, well, there was, there's the outhouse, the bathroom, that is just the outhouse. You washed in the kitchen.

And I don't know, I didn't see a tub or anything. But there was still the big, when you were going back to the back of the house where the outhouse is, there was this door. And you went in there, and this, a huge room, I guess about the size of this. (she indicates)

And there were still the racks, and this was where Grandma and Grandpa, they had, the chickens were up there in the winter on the racks. And, and then they had, they had some goats, they had a few cows, and the chickens, and I think a pig or two. And I could, when I was there I could still sense that that was all there. And I was so pleased. And then outside their house this one wall is almost like open, and it's solid, they cut the wood for their, you know, their stove and the fire. They heat it with that. They had a, like a fireplace. And all this wood is packed real tight. You can't see through any of it the way it's...

LEVINE: Yeah.

NEATHERY: ...stacked. And I can remember Mama stacking firewood for her laundry room over there, because you had this great, big cast iron kettle that's still over there, that she boiled the water in, or heated it for her washings [sic], because she took in laundry for a living when my step father died. So that meant you scrubbed clothes. And back then you wrung them by hand, you know, because you didn't have a wringer. And then eventually she got, because she had this big wooden washing machine that had the crank. And then eventually someone in the area gave her a wringer to attach. And you wrung it by hand. And she just gradually, as my half brother, you know, got older, got it fixed up to where it was like, she still has the wringer washer over there, and all her rinse tubs, and her clothes lines, and everything. Because Martin hasn't done anything with any of it. It's just there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NEATHERY: But that's all I can really say I remember. I felt that when I was there, you know, I just felt I was at home.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the town that, that took place when you were there...

NEATHERY: No.

LEVINE: ...or what people did mostly in the town, or...

NEATHERY: No. Well, they lived within three blocks of the little church. Now, when I saw the church, I felt that that had to be the church where I had been baptized and confirmed and everything. And it was. But really, I didn't remember it. So I must have been kept at home quite a lot, you know, and four years isn't that much.

LEVINE: Yeah. What church was this? What kind of church?

NEATHERY: A Catholic church.

LEVINE: A Catholic church. And were, was your family religious?

NEATHERY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I've sort of dropped away, because I don't like the modern way they do. I don't, I can't see telling jokes at mass, and people applauding and

all this. I think tell the jokes, you know, the priest, he's telling these jokes to be funny. And if I'm going to go to an auditorium and be entertained that's, that's not going to God's house to pray and meditate and really commune. You're just, I like to go there when it's quiet because then, well, there's no phones, there's no talking. It's just, just you and God, or whatever you think it is. You know, whatever you feel it is. And to me that's how, to me it is. And the kneeling down to pray and all. So. In fact I forgot yesterday was Ash Wednesday until it was late, and so I had to last night with my brother. He had forgotten because he had something he had to do in the morning, so it worked out fine.

LEVINE: So is there anything else before we talk about your leaving Germany that, that you think of when you think of being, having been there.

NEATHERY: Well, it seems that, I guess since I was Grand, Grandfather's pet, I do remember that when we sat, at noon, at mealtime, everybody, you know, was, great big table, and everybody was around there, and everybody would be eating, and I'm sitting there I guess in my high chair. And no one had given me anything, and I

can remember asking, "Nanno kriege Nichts," which means "Annie doesn't get anything." (they laugh) And Mama told me about that. And she said that they were very afraid, the Germans were very afraid there in Gerzen of the Frenchmen. And why I don't know, unless there was a war there that I don't remember. But she said that when we came to America, and we were living over there in my step father's house, a car, there were very few cars that went up and down U.S. 1 at that time. And she said one day a car went by and backfired a couple of times, and she said that I ran and crawled under the house and said, "Mama, come quick," in German. "The Frenchmen are coming." (she laughs)

LEVINE: Hmm.

NEATHERY: So I couldn't imagine being that scared, but apparently I was, you know. Come quick, the Germans, the Frenchmen are coming.

LEVINE: Oh.

NEATHERY: So that's the only thing that...

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NEATHERY: ...that and...

LEVINE: How about food? Do you remember any of the kinds of food that...

NEATHERY: Sauerkraut. We had Baunkel [PH], which is some, a dish made with potatoes. We had Baunkel, lots of potatoes. Lots and lots of potatoes. Schmarm [PH], which is another dish with potatoes. Sort of, to me Schmarm would be the equivalent of America's hash browns. And milk. I drank goat's milk.

LEVINE: Did, did your grandmother and grandfather have animals?

NEATHERY: Yeah, they...

LEVINE: Oh, they had the chickens...

NEATHERY: Right, the, yeah, and the goats, and the cow. And I guess they must have had a horse. I don't recall a horse. Or a mule. I know my step father had a mule. Good.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, so, wait. Did you have a, a step father

when you were in Germany?

NEATHERY: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

NEATHERY: No, no.

LEVINE: That was here.

NEATHERY: No, that was this man here that Mama came to marry.
The man that had written to find a bride.

LEVINE: Right. Well, now how, tell me about, tell me that
story about how it happened that you and your mother
did come to America.

NEATHERY: Well, this man was living here. Paul Bayer was living
here in Tillman. It was called Tillman. And there
were like twelve families in Tillman, and they were all
either Germans or Czechoslovakians or Rumanians or
Hungarians. That's, that's about it. We were all, you
know, that. And we were all farmers of one kind or
another. And he was in his early thirties and decided
it was time to get married. And there were no young

German maidens. So he wrote to his brother in Gerzen to find him a wife. And his brother didn't know anyone, so he took the letter to the parish priest where Mama and I had gone to church. And the parish priest said, well, the only people he knew, the only one he knew of that maybe had someone that would go to America to marry this man was my grandparents. They had this daughter that had this little girl, and maybe it was time for her to have a husband and the little girl to have a dad. And so they just told her, you have to go. I can remember much, year, years later asking her, Mama, how could you go thousands of miles in a ship across an ocean to marry a man you had never seen, had never talked to, didn't know at all. Nobody in the family knew him. But she said, "Well, back in those days, you did what your parents told you." So that's how it was. So we came to America.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that you knew about America at that age?

NEATHERY: Nothing. No. I don't think we'd even heard of it.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did your mother ever tell you anything later about what she expected, or...

NEATHERY: Well, when she got to, she didn't know what to expect, but when she got to New York, and after we got off of Ellis, and when she was on, we were on the train coming, and she decided, well, New York wasn't too bad. You know, it was cold and everything. It was more like I guess Germany or something. And she said, this isn't too bad. But as the train kept coming further south, and the scenery changed, by the time she hit Tillman, Florida she was just crushed, because, you know, it was nothing like what she expected. There, you know, it was going, there was sand. There was no snow. There was no, nothing that she was used to. And totally different houses, plus this strange man. So...

LEVINE: Well, tell me about the crossing. Was there anything, do you remember the name of the ship?

NEATHERY: Hmm-mm. It was the Bremerhaven. It came out of, no, the name of the ship was the Bremen, and we came out of Bremerhaven. And we had, our passport pictures were taken, I believe Mama said in Munich, because we went there on the way to the port. Hmm-mm. (she indicates a photograph) And so this is the picture of, hanging on to Ma. See, I had blond hair in those days.

LEVINE: Yeah.

NEATHERY: So, I don't really remember the ship. Mama says I was bad. She was seasick. And I guess I missed my grandmother, because, you know, she was really Mother. And when she, Mama told me that when she would try to correct me, I would say, "I'll tell Grossmutter." You know. "I'll tell Grossmutter," but I never got to tell Grossmutter, because Grossmutter was over there.

LEVINE: Did you know you were leaving when you left?

NEATHERY: I don't recall.

LEVINE: Did you know you were leaving your parents...

NEATHERY: I don't re...

LEVINE: ...your grandparents?

NEATHERY: I don't recall that I had, you know. I must have but I have no recollections of it. Maybe it's because Mama would never talk about anything unless you just more or less asked point blank, look, I want to know this or

this.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NEATHERY: Then she would tell you little bits and pieces.

LEVINE: I see. So do you remember the ship at all, the crossing?

NEATHERY: No, I don't. She said that I had a playmate there. A little German, another little German girl that I played with. And I must have been rambunctious or something. I really don't remember. I know that when we got to Ellis Island I broke out in a rash. And they kept us there like three weeks because they were going to deport me if I didn't get well. And she could come on, but then the rash went away, and here I am. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Do you know what you had?

NEATHERY: No. I have no idea. May, maybe some sort of measles.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Where, were you in the hospital there? Or

do...

NEATHERY: I don't think so. I don't know. I don't remember that, either.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NEATHERY: It's strange, you know, that I don't remember, and I wish I did.

LEVINE: No. Four is so young really.

NEATHERY: Well, a lot of people seem to remember things when...

LEVINE: Some do. I don't. (she laughs)

NEATHERY: ...they claim. (she coughs)

LEVINE: So you, so you don't, you can't...

NEATHERY: I remember more of what happened after I got here. A lot more than I did over there.

LEVINE: Yeah. So after you left, no one met you at Ellis Island? Your mother and you just came by train...

NEATHERY: Just us. Hmm-mm.

LEVINE: ...from New York.

NEATHERY: Yeah. Whenever she got through with whatever you had to do and I got well, then I guess they told her how to get on the train, and we headed to Tillman, Florida.

LEVINE: Well, your mother must have been frantic. I mean...

NEATHERY: I would think.

LEVINE: ...with you with the rash, and with she going to meet a husband to be that she had...

NEATHERY: I, I don't know how she could have done it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

NEATHERY: I just. I would have been I think out of my mind. But I guess you just did what you had to do. There was no future there apparently for her other than field work. She wasn't lucky like my aunt that married Mr. Hof, Hofstrasse and lived in Munich. My step, my cousin's

step father.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember the meeting between you and your mother and her husband to be when you got to...

NEATHERY: No.

LEVINE: ...to Tillman?

NEATHERY: No, I don't. I have heard that he was surprised that there was a child, but I cant', I can't believe my mother wouldn't have written and told him. (she clears her throat) Because I know he wasn't too happy about it, because of the way he treated me. He was not a good step dad. I don't know why, but I'm getting a frog in my throat.

LEVINE: Do you want to get a drink or anything like that?

NEATHERY: I think it would help.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. Let me just stop...(break in tape)...Okay. We're resuming again. So you were, you and your mother were on the train and coming to Tillman, which is now Palm Bay.

NEATHERY: Right.

LEVINE: And do you remember that trip yourself?

NEATHERY: Well, I loved the smell of some of the food on the train. There are times that, like when we were in New York to go to Ellis Island in September, some restaurant we passed, there was this same food smell that came out, and it just hit me. That's the smell of the food that I smelled way back. And then Mama had some Bing cherries. To this day I love them. They have the most wonderful taste. Those were the two main foods that I remember of the trip down. I don't really, I don't know why, but I don't have a whole lot of, you know, fun things that I can remember that happened. But I remember the food.

LEVINE: Do you remember what life was like those first few years when you, when you were here in Tillman? (a cuckoo clock chimes)

NEATHERY: Yes. (she laughs) Yes. Yes. We got here, and we lived in this house on stilts. It was like, about three feet up off the ground because they would have

flash floods. Because, you know, there was so much woods. Everything was woods. And they, every day they would have these rains. It didn't last long, but it would come hard. And my step father, well, I found some little German children just around the corner. My step father had sponsored their, them to come from Ohio. And, the Kitchenbergs [PH]. And so, they had two or three children. There was Rudy and Loretta. And they were my age. Well, Rudy was my age. And so when I got to go over and play with them, which was like two, two and a half blocks from Mama's house, I was learning to speak English. And I was excited, and I would go home and try to talk this to Mama. But my step father did not want Germ, English spoken, or American spoken in his house. And so he would spank me. So that didn't set very good. And he wanted me to learn to play a violin. But it wouldn't set on my shoulder. It kept falling off. So therein came more spankings. And it seemed like, maybe it's my vision. I don't know. Maybe I already had eye trouble back then, but I would have to, he would tell me to hold a board just so. But then I'm only four going on five. And I would hold the board I thought just so, but it, something was wrong and I would get more spankings. So all I remember of my step dad for the two years that he

EI-427/NEATHERY

lived was spankings. I remember laying on my, I had my same little bed behind the door, front door, on the floor. And up above he would have, he had these, I guess it was hams in these mesh bags, smoked, smoked meat. And when they needed some they would just cut off some. But I remember my bed there. And I don't think I like my step father.

LEVINE: What was his name?

NEATHERY: Paul. And he used to spell his...

LEVINE: This was Boyer [PH]?

NEATHERY: ...he used to, when he came to America his name was spelled B-I-A-R, or B-I-E-R. But then he changed it to B-A-Y-E-R. I guess it was more American.

LEVINE: But it sounds like he really didn't want to become Americanized, if he didn't really want to speak English, or...

NEATHERY: I don't know if, I don't recall that he ev, ever hearing him speak English at all. But he had to have been able to some to get along, you know. And we had a

horse and, horse and wagon, that they would go to Pupkins [PH]. That's where you went to shop I think in those days. To, he, he grew vegetables, and the Haslingers [PH] grew vegetables. Mr. Haslinger who lived like a mile further, they had a whole truck farm, like, and they had wonderful vegetables. And my step father had bought some land. I don't know just where it was, but it must be Port, part of Port Malibar now. And so I got to go with Mama and he to, out to this, on the horse and buggy. And they were grubbing up palmettos. And they would stack them. And then when they would dry, they would burn them. I, I do recall I loved the smell that the palmetto smoke made. It was just totally different. It was a wonderful smell. And the land looked real pretty, you know, where they had cleared it. But that's about all the happy memories. Then when my brother, Martin, he's my half brother. When he came along, well, they were out working, and he was on a table something like this by a window. (she indicates) And I was supposed to be watching him so he wouldn't roll off the table. I don't know what I was doing, but I wasn't paying attention and he rolled off the table. And I got a great spanking for that. (she laughs) So. But he, he's a wonderful person.

LEVINE: Were you, was your mother also working in the fields with your step father.

NEATHERY: Oh, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NEATHERY: Yeah, they would work out there all day, you know, hoeing, and, they had these big grub hoes. I don't think I've seen any since, but they were huge, big hoes. Because you had to have them to get these big palmetto, because, you know, if you've seen them grow...

LEVINE: The roots.

NEATHERY: Yeah, they have long, big roots that kind of look like an alligator, the roots, the way they grow in the ground. But, that's about all. I know when he passed away, I know I didn't realize that he wasn't coming back. But my mother told me I embarrassed her to death. She was humiliated, that the day of his funeral over here in the little church, here she is in America. She's now got two children. She can't read or write. She just lost her husband. And she's going into the

church following the coffin, and here is her six year old skipping down the aisle. She said she was mortified. (she laughs) I really don't know why. I can, I can see me doing it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NEATHERY: I, and I know when after he passed away, every Sunday after mass you had to go to the cemetery. And you had to kneel down there and say prayers. And I resented having to pray for him. This wasn't right, but I just resented having to pray for him. I don't think I understood what had happened.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Did you, was your mo, how did your mother feel about the, the marriage that she had gotten herself into?

NEATHERY: If she, she had to have been very disappointed, but I, Mama was strong and I guess she just made the very

best she could of it, and she never got married again.

There never just was, well, there was just never anybody worthwhile, really. I mean, if she was going, there was a man she would have married, but she, and he wanted to get married, but she said, "Heh [sic]." If she was go, he wanted her to continue with her home laundry deal. And then he would do the picking up and the delivering. And she told me, you know, she, this was much later, but she said, well, if I'm going to have to continue the work, why should he, if I'm going to be doing the washing and the ironing, why should he be the one to pick them and deliver them and have the easy part. So she didn't marry him. And I think she was smart. And then my brothers, he lived right there next door. He, he never was away from her, except when he was in service, the entire time of his life. So she, he was sort of, I guess he was sort of her everything, you know. Because, and then he, and when he got married, and they still lived right next door, and they had six wonderful children. So.

LEVINE: So she had a full life. But tell, tell how it was that your step father died.

NEATHERY: Well, as I understood, they went out in the woods, and

Palm Bay was all woods, except for the marle [PH] roads here and there to the different houses. And they went out in the woods to pick mushrooms. And they picked toadstools. And I don't know how they fixed them, but she said that he liked them and he ate them. She didn't care for them and she didn't eat any, and I didn't like them and spit them out. Well, they, he got deathly sick. And by the time they got him, there was no doctors in the area, and there was no hospitals. So they, somehow I guess someone came to help her. Maybe the Hofrichters [PH], maybe some neighbors, to get him on the horse and buggy to get him up to the depot. Because there was one train a day came from Miami to Jacksonville. And then there was one train a day came from Jacksonville to Miami. So you had to catch the train, and as, as best I know he died en route to the hospital, and then they just brought him back. And that was it. When we came to America, when we got to Tillman, got off the train, we went over to some people by the name of Bob Breault [PH] across Turkey Creek, and stayed there until Father Gabriel came up from Fort Pierce to marry Mama and my step dad. Because they, there was no priest here. He travelled like he, you know, he had from Fort Pierce clear up to Titusville and back. So, and

I knew him later, because he, Father Gabriel lived for a long time. So, and then they have Father Bierhalter, and he was here. But, and, this priest had a garage, that he, he was going to get a bigger, nicer garage. So my, they gave it to my step father, and they moved it over to Mama's land. And this was fixed up little by little, and this is where she lives, lived all of her life, was in this house. And it's just a real cute little bung, little tiny cottage, just big enough for one, really. But she and Martin lived there. He grew up in there. And eventually he, Martin was telling me that he tore down the house that was up on the stilts. And that became her laundry room that she, her ironing house as I called it, where she did her ironing and folding. So, but she had a very hard life.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You mentioned earlier that your step father sponsored a German family from Ohio.

NEATHERY: Hmm-mm.

LEVINE: What was, what was that?

NEATHERY: That was the only way that you could come into

Florida, or into Tillman. You had to, if you were, because really, and Loretta told me that well, in order to come, he, they had this little German newspaper. And Mr Kitchenberg put this little ad in, that he would like to move to Florida, or Tillman, and he needed a sponsor. So I guess you had to be sure that, instead of like the immigrants come in today, and, with no one to really, that's going to, you know, take care of them, look after them in case they needed help. Well, he sponsored them to come to Florida, and helped them find a little place just a block or two away. And helped them get set up. And Mr. Kitchenberg also farmed. (a bell rings) (she coughs)

LEVINE: Whoops. We'll pause here for a...

NEATHERY: He'll get that. (break in tape)

LEVINE: We're resuming now, having coffee and...(she laughs)

NEATHERY: Here's your paper.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. So, let's see. Well, tell about your mother and the, after your step father died. Then what kind of a life she had and what it meant for you?

NEATHERY: Well, from there she had, well, she went to work with, there were some people that lived in Malibar which was like three miles south of Tillman. They had a home laundry, and it was right down on Turkey Creek, and the water that they used was spring water. And, so she worked for them for a little while. They were also Germans. But you had to come like, I don't know how many steps, fifty steps up from where they washed and rinsed the clothes. You had to come up these steps, cross U.S. 1 which was only two lane, but still. And then go up another little tiny terrace and go in these people's backyard to hang these clothes out to dry. And Mama was never a very big person, and this was very hard. And the lady that she worked for, Mrs. Greimel, her husband Peter tried to help Mama out once in a while, but Mama said that Mrs. Greimel told him he had better things to do than to help the hired help with the laundry baskets. And so as soon as she saved up enough nickels and dimes, I don't know what she made, but not much. She decided she'd get this old washing machine. And there was, in Tillman was a little tourist camp right on U.S. 1. And had these little cottages, and it was run by a Mr. Doorman. And so Mama got to do all of his linens for his little

cabins. These little, the people from the North came down in the winter. So she did that. And then the people inside this little park, you know, had Mama do their laundry. And then little by little she just enlarged, and she, you picked them up and delivered them in your little red wagon. And she did beautiful work. Sometimes these ladies would, they'd have some really beautiful dress like made out of some rayon or something. And they'd wash it, and it got all shrunk up into little tiny crinkles. Then they'd bring it to Mama. I can remember one dress. And they asked her could she fix it. Well, all she did was wet it and then stretch and press it, and it turned out just like new. Well, that just made her even more popular as the person to go to see if you had laundry. And then she also did housecleaning for whoever needed houseclean [sic]. And she would go, even then yet, she went over to, came south on U.S. 1 across the bridge and did some laundry at the Good, Good, some people by the name of Good. Alex Good. They had a number of children, and she did their laundry. And just little by little the Pollocks [PH] helped her get a little motor to put on her washing machine in a few years. And that motorized the washer. And you didn't have to use the wooden crank. So, and, I know when I'd come

off the school bus, because the school house in Palm Bay burned down, so you had to go to Melbourne school.

And when I'd get off the bus, and I hit the corner of Hickory Avenue, and if I heard that "putt, putt, putt, putt, putt," of her little laundry down there, I'd think, oh, gosh. She's washing. That means we got more washing and ironing and all this to do. Because...

LEVINE: Would you help her?

NEATHERY: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. How you think I got all these muscles. Oh, my goodness, yeah. I was, I was her left hand, I guess. Because Martin, you know, he was just a little tiny baby. So, yeah, I did. I was, I had the one, I would go and pick the clothes, take the clean clothes to the people and collect the money, pick up their dirty clothes. And you did that before school, before you caught the bus. So then, well, and she became real active in St. Joseph's Church there. She, you know, belonged to the lady's, the Altar Society. And she helped clean the church, and so did I. But every Saturday, and then she, it was a great privilege in those days to be able, to be the one chosen to wash the altar linens. So. And the years

just rolled by. And when my brother had to go to war, I forget what year. He was just out of high school. He bought an old terraplane [PH]. She had to learn how to drive this old terraplane. And she was so short she can just barely, you could just barely see her head, you know, her eyes over the, out of the window. But she drove this terraplane to pick up and deliver the clothes from people that lived like up in Melbourne by then. She had expanded to where she had people in Melbourne. And I know, one thing I remember, well, she had chickens. We had this big chicken yard. (she indicates a photograph) And I had this photograph I found that I was, but I should have waited until today and showed you it. It showed the chicken yard and Mama in her more modern American type dress, with her black shoes, and high top shoes and all. And then my step father. And then way over at one side am I, and then there's the old mule. And, and in the chicken yard, that I used to have to clean.

But when I was like ten or eleven, Mama called me out to the chicken house. And I was always really apprehensive because it was my job to clean the chicken house, gather the eggs, rake the yard and all these things, you know. I mean I was the only other person other than her, because Martin, he was special.

He was her boy. So she called me out there, and I felt, I felt so honored. She dug down. She says, "Now, I'm going to show you something," she's telling me in German. "And nobody's to know but you." But she said, just in case something happened to me, you will know where there's a little bit of money to help you take care of you and Martin. So she digs down in this big drum that she had her chicken feed in, and down, way down in there she had a Calumet Baking Powder can. And there was nickels and dimes and quarters and I think silver dollars, you know, just little bits of money. And it was about half full. And this was our whole estate. That brings up a story about Mama. After my step father died, somebody gave her a gun, and it had a barrel about this long. (she indicates) Well, she didn't know how to shoot the gun. But we didn't ever have any meat, because what vegetables she had, like collard greens, and we had a lot of, we had persimmon trees, oranges trees, some grape vines that he had, by step father had planted. And mulberry trees, tons of mulberry trees. So we had oranges, grapefruit, mulberries, persimmons and a few figs. We had a fig tree. But when it came to meat, well, we had the chickens. And then Mr. Maloney owned cattle down in Malibar. And he had a horse and

buggy, and he drove around on Saturday and sold meat off the back of his truck. And once in a while Mama would buy a little piece of meat about the size of a small skillet, and she would fix that. And it was always so good. And you got one little tiny piece, because that was all your meat, you know. That was all she had. But we thought we lived good. And the Haslingers would occasionally furnish milk. Otherwise you drank canned milk. But anyway, somebody gave Mama this gun. So she learned how to use it a little bit.

And she said, "We're going to have some rabbit," because there was a rabbit came to eat on her collard greens all the time. So I can remember standing out there along side of her on the northwest corner of her house. And we had to be real quiet, because there were no trees. It was all just these bunches of collard greens. So she sees the rabbit, she aims, nothing happens. She aims and "click," nothing happens. She says, "Was ist los mit the gun?" (she gestures) So she's pointing it up this way, and she pulled, and it went off, and it just missed her forehead. And she was scared spitless. And I was scared when I realized, you know, when she told me, because, you know, hey, I would have had to help take care of Martin all by myself. And what was I going to

EI-427/NEATHERY

do? No Mama. So she went in the house, she put the gun away, and I never to this day have ever seen it. I don't know what she did with it, but it just, I still hate guns. I never let Sammy have a gun when he was little. But we didn't get rabbit either. (they laugh) We never got rabbit. (sounds of dishes)

LEVINE: Well, you, you mentioned before that there are certain ways that you have about you that are strictly German.

NEATHERY: Well...

LEVINE: What, what, if you were to think of yourself now, what kind of aspects of you would be the German ones, and what would be more American?

NEATHERY: I think the way I think. Everything, you know, if you're going to do something it has to be done, if, if you tell somebody you're going to do something, or you make a commitment, you keep that commitment. It doesn't matter, or if it's, you know, it's either right or it's wrong. And you work very, very hard. And everything got to be as, as clean, I'm not as clean as I used to be. I've gotten too old for that. But, oh, my heavens. Everything use to have to be

just so. I'd even wash, you know, scrub the sidewalk, the driveway, anything, because over there you just kept everything clean, and you didn't have trash laying around. And you had to, you always prayed. You always had, God had to be big part in your thinking, and in your, you know, everyday life. And I still feel that way. I just had a very, even in how I think, like, I think young girls, you know, like the old fashioned people, I think, like, you should wait till you're married. First you go to school and learn. Then you get married eventually, and then you have children. And I get quite upset because this, it isn't like that anymore. And when I met Aunt Katel over there, she was the spitting image of Ma. Mama would layer her clothes. She would wear an old dress, maybe that didn't have sleeves anymore. That was her petticoat. Then she would have another dress. And then if that wasn't enough she put a dress on top of that. Then if she got cold, of course, then she had to have another something. Oh.

LEVINE: Did your mother continue to dress in the way that she might have in Germany?

NEATHERY: No. She changed. (she searches for a photograph)

Let's see. What was it? I was saving something for you. That's my Ellis Island papers. Here's how she looked, not, darn. Well, a few years back, not too many years back.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. I see.

NEATHERY: And they were having a, St. Joseph's church where she went all her life in America, was having their seventy-fifth anniversary, the church. And this, they were having a dinner for, and, for all, and all of the people who were there from the beginning of the church. The church started in 1914. And she was one of the nine old timers. She did, first she wasn't going. But then she went. I took her. And then, of course, they brought her food. I said she has to have pureed food, so they found soft stuff. But she had the best time, because there were some old, old timers and a few old nuns. And she really didn't even want to go home. She wants...

LEVINE: (referring to the photograph) It looks like she was enjoying herself.

NEATHERY: Yes, she was. I think that's basically the same.

But...

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, that's nice. So, so you were, you were helping her with the laundry and with, taking care of your brother and all the chores that...

NEATHERY: That's right. And, well, by the time I got to be thirteen, twelve, thirteen, I guess times were hard. And so she told me that if I wanted to go to school past the eight grade I had to get a job. And I said, "Mama, what can I do?" I couldn't get a job. So she found these people over in Melbourne Beach, the O'Connors, that needed someone to come and help with the housework, and just kind of be a live-in housegirl or something. And so I went to live with them all that summer. And I, I didn't have to do real heavy work, but I had to every day help brush up the house, help with the cooking and the dishes. And when the, they had a colored girl that came and did the laundry. And then I slept in a little tiny, I guess it was like a servants quarter. A little tiny room underneath the house. The house is still over there. I still see it. And when all my work was done, before, well, every morning at six o'clock in the morning, you had to be up, go out to the beach. There

was Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor and their, her elderly sister. They would go out, as far out as they could go. No, they didn't go that far. No, they went out in the ocean and swam around on my station. And then they gave me these two quart milk jars, glass. And I had to swim out as far as they could where the water was real clear, and get two quarts of this sea water, and bring it in. And then they would set in on their, in the kitchen till it settled. And then they would drink this. And every day they had a little drink of this, and then they claimed it was medicinal. And...

LEVINE: Did they live a long life? (she laughs)

NEATHERY: I guess. They were, well, they were old when I was living there. I mean, to me they were ancient. And then when school, and so I got two dollars a week. And one, well, they ate very frugally. Because they were old I guess they were kind of watching their weight. They were chunky. But like for supper you got maybe a slice of bread and butter, and this little half a peach and a, and a glass of milk. And I know my brother came over one weekend to spend a weekend, and we ate our little meal. And he said, "Well, Nanni, is that all we get to eat?" And I said,

"That's it." He says, "Oh, I would starve to death on this." (they laugh) Then I went back home, and, at school time went back to Melbourne High School. And then by the time that term was over I, she sent me to Fort Pierce to live with Uncle Herbst. That was, my brother's dad, Mama's husband, Paul Bayer, and Mr. Herbst' wife were brother and sister. And she had dropped dead and had left these two little boys. So I had to go down there and live with them, and supposedly go to Catholic school, because Mama said, she couldn't, you know, she couldn't afford to feed three. It was just, I'm getting too big, I guess, I'm eating too much. Anyway I went down there and lived with them for that term of school. Then I came back to Palm Bay. And then she was wanting to marry what turned out to be my sister-in-law's uncle. Way back then, they, he was German, and Mama really cared about him. And he I guess cared about her. But he said he wasn't, he couldn't marry her as long as his fifteen year old girl was there. She would never look at him, look up to him as Father or Dad. So he had to go over to Germany to, on business. But when he came back maybe they would talk further and maybe get married. I don't know. But anyway coming back on the ship this eighteen year old girl spotted him and decided he must

be some rich German since he could afford to be in America and go over and then go back. So she latched onto him. And they got married. And they had, my sister-in-law tells me that since this was her uncle, that his wife used to, when they'd get into their terrible arguments, she would yell and say, "You should have married Eva Bayer, because you, you two belong together." But they, he eventually, I never understood if he killed himself, or anyway he died. And then she died. His wife died not too long ago. And I never knew who they were until, oh, about maybe ten years ago, my oldest niece was getting married. And I came down to go to the wedding. And I asked my sister-in-law who was the other lady sitting on the other side of me there between, next to Mama? And she said well, that was August Eberhardt's wife. And I thought how could she sit next to Mama, you know, when she had stolen her husband. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, how did you meet your husband then?

NEATHERY: Well, when I was down in Fort Pierce. And I didn't go to Catholic school, because Uncle Herbst found out he had to pay tuition. And one of the neighbor girls over on the next street, she and I would get together.

Back then you had big pages of literature and stuff you had to memorize for school. So we would be over there. Well, this one day, then she was telling me about this movie that was coming in Fort Pierce, "The Black Cat," on Halloween. But you had to be eighteen to see it, or you had to have an escort. So she conned her brother into taking she and I. But when come the night of the movie, and we told my Uncle Herbst that her mother was ill and could I spend the night, because we wouldn't dare tell him we were going to this movie. Well, her brother Carl decided he wouldn't go. But he got two other people to take us.

So we didn't care, just so we got to see this scary, horrible movie. (she laughs) It was scary. And one of the men was this children's father. And when he came, I didn't, all he knew was my name was Anna. And a week later I'm over to my girl friend's, Lois. We're memorizing all this literature. And here comes little Emil⁵, my uncle's oldest boy. And he says, "Anna, come quick. There's a man here to see you." And I said, "I don't know any men," you know, because I didn't like boys. Well, I, so I went over to see, and here is this man. I says, "Oh, how did you find me? How did, you didn't even know my name." And he says, "Well, if a person is interested they find out

these things." And he asked my uncle if I could go, if he could take me for a ride. And he said, well, only if I, we brought him back some groceries that he gave me a list for. So we did. And then when I came back home, once a month he would come up. And then I was going to run away from home so Ma could get married to somebody. (she laughs) And he said, "Well, don't do that. Let's get married." And so that's how it happened.

LEVINE: And how many, name your children.

NEATHERY: Ozelle [PH] and Jo Anne and Sammy. Well, Samuel.

LEVINE: And you have grandchildren?

NEATHERY: Oh, yes. I have, hmm. I have, well, Ozelle had four children. One of them was killed in a, so she only has three now. So all told I had nine grandchildren. But like I say, Jeffrey was killed in a motorcycle accident in Beaumont, Texas. So, way back in '81. And then I have, I must have about, I think I have five or six great grandchildren.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness. Wonderful.

NEATHERY: Yeah, because there's, I'm trying to think. Well, there's, there's Ozelle's children. Her oldest son has, he has Jeff and he has Whitney. Then her daughter has Meaghan, and her other son, her younger son has Frankie Joe. And they're like, they're all in school, they're all, you know, growing up. Then on Jo Anne's side, my younger daughter, her son Teddie, he is married, and he has Hanna and Bridget. And then I hear that, yeah, because Libby, I hear that, I have one hearing impaired grandson. And he married a hearing impaired little girl. And she's real teensie weensie [sic]. And he's, you know, real huge. And they have a beautiful marriage. They've been married six years and they're going to be parents in September. It'll be their first child. So, and I'm supposed to go up in May to my granddaughter's Elizabeth's wedding. I don't know if I'll make it or not. But I have wonderful kids. To have grown up, because I left their father a while, in, oh, we got married in '35, and I, I just walked out in '47. I had had enough. Took my three kids and walked out. Left everything. And that's how, he came and took them to Kansas City, and then I went up there. I just sold what little I had, took my suitcase and the

clothes on my back, and went, got me some job up there, and eventually went to secretarial in Kansas City, Missouri, and got my diploma so that I could get a good job, because I knew shorthand and typing. And eventually I wound up working for Southwestern Bell as a stenographer for thirteen and, about thirteen and a half years.

LEVINE: Oh.

NEATHERY: And I loved that job. And my son was the one that kept saying, "Mother, why don't you go to work for Southwestern Bell." And I said, "Sam, they won't hire me. I'm fifty-four." "Go down. Take your test." And I did. And they had to call Mama because I had never seen a birth certificate. I'd never needed one. I had worked and never one, but Southwester Bell, you had to have a birth certificate. And they couldn't believe that I didn't know if I had one. So they call Mama at my brother's house, because Mama never had a phone. And she said yes, that she had one that was written by the parish priest. And so she translated it for them, and she sent both, the German and her translation. And in the meantime they went ahead and hired me. And then they took it. They didn't, to

make sure that it was authentic they took it to someone within the company that could read German. That's birth, that's the only birth certificate that I had. I, I did have to get my own citizenship papers, even though when she became an American citizen in 1935, I automatically became one. But then when, I guess it was in '42 or '43 when I was living in Fort Pierce with the children and their dad, and our neighbor was a commander with the Coast Guard. And the U-boats were, German U-boats were out there in the Atlantic just off the, off of Fort Pierce beach. He said to me one day, "You know, Anna, you really should get your American citizenship papers." And I said, "But I am one." And he said, "Yes, but you couldn't prove it, could you?" And I said, "Well, yeah." He says, "Well, I sure would hate for my neighbor to have a big P.O.W. on her back." So I got my own papers.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, we have about a minute left. So why don't you say for the tape what, how you experienced your visit to Ellis Island recently.

NEATHERY: Oh, that was awesome. It was, when we got off the ship, and I saw the building, I don't know. I was just a wonderful feeling. And as we went inside the

building I knew that I had been there. I just, my skin just got all tingly. I knew I had been there. And then we went upstairs, and we went in the different rooms. And it was just an undescrivable [sic] feeling. I loved it. And I ate German food. I had sauerkraut and knackwurst. (she laughs) Or whatever it was that they had with it. And talked with some of the people there, and went to a little tape they had, the movie, and just enjoyed it all. I hated to leave. I wanted another day, because then when we went out and found Mama's name and my name and my Uncle Louie, oh, it was the most wonderful, wonderful day. And I have a picture that my kids took of Sammy, well, Jo Anne took it of Sammy and Ozelle and I. And I just look ecstatic, and I was. I wouldn't take anything from that trip.

LEVINE: Wow.

NEATHERY: And I just wish Mama could have went. But she was already gone, so I couldn't even tell her about it. She knew that I was going.

LEVINE: Well, I think that this is a good place to stop.

NEATHERY: Okay.

LEVINE: I want to thank you very much for a wonderful story.

NEATHERY: Well, I hope it was good.

LEVINE: It was. This is Janet Levine, and I'm talking with Anna Neathery who is here in Palm Bay, Florida. It's February 17th, 1994, and I'm signing off.