

EI-428/ANN DAIBERL

**EI-428**

**ANN SCHMEISSER DAIBERL**

**BIRTHDATE: MARCH 31, 1908**

**INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY, 17, 1994**

**RUNNING TIME: 30:06**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: PALM BAY, FLORIDA**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 3/1996**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG**

**GERMANY, 1926**

**AGE 18**

**SHIP: THE DEUTSCHLAND**

**PORT: HAMBURG**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **GERMANY: INKOFEN, LANDSHUT, BAVARIA**
- **US: AURORA, OAK PARK, IL; PALM BAY, FL**

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

**LEVINE:** Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's February 17th, 1994, and I'm here in Palm Bay, Florida at the home of L and Mrs. Louis Daiberl.

**DAIBERL:** Right.

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LEVINE: And I'm speaking with Mrs. Daiberl whose name is Ann. And she came from Germany in 1926 when she was eighteen years old, about.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, I'm very happy to have found out that you're here, too, and I have a chance to talk with you.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Why don't we start, you say your birth date.

DAIBERL: My birth date? March 31st, 199', 1908.

LEVINE: Okay. And where were you born?

DAIBERL: Oh, in Inkofen. It's I-N-K-O-F-E-N. That's in Bavaria.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you live in Inkofen the whole time until you left when you were about eighteen years old?

DAIBERL: No.

LEVINE: Okay. Where, how long did you live there?

DAIBERL: Well, let's see now. Until eighth grade or something like that. That would be, well, that would be about eight or ten years, right?

LEVINE: Yeah.

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DAIBERL: Yeah. Then...

LEVINE: Well, if you started school at five you'd probably be about thirteen years old.

DAIBERL: Right. Right. Yeah. Then I moved to Landshut

LEVINE: L-A-N-...

DAIBERL: -N-T-S-H-U-T. [Pronounced "t", spelled "d"]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

L DAIBERL: Here it is. (He indicates a photograph)

DAIBERL: Hmm?

LEVINE: Oh. There's a picture of it. Uh-huh.

L DAIBERL: Postcard.

LEVINE: Yeah. So did you live in Landshut until you left for America?

DAIBERL: Right. Right.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let's start out talking about life in Ink, Inkofen. Would you remember the town?

DAIBERL: Yeah. It was just a s--very small village.

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LEVINE: And about, do you have any idea about how many families, or...

DAIBERL: No, I really don't.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What did people do around there?

DAIBERL: Well, it was mostly farmers.

LEVINE: And what kind of farming? What did they farm?

DAIBERL: Just about anything. [To L Daiberl] Right? Yeah.

L DAIBERL: Grain. Mostly grain.

DAIBERL: Yeah. Grain, potatoes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did your fa---- was your father a farmer?

DAIBERL: No. I didn't even know my father until I was about twelve years old.

LEVINE: How, how come you, he wasn't around, or...

DAIBERL: No. No, he just, he just married somebody else. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, I see. [Laughs] I see.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

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LEVINE: So, you were living with your mother?

DAIBERL: My mother was dead when I was eight years old.

LEVINE: Oh.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember your mother at all?

DAIBERL: Yeah, I do. I remember she had real beautiful curly hair. [Laughs] Yeah. Otherwise I don't remember too much, because I was staying with some other people.

LEVINE: I see.

DAIBERL: Yes.

LEVINE: Well, well, what was your mother's name?

DAIBERL: Anna.

LEVINE: And her, and her name, her last name?

DAIBERL: Schmeisser.

LEVINE: S-C-H-...

DAIBERL: Yeah. -M-E-I-S-S-E-R.

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LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you have brothers and sisters?

DAIBERL: I had a brother, and I didn't even know him. He, he was killed in the war.

LEVINE: I see.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you know him as a child before that?

DAIBERL: No. No, because we were placed in different places.

LEVINE: I see.

DAIBERL: So we both grew up without knowin' each other.

LEVINE: I see.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, up until you were eight years old, were you with your mother then, or you, you...

DAIBERL: No. No.

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LEVINE: No.

DAIBERL: I was with some other people.

LEVINE: Well, what do you remember about life in Inkofen? What, do you remember the family you were with?

DAIBERL: Yeah. I do. But I don't know if that's any interesting or not. Their name was Weinberger.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was it like living with them?

DAIBERL: Well, I guess it was okay. It wasn't a very happy situation, but it was all right. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you go to school in Inkofen?

DAIBERL: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: What, do you remember school?

DAIBERL: Yeah, I do. It's a little country school. I think we had only two teachers. One for one, two and three grades, and then the rest of the we had another, another teacher.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DAIBERL: Yeah. Till eighth grade. Yeah. That's...

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LEVINE: Did, did you like school? Was that enjoyable or not...

DAIBERL: Well, not really. It was just a matter of what you had to go through.  
[Laughs]

LEVINE: And so, do you remember the house you lived in?

DAIBERL: Yeah. I, I remember the house I lived in. It was very ordinary. [Laughs] I shouldn't even say, but we didn't even have the inside bathroom. No, oh, we did have water inside. Yeah. But that's about all.

LEVINE: Were there other children?

DAIBERL: No.

LEVINE: Did the Weinbergers have children?

DAIBERL: No.

LEVINE: No.

DAIBERL: Well, they had a son and a daughter, but they were a lot older than I was.

LEVINE: I see.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: So did you help them around the house? Did you have chores?

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DAIBERL: Yeah. I had to feed the rabbits. I had to feed the chickens. I had to bring wood in the house for the stove. [Laughs] All kinds of, all kinds of things.

LEVINE: Do you remember the kitchen of the house?

DAIBERL: Yeah. It had a wooden stove, and a table and chairs around. That's about all. Oh, yeah, there was an old couch, too, I think. But that's all. It was very plain.

LEVINE: Was it a stone house? Like a stucco house?

DAIBERL: I don't think it was a stone house. I don't even know if it was wood. It wasn't stone. That's for sure. Probably wood. I don't remember that so good. I wasn't interested in that stuff at that time.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. So, okay, so, let's see. You were there; do you remember what you did for fun? Was there anything enjoyable that you remember about when you lived in, in Inkofen?

DAIBERL: Are you kidding?

LEVINE: It was work, and----

DAIBERL: All I know is school and work. That's about all.

LEVINE: Yeah.

DAIBERL: Otherwise. Ah, we kids used to play hide and seek and stuff like that once

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in a while, you know, but there wasn't much of anything else.

LEVINE: Were you religious? Did you go to church?

DAIBERL: Yeah. I did. I had to. [Laughs] That was a must. You had to.

LEVINE: Do you remember any holidays that you, that were celebrated?

DAIBERL: Oh, Christmas. We had a real tree, and we had candles on it. And I got a little candy, and maybe a little toy or something. That's about it. Most of the time a prayer *buchen* (book) or rosary. [Laughs] That...

LEVINE: Were the Weinbergers very religious?

DAIBERL: Well, everybody was, in that village.

LEVINE: Oh.

DAIBERL: That, everybody.

LEVINE: Do you remember the church?

DAIBERL: Yeah. We, we kids used to have to go to church before school, even, in the morning. And in the winter, oh, boy, was it cold. Walking through the snow, you know, and it took, I think it took almost an hour to walk to school. It was that far. It wasn't any fun. It really wasn't---much fun. It was just a matter of---- everybody lived like that more or less. You know, that's the way it was. [Laughs]

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LEVINE: How about food? Do you remember...

DAIBERL: Food?

LEVINE: any food that...

DAIBERL: Food was very ordinary. I think we only had some meat once a week. And otherwise pancakes and stuff like that, you know. Yeah. I, I don't think----- now we had two cows, but I never had any milk to drink. I think they used that for, to get the butter, you know. They, they lived on what that little----- I think they only had five acres, and they lived on, off the land----whatever they, you know, whatever they could sell. They would sell the eggs, they would sell the butter, you know, all this stuff, so. But that's the way it was.

LEVINE: Do you remember why you happened to then go to Landshut?

DAIBERL: Why what?

LEVINE: You moved?

DAIBERL: Oh, when I moved to Landshut?

LEVINE: Yeah.

DAIBERL: To get a job.

LEVINE: You had finished school, eighth grade?

DAIBERL: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, we had to, that's a law, that was a law in Germany. You

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had to go to school; I think was it twice or three times a week? [To L Daiberl] Oh.

LEVINE: He's, he's being quiet.

DAIBERL: I don't remember. We had, I think, well, it, most of the people, most of the kids worked, you know. And I think we had one class on Sundays. And in, I think two more during the week sometime. For three years. Like, like they have high school here, you know. Yeah. That's it.

LEVINE: So, so what did you get a job doing when you, when you went to Landshut?

DAIBERL: Well, I did housework, and I worked in a hotel, and that's about it.

LEVINE: And you went to school on Sunday...

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: and the two other times. Uh-huh.

DAIBERL: Yeah. That was the law. They had to, whoever hires you had to let you go, you know.

LEVINE: I see.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: So then did you live with the people you worked for?

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DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: In Landshut?

DAIBERL: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about that town?

DAIBERL: Landshut? That's a nice town. It, in fact it's real nice. I liked it there.

LEVINE: How was it different from Inkofen?

DAIBERL: Well, in the first place, it's a city. It's a lot bigger. And well, there's a lot more stuff going on, you know. So, it was okay. I liked it.

LEVINE: And do you remember anything about the school there, when you went for those three times a week?

DAIBERL: Not really. Not much. (Indicating the postcard of Landshut) I don't know, I, that's Landshut? I didn't...

L DAIBERL: That's Landshut.

DAIBERL: I didn't even know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

DAIBERL: Where the heck did we get that?

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L DAIBERL: Somebody sent it to you, I'm sure.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, so did you have any fun in Landshut?

DAIBERL: Well, I had a boyfriend by that time, and I had some fun. Yeah. I liked that.

LEVINE: What would you do to, like if you went out to have a good time? What...

DAIBERL: Oh, go to a restaurant to eat, and once in a while go dancing. You know, stuff like that. That's all. Yeah.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you remember about life in Germany before you left?

DAIBERL: Not really. I really didn't miss it an awful lot.

LEVINE: How was it that it was decided that you would come here to this country?

DAIBERL: Well, I had relatives here. I had an uncle here which I had never met before. And they sent me the fare. And that's how I come over here. Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, who was this uncle?

DAIBERL: John Schmeisser.

LEVINE: And so he was your mother's brother?

DAIBERL: Brother. Yeah.

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LEVINE: And he, did you correspond with him? Is that how you...

DAIBERL: I don't, I can't even tell you how I found out that he was my uncle. I, I don't remember that. But I remember the first day when I came over here, my aunt sent me down the street, and told me to pick him out. And about four or five guys come walking up the street, and I, I know right away. 'cause I had seen a picture of him, you know. But I picked him right away.

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving, leaving Landshut to, to come to America?

DAIBERL: Yeah, I do. It scared the daylights out of me when I saw that big boat. I had never seen any big body of water, or never a big boat like that. And when I got on it I thought to myself, well, here goes. No matter what happens, you know, if it goes down, it goes down. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Were you traveling by yourself?

DAIBERL: Yeah. And I didn't know anybody here really, because I didn't know my uncle, either, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: So you must have been frightened.

DAIBERL: You know, when you're young like that, you don't think about a lot of stuff. And things weren't as dangerous then as they are now. I think now I would be afraid. But not, no, never got in my head, except I, when I saw all that water I---- the boat was----- nothing but water. And I thought, oh, boy, if this boat goes down, that's it. [Laughs] But it didn't.

LEVINE: What did you take with you? Do you remember what you packed?

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DAIBERL: Well, I didn't have much of anything. Just my clothes. That's all. I didn't have anything else.

LEVINE: Do you remember how you dressed when you first came or before you left?

DAIBERL: No, I really don't. I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the voyage coming over?

DAIBERL: Yeah...

LEVINE: What was the name of the ship?

DAIBERL: [superposed] I was sicker than a dog. On the boat. Everybody was sick. Everybody was hanging over the railing, throwing up and stuff, you know. And I thought, oh, boy, I'm doing pretty good. Nothing is wrong with me, you know, I'm just fine. And it didn't take a couple hours, and then I was sicker than a dog myself. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Were you down in the steerage, down in the, in the hold of the ship, in a big room with a lot of people?

DAIBERL: Well, we had cabins, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, you had cabins.

DAIBERL: Yeah. Yeah. But I, I remember still trying to walk in that hall, and the, boy, I han---hung to the railing, and, oh, boy. [Laughs] I was sick.

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LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the ship?

DAIBERL: I think it was Deutschland.

LEVINE: And where did it leave from?

DAIBERL: Hamburg. Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember eating on the ship at all?

DAIBERL: Yeah. I guess it was okay. But when that---- I think when we got off the ship, no, that was when they got, when we got off Ellis Island, when they gave us crackers, and this stuff. And I never tasted a cracker before, and I thought that was terrible tasting stuff. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Do you remember when the ship came into New York Harbor?

DAIBERL: No, I really don't. But I do remember going through Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about that.

DAIBERL: That was sort of scary. And I had to walk through a line, and there were two or three man [sic] there. And they had books open with different languages. And they were trying to make me to read something in German that I didn't like it, what it said. So I walked right through. [Laughs] Then they laughed, you know, they just laughed at. But I wasn't going to read whatever they made me read. I was sort of by myself, and they figured they were going to have some fun, you know. [Laughs] I, I don't remember

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what it was, but it wasn't something very nice. So that was it. Then I came with the train to Chicago. And I still remember a couple of girls sittin' across from me, talking, and it sounded like chickens. I didn't know a---one word of English. Nothing, you know. And I thought, God, what is this. Then, then a colored man took my suitcase from on top of the---- the bus, you know. And I had only seen one colored person in my whole life before. And I, I was really scared. I thought what, what's he going to do, you know. And he finally, I don't know what he did. He put my suitcase someplace, and I, I gave him a dollar tip. And boy, that was, that went over pretty big, you know. My uncle said, "Yeah, no wonder." But I was so glad to get rid of that colored man, I just, I, I was just not used to colored people, you know. I was really scared.

LEVINE: Do you know how you made your way to the train to Chicago?

DAIBERL: No, I don't know how. I don't really know. We must have got right from Ellis Island, I imagine.

LEVINE: Well, did somebody meet you at Ellis Island?

DAIBERL: No. Nobody did. I came all, all the way to Aurora all by myself.

LEVINE: Wow.

DAIBERL: Yeah. It was nothing. Not then. Yeah, then I, my aunt picked me up. [To L Daiberl] Or did you pick me up?

L DAIBERL: When?

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LEVINE: Did you know your husband before?

DAIBERL: No. No, I met him the first day I came over here?

L DAIBERL: I know her, but after she was here about six, seven hours. [Laughs]

DAIBERL: Yeah. I, I never remember, I mean, I never forget my, my aunt's house.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about...

DAIBERL: It was okay, but I came from a real nice, clean place, you know, where everything was just perfect. And here the first thing I saw was a dirty mop. In the back, when we walked in the back door. [Laughs] Then we come into the kitchen, here was some soaked up doughnuts and coffee slopped on the table. And I thought, what is this? It really shocked me. You know, I'd, I always heard everything was so perfect in America, but boy, that, that really, that turned me off. Then there was, they had a daughter and a son. My cousins. And there was another cousin staying there with them. And the two girls, they would talk English and I could never understand a word, you know. Boy, that was really hard. We, the three of us slept in one bedroom, and they would talk and talk and talk. And the one came from Germany, too, so she certainly could have talked German to me, you know. But they was sort of mean. I thought that was sort of mean. I didn't like that. I felt very lonely then. Then I worked in a factory in Aurora.

LEVINE: What kind of factory?

DAIBERL: They made electrical equipment. You know those things that go into the----- wall, where the, where you plug in that sort of a square box. And I was

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really, I was a pretty nice kid then, and I didn't like a lot of stuff. There was a boss, and he used to chew tobacco and, and spit around, and oh, that used to make me sick. And then everybody would, at, at lunch time everybody would wash their hands in gasoline, you know, because it was all this oily stuff and everything. And I would always stand there until everybody was done. And one day somebody said to me, why don't you go and you push ahead, you know, go, go in there. And I, then I did the next day, but I said, "Excuse me." I was real polite at that time yet. But that was----then I worked in a corset factory. And then I did housework. I moved to Oak Park and did housework there, which was okay. It was fine.

LEVINE: How did you learn English?

DAIBERL: Well, just by listening to other people talking to other people. And when I did housework, they was real nice people, you know, in Oak Park. And well, they, they talked real good English, so I guess that's how come I learned pretty good, too, you know. And they used to get a big kick out of me whenever I'd answer the telephone. And I would talk, try and talk English, then I'd start in ----in German, you know, and stuff, but I got used to it. It didn't take me too long. It was okay.

LEVINE: What...

DAIBERL: But those people were ni---real nice to me. They were great.

LEVINE: Were you glad you had come to America, or did you feel like maybe you should have stayed in Germany?

DAIBERL: Well, I'm glad I came. I mean, my, my children are all born here, and they

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certainly had a lot of better chance than they would have had--- had I stayed over there, you know. So, no, I'm not sorry that I came. I'm, I'm glad I came. I'm glad I'm here, too. I don't think it still isn't too good over there.

LEVINE: Tell me how you met your husband.

DAIBERL: The first night he took me for a ride, didn't you?

L DAIBERL: Hmm-mm.

DAIBERL: Yeah. He had a little Ford, and he took...

L DAIBERL: There was a party for you, and I says," the hell with that, let's go for a ride."

DAIBERL: Yeah, he took me for a ride.

LEVINE: So your aunt had a party for you?

DAIBERL: No. She didn't have no party. [To L Daiberl] I said my aunt didn't have no party.

L DAIBERL: [not understood]

DAIBERL: Oh, I don't know. I, I don't remember that. But I know--- I do remember I went for a ride with him the first night.

LEVINE: And did you like each other right away?

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DAIBERL: Yeah. I guess so, huh?

L DAIBERL: Guess so. [Laughs] Well, she was alone. I was alone.

DAIBERL: Right. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you keep, did you start seeing each other regularly right away?

DAIBERL: Yeah. I think so, huh?

L DAIBERL: Yeah.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, so you worked at all those jobs. Were you married, or had, this was before you got married?

DAIBERL: That was before I got married. And I worked after, after we got married, too. I did housework, and just all kinds of things. Whatever came along. Whenever it was necessary, whenever we needed some extra money, I'd help along.

LEVINE: And then, how many children did you have?

DAIBERL: Six. Yeah.

LEVINE: And.

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DAIBERL: One daughter died. [To L Daiberl] She was, Lois was fifty, huh, when she died? A beautiful girl. And then one, then we lost one seven years old. He had strep germ. So we only got four left. Yeah.

LEVINE: And what, what were you children's names?

DAIBERL: Fred, Lois, Butsi. His name was actually Harry. We call him Butsi. That's the one that died. And Ruthy and John and Dick.

L DAIBERL: Wait a minute.

DAIBERL: Hmm?

L DAIBERL: Did you mention something the doctor gave the little kid, to prescription for an upset stomach when he was all [not understood]?

DAIBERL: Yeah.

L DAIBERL: They operate on him...[A telephone rings]. [Not understood].

DAIBERL: Excuse me. [Halted tape

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now after a telephone call. So let's see. You, you were talking about your children, and, what, what are you proudest of that you've done in your life?

DAIBERL: Well, I'm sure proud of my children. They're great. Lois was a secretary. John is an executive. Dick is a teacher. And Ruthey was a dental assistant. So they're, and they're all, they're really great. They're, they're

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great kids. All of them.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren?

DAIBERL: Oh, God, how many have I got? About ten or twelve of them, I think.

LEVINE: Really?

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, do you think that----- if you were divide yourself up into being German and American, what, what, what aspects of you would be German and what parts of you would be American, do you think?

DAIBERL: Well, I came over here and I'm an American. And, of course, I still have a soft heart for Germany, but as far as I'm concerned ----it's America, you know. Sure, that's the way I feel.

LEVINE: And how about this time in your life?

DAIBERL: The what?

LEVINE: This time of your life, your old age time. How, how is that for you?

DAIBERL: Well, this is the most miserable time we ever had. He has got Parkinson's Disease, and I got diabetes, angina, arthritis, and this miserable, lousy foot that keeps swelling up all the time. So right now it's now so good. But...

LEVINE: Well how about when you're not laid up? When...

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DAIBERL: Well, then we just do our thing around here. We just take care of everything ourselves, you know. And we've been doing pretty good so far. But now it's--- it's really, it's very hard. But then, again, he is ninety years old, I'm eighty-five. What do you expect? You know? You have to expect certain things. That's the way it is. That's the way life is, you know. So we handle it as good as we can, and that's----we just do it one day at a time, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well...

DAIBERL: What else can you do? [They laugh]

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you would say about, about starting your life in Germany, and coming here, and what difference you think that made in, in the kind of person you are and the way you do things, and.

DAIBERL: Well, I don't know. Now, what was that question again?

LEVINE: Well, I was asking, the fact that you were born in Germany and you came here as a young, young lady...

DAIBERL: Well...

LEVINE: do you think that made a difference?

DAIBERL: That was a fact that I had no control of--- that I was born in Germany.  
[Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah.

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DAIBERL: And I'm here now, and that's just fine with me.

LEVINE: [Laughs] Okay.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, is there anything else you would want to say?

DAIBERL: I don't think so.

LEVINE: on the tape.

DAIBERL: I don't think so.

LEVINE: Well, maybe that's a perfect place to end.

DAIBERL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. [(They laugh] Okay, I'm talking with Ann Daiberl...

DAIBERL: Right.

LEVINE: here in Florida, in Palm Bay, and it's February 17th, 1994, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off. Well, thank you.

DAIBERL: Well, you're welcome.

LEVINE: That was wonderful.