

KECK-012

MARIE KUNERT

BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 3, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 19, 1985

RUNNING TIME: 43:00

INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB

RECORDING ENGINEER: O.J. CONNELL, III

INTERVIEW LOCATION: BALTIMORE, MD

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: NANCY VEGA, 6/1995

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

GERMANY, 1923

AGE 15

PASSAGE ON THE "HANNOVER"

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb, and I'm speaking with Mrs. Marie  
Kunert . . .

KUNERT: Kunert.

GUMB: Kunert, okay. Um, on the 19th day of July 1985.  
We're beginning this interview at 2:10 PM, and we're  
about to interview Mrs. Kunert about her immigration  
experience from Germany in the year 1923.

KUNERT: Just think, if I wouldn't have come, I would have  
never met you, never had our six children or nine  
grandchildren, right?

GUMB: Okay, Mrs. Kunert, if we could begin, we could first  
ask, uh, where and when were you born?

KUNERT: Coburg, C-O-B-U-R-G.

GUMB: Germany.

KUNERT: Germany, right.

GUMB: And what was the date?

KUNERT: August the 3rd, 1908. Five thirty in the morning, believe it or not. I still have my birth certificate.

GUMB: And what was your native town like? What was life like there?

KUNERT: An adorable city, German principality. 'Cause the Duke of Coburg resided there. There's the picture, where he resided. Beautiful place. I still get homesick after it, can't help it.

GUMB: And what sort of place did you live in there?

KUNERT: Us?

GUMB: Right, your family.

KUNERT: My father was, um, what's the word? Amputee, like my husband, from the First World War. And he got a house from the German Reich because of it and we lived in a

lovely house that's in existence today. 'Cause when hubby and I went home on a visit it was still there.

GUMB: And what did he do? What was his occupation?

KUNERT: My father was an interior decorator. Yes. And my brother's an artist and he painted the whole side of the house, a beautiful picture. Right, Otta papa, when we were there? We saw it. We were at home twice.

GUMB: Did you go to school there? What sort of school did you go to?

KUNERT: Of course I went to school, for eight years only. Grammar school, because I came over here before I was fifteen. I never had no high school. And my English is all self-taught.

GUMB: Do you remember when you first heard about America?

KUNERT: In school, of course. You know how children learn about other countries and we, of course, did too. And I was very interested. I always thought someday I'm gonna have to see this wonderful America, and I did.

GUMB: What sort of things did you hear about the United

States?

KUNERT: You're gonna laugh, because they said, for fun, how's the word, Daddy? "Die gebratenen Tauben fliegen auf der Strasse." The fried pigeons, they're for the taking.

GUMB: Fried pigeons?

KUNERT: Yeah. Tauben, Tauben is pigeons. And . . .

GUMB: Like birds, huh?

KUNERT: Yeah, because it was so wonderful here everything was ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) the gold on the streets. They really used to say those things back home, you know that? Of course, I found out different, mighty quick.

GUMB: So, do you remember when you first decided that you wanted to come to this country and how . . .

KUNERT: I told you. I had an aunt here, who also was my godmother. And I wrote her one day and said I would like to come to America, would you send me the ticket. And she wrote back yes, you can come. But my father and mother said for one year only. They only wanted

me here for a year. But then I liked it so well I, you know, never went back. So when we got married I wasn't quite seventeen. Papa had to get permission from my parents, written permission, or they wouldn't let me get married. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) We had to get married young in them days. Sixty-two years, I mean, sixty years, we're married, the first of August, not quite, had to be the first.

GUMB: So what age were you when you came over? What was your age when you came over?

KUNERT: I was almost fifteen, 'cause I came the 12th of July, my birthday was the 3rd of August. Remember, I was born 1908? This was '23.

GUMB: Right. Were your parents a little scared about letting you go?

KUNERT: I wonder, I wonder. They never let on. But I was always sort of self-sufficient. Evidently they didn't worry too much about me.

GUMB: So, uh, to come over, uh, what did you have to do to come over, what were, you had to go to the consulate, right, and?

KUNERT: Yes. Get the permission, and then have all kinds of papers signed all so I could leave the country, you know, Germany. But I suppose, because I was so young, it wasn't as important as if I had been an adult.

GUMB: Right. So, uh, did your father take you to the Consulate, or?

KUNERT: No, I went by train myself to Munich, which is a good distance from Coburg, where I come from. Then everything went fine.

GUMB: The people at the consulate didn't have any, uh, questions about a young girl going by herself?

KUNERT: No. I brought the papers along, the permission papers, you know. You saw. And they didn't question. It's a wonder that they didn't, huh?

GUMB: So after you got the visa how did you get the ticket, the, uh, the ticket for the ship?

KUNERT: My aunt sent that from here. Uh-huh.

GUMB: And what port did you leave from, what exit port did you leave from?

KUNERT: Bremerhaven

GUMB: Could you spell the name of the port?

KUNERT: Coming over, most of the way, remember I told you, and the lady was supposed to look out for me, and she didn't even bother with me? Well, I stayed in my cabin most of the time because I couldn't stand seeing the water, the ocean.

GUMB: Who was the lady who was supposed to take care of you?

KUNERT: I don't remember her name. Would you believe it? Because it made me so angry that I was so seasick the whole twelve days.

GUMB: Yeah. What was her position, what, uh . . .

KUNERT: Remember I told you the German Lloyd saw to it, because I was under age, that she should be a sort of a guardian? But I can't remember her name, because she didn't come to Baltimore like I did after they picked me up in New York? Honey, did I ever tell you her name? I really don't remember, that's the truth.

GUMB: Was she another passenger?

KUNERT: Yes, she was a passenger. I think she was around twenty-eight years old. But she didn't bother at all

with me.

GUMB: What was she doing during the voyage?

KUNERT: I wonder.

GUMB: Uh, so, uh, do you remember how much the ticket cost to come over?

KUNERT: I remember paying my aunt back a hundred forty dollars, but I don't think the ticket was a hundred forty. I think she, what did we talk about, why it was a hundred and forty, honey? Oh, she bought me a few things and she charged that on there. And see, I told you I got a job for very wealthy people and I made eight dollars a week for seven days and my aunt got, uh, five to pay the ticket off, every week. Yeah. Every week. And two dollars, what was that, insurance, in case I died so she can bury me, she always said, and a dollar to spend and don't you dare spend it and I did? ( he laughs ) That's when she got angry with me.

GUMB: Do you remember what class you were traveling on?

KUNERT: Third.

GUMB: Right, steerage.

KUNERT: No, it wasn't steerage. Steerage is below third class. Third class was rather nice.

GUMB: What was it like?

KUNERT: Two in a cabin, bunk beds, and I think I was on the upper one, yeah. No wonder I stayed in there all the time because bunk beds were something new to me. You know, I never slept upstairs before.

GUMB: Do you remember what the food was like on the ship?

KUNERT: What little I did eat was very good, very good. But the smell of it made me so sick, and the smell of the paint on the ship, 'cause the ship was called Hannover, and it was freshly painted, and between the food smell and the paint smell I just, it was too much.

GUMB: Do you remember meeting anyone on the ship?

KUNERT: Nah. Nobody bothered with a kid.

GUMB: After you got your visa and you had your, uh, ticket from your aunt, the ship ticket from your aunt, how did you travel from your home town?

KUNERT: My father took me by train from Bremerhaven, I mean, from Coburg to Bremerhaven. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts )  
Yeah, that's where the boat left from.

GUMB: How did it feel to be leaving your father and your mother?

KUNERT: I can see my mother yet standing at the gate in the garden and waving to me and I was so excited I wasn't even sad a bit. Later on, when I thought about it, you know, I thought it was terrible the way I was so excited, leaving home. I didn't see it no more until, when was the first time we went home, honey? 1968.

GUMB: You didn't see your parents again until 1968?

KUNERT: No. They were dead, long gone. They died in '47, both of them.

GUMB: So you never went home until . . .

KUNERT: Couldn't afford it. We had to raise six children, Mr. Kunert. Where would we get the money? You know, when hubby and I got married, when a man made twenty-five dollars a week that was a lot of money.

GUMB: So, do you remember, what were the first thing you

remember about sailing into the harbor, your first impressions of the country as you sailed in.

KUNERT: Seeing the Statue of Liberty. That was impressive. You know, by then I was feeling okay and everybody crowded on the railing. We all wanted to see that wonderful American statue. That was the impressive sight, really. Is it still like that today?

KUNERT: Oh, yeah, it's still there. They're fixing it up, too. Yeah, had to, you heard about that in Germany, the Statue of Liberty?

KUNERT: Yeah, sure. Sure we heard about it. But it's really something to behold when you cross the ocean and see it all of a sudden, you know?

GUMB: Where did the boat go? Do you remember where the boat docked, the oceanliner you were in?

KUNERT: Oh, no, I don't. All I remember is going to Ellis Island, which made me very unhappy. Everybody left and I had to go to Ellis Island.

GUMB: Do you remember why, why you had to go?

KUNERT: What did I tell you? Had to send a telegram to my

aunt. They sent a telegram. And it was a Friday and my aunt couldn't pick me up until Monday. So, I was very unhappy at Ellis Island. I'm sorry to tell you, that's what I was. And I, wasn't supposed to change that money that my aunt paid me, twenty dollars, coming this country with, and they had fig newtons, and I wanted a package of fig newtons, so I changed the money. And, oh, my aunt had a fit when she saw me. How dare I change the twenty dollars. Remember me telling you, darling?

GUMB: So why wasn't your aunt there on Friday when you arrived?

KUNERT: Because they had to send her a telegram to Baltimore, and you can't go on the boat on a Friday. She had to wait until Monday.

KUNERT: Oh. She didn't get word of when you were arriving? She didn't know when you were going to arrive?

KUNERT: Evidently not. 'Cause she wasn't there to pick me up on a Friday.

GUMB: Right. And they wouldn't let you out alone.

KUNERT: Oh, no. I had a tag on me, you know, like all

immigrants them days had to have a big piece of paper.

GUMB: Do you remember what the tag said or what it looked like?

KUNERT: No, no, I don't. Not really.

GUMB: So you had to spend the weekend there.

KUNERT: Right.

GUMB: Do you remember . . .

KUNERT: Sleeping in a bunk bed on the, in Ellis Island. A big man, every morning, it seemed like he hit the hammer on the bed and woke us up.

GUMB: Did he have a uniform on, this man.

KUNERT: Uh, I don't remember. No, I don't think he had a uniform on.

GUMB: Yeah. He was just, he was just supposed to wake everybody up?

KUNERT: Yes, yes. And what I didn't like, they had bathrooms with no doors. I didn't like that at all. I wasn't used to that. But that's how it was, not even a curtain in front.

GUMB: You mean for the toilets?

KUNERT: That's right.

GUMB: For the toilets. Was it clean?

KUNERT: Yes, it was clean, sure. But . . .

GUMB: Did they have showers for the girls?

KUNERT: Shower I never knew. I took a bath. We didn't have showers back home, them days.

GUMB: So they had baths there.

KUNERT: Right.

GUMB: Who were you with? Do you, who were the other people?

KUNERT: Complete strangers. I didn't know. They didn't even speak my language. They must have been from other countries, you know. Couldn't converse with them.

GUMB: Were they also young people?

KUNERT: No, I think I was kind of the youngest of the lot. And the ones that were there, they weren't from our ship, not from the Hannover. They spoke an altogether different language.

GUMB: What were they dressed in? What did they look like, the other people, do you remember?

KUNERT: They all were dressed neat and nice. I was, too.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about the food, what they gave you to eat?

KUNERT: I think it was good food they gave us.

GUMB: Okay, uh, we were talking about your time on Ellis Island. I think you were saying, uh, something about the food, what kind of food they had to eat there, do you remember anything about that?

KUNERT: You mean exactly? No, I don't. The only thing that stuck in my mind was the fig newtons that I bought myself because I never seen anything like it.

GUMB: Anything like a fig newton.

KUNERT: No, of course not. See, that was '23. They still had, you're too young, you wouldn't remember, they still had those tickets where you could, when you had to go to the grocery store, we had that here, too, during the war, maybe you heard about it.

GUMB: Oh, rationing coupons?

KUNERT: Yeah. I mean cake and stuff like that was not very often to be had back home.

GUMB: Back in Germany.

KUNERT: Yeah, right. But we had 'em here, too, rationing, right. During the second World War. We had little chips, little, yeah, yeah. Of course, you're too young. You wouldn't know.

GUMB: Where did you, where did you buy those fig newtons?

KUNERT: See, it must have been, in my mind, it must have been like a, a little store on Ellis Island, you know. Like they have with all kinds of goodies. And fig newtons is what I had never seen, so that's what I bought.

GUMB: Do you remember where it was in relation to . . .

KUNERT: No, honestly I don't.

GUMB: Do you remember the great registry hall, the great hall in the, walking into a big room with a big . . .

KUNERT: I was so unhappy there I didn't remember too much about it. I merely wanted to go home.

GUMB: At that point you were homesick?

KUNERT: Yeah. 'Cause nobody was with me, you see? Nobody that I knew, and I felt real bad. Want me to tell the truth, don't you?

KUNERT: Yeah. At that point you wanted to go home. You really felt the whole . . .

KUNERT: That's the first time I was a little bit homesick, because I was stuck there.

GUMB: Do you remember how much the fig newtons cost? How much they were?

KUNERT: I think a quarter, if I remember correct. Just one of those . . .

GUMB: So you had, what, a Deutsche Mark? You had German money?

KUNERT: No. I had dollars. Remember my aunt sent me twenty dollars with my ship's ticket, I told you? Yeah. And I changed. And that's all I spent. The rest I took to her and she didn't like it that I changed it.

GUMB: Spent it, right. Spent that money. So, um, uh . . .

KUNERT: It's all the truth, because my hubby knows all that.  
I told him all that long ago.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about the examinations, the  
medical examinations, what they, how they looked at  
you? Do you remember anything or what they looked  
for?

KUNERT: Well, they sure didn't bother me much, probably looked  
in my eyes, asked me a few questions, and that was it.  
Because I was the picture of health. Rosy cheeks,  
like a little country girl.

GUMB: Do you remember anything else about any of the  
examinations, any kind of tests or anything?

KUNERT: No, uh-uh. No.

GUMB: Did you pretty much stay in one part of the Island, or  
did they move you around at all, or did you pretty  
much stay in one spot, one area?

KUNERT: Yes, of course. They didn't let us go any place.

GUMB: Right, right.

KUNERT: And it was just from Friday to Monday. Boy was I glad when my aunt was announced that she was gonna pick me up. Oh!

GUMB: How did you get the word? Do you remember, how did you get the announcement?

KUNERT: Oh, one of the people told me, you know. And when I saw New York, and it was hot as Hades, I didn't like it one bit. And then I came to Baltimore, boy, and my aunt had a third floor bedroom for me, and I didn't like that, it was so hot. You can imagine, 12th of July, how hot it was. Ay, ay, ay. Then I wanted to go back home, but it was too late.

GUMB: Where did your aunt meet you? Do you remember?

KUNERT: Right at Ellis Island, young man. I couldn't get off unless she came.

GUMB: She came by ferry boat or something?

KUNERT: I presume. And then she took me to a cousin of ours in New York. We visited a little while and then we went by train to Baltimore, Hampton Station. I got

sick on the train again. See, I had inner ear trouble and didn't know it. Nobody ever told me until much later, and that's why I had motion sickness.

GUMB: Yeah. Do you remember how much you were -- what sort of possessions you had, how much you were carrying on the trip?

KUNERT: Oh, my father had, he knew how to weave, and he weaved a suitcase for me. Only it was bigger than a suitcase. Remember, honey, that thing out of reed that we had, that my father made for me? All my worldly possession were in there, which wasn't much.

GUMB: Yeah. So, um, then you, how long did you stay in New York?

KUNERT: Not even a day because we were in Baltimore that evening, just visiting with the relatives for a while.

GUMB: Right. And, uh, do you remember what your, you began to talk about your first impressions of New York . . .

KUNERT: It was hot and disgusting.

GUMB: Do you remember how you got from the Battery up to your cousin's house, how you traveled?

KUNERT: By taxi. My aunt, who was very frugal, 'cause she's long gone, she called a taxi, that's the only way we could get there, from the boat to the cousin's house.

GUMB: Yeah, this was a, uh, a, uh, automobile taxi?

KUNERT: Yeah, I think it was a yellow cab.

KUNERT: Yeah, 1923. That wasn't that long ago. So where was your cousin's house?

KUNERT: In the Bronx. That's all I remember. Bronx. That word stuck in my mind. The street I couldn't tell you any more.

GUMB: Okay. So, and then you took the train down to Baltimore. And what were your first impressions of Baltimore?

KUNERT: Uh, a big city. See, I came from a little, little, city, you know. Everything nice and green, trees and everything, and I came to a big city coming to New York, and a big city coming to Baltimore. That was my first impression.

GUMB: And where did you settle here? Where was your aunt's house here?

KUNERT: Oh, 25-26 Boyd Street, she lived, a three-story house she had.

GUMB: Uh, and, uh, what did you start doing when you arrived in Baltimore, what did you start, did you go to school?

KUNERT: I was here one week my aunt got me a job working for very wealthy people, I told you. And she didn't tell them how young I was. Of course, they thought, she must have told them I was eighteen, and I was there a year, and I told the Madam today's my sixteenth birthday. She said, "Marie, you were eighteen when you came here." I said, "No ma'am." By then I knew enough English. So my aunt fibbed so I could get a job, evidently. But we went to the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia for four weeks and that was beautiful.

GUMB: How did you . . .

KUNERT: And the house where I lived was 3600 Springdale Avenue, and the name of the people was Block, Hugo Block. He had, uh, honey, how do you say a car display? Yeah, he sold Kangler and Cleveland little cards.

GUMB: What kind of cars?

KUNERT: Kangler and Cleveland automobiles. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) What darling? Very expensive, and it was on Cathedral Street, where his display office was. Yeah, I remember that.

GUMB: So, he was a wealthy man.

KUNERT: Yes. Very nice to me. Boy, I was so dumb and they treated me so good.

GUMB: How were you dumb?

KUNERT: I had never worked in a home where there is maids, me, a cook, a nurse girl, a laundress. You know, you've got to know something to work for people like that. But they were nice and kind.

GUMB: What did you have to do? What were your duties in your first job?

KUNERT: Make beds, wait on the table, wore uniforms. They dolled me all up.

GUMB: Where were you staying at this time?

KUNERT: Where was I staying? Living with them.

GUMB: Oh, you were living with them. Oh.

KUNERT: Them days you were a live-in maid. You had a nice room. Got off once a week on Tuesday, half an afternoon. Big deal. That was some experience.

GUMB: So what did they, did you know English at this point, or . . .

KUNERT: I knew only a little, a smattering of it when I came States side, but I learned real quick 'cause they had three children, and with them I learned.

GUMB: By the way, on Ellis Island did you speak English to every, to the officials, or what?

KUNERT: Nobody asked me anything. Uh-uh. I wouldn't have known enough to hold a conversation when I came over. I only knew some words, you know?

GUMB: I wonder, how you got the message that, for example, your aunt was there. Do you remember how you could have gotten that news?

KUNERT: Come to think of it I should remember that, shouldn't I? They must have told, somebody must have known German and must have told me.

GUMB: Because you didn't have any English, you didn't have enough English. So, uh, when, how long did you still feel homesick, or was there a time when you no longer felt homesick, or . . .

KUNERT: When I met him, the following year. Then I was no more homesick.

GUMB: The following year.

KUNERT: Yeah. We met a whole year later.

GUMB: And how did the two of you meet?

KUNERT: In the Aryan Park, on a Sunday. They had a concert. It was, like I said before, there was nothing to do for young people, because it was blue laws. Nothing for Sunday to do, and they had dances there, German dances. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) The Aryna Singing Society, one hundred and thirty-four years old, darling. Yep, they're still in existence. And the park -- was their park. It was called Arien Park, off of Welden's Avenue.

GUMB: Was that an area there were a lot of German immigrants at that time, or . . .

KUNERT: I don't really think so. It was just a park off of Welden's Avenue owned by German people, and all the immigrants used to meet there for dancing. And I couldn't dance. He could. But he, the day we met he said, "I'm gonna marry you." And he did.

GUMB: They day you met?

KUNERT: Yeah. He said, "I'm gonna marry you." And we got married the following year. My aunt didn't like the idea, so I up and wrote a letter home and my hubby wrote, so they gave permission that I could get married.

GUMB: Your parents? Your parents gave permission?

KUNERT: Oh, yeah. 'Cause you had to be eighteen then, you know, them days, and I wasn't even seventeen.  
( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) Yeah, they were probably afraid that I was having a baby because they had to wait four years and four months before the first one came along.

GUMB: This is the end of side one.e

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is the beginning of side two. Okay, you were talking about how you met your husband, and what kind of papers you needed to get to marry him.

KUNERT: Oh, yeah, permission from my parents, because I was underage and my aunt didn't want me to have him marry me. She wanted her daughter to get hi, so we wrote home and they sent notarized papers so I could get married. And Father Bead of Fourteen Holy Martyrs Church married us, right, Otty papa? He was a Catholic. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) I wasn't. Yes, dear. That's my love.

GUMB: So how did your expectations of America compare with what you found here? How did what you thought you would find in America when you were in Germany, how did that compare with what you actually found in this country?

KUNERT: Well, for one thing, it's so much opener, so much freer, so much bigger than, I came from a little city. I think the most people we had in my city is fifty thousand. Just imagine coming to a big city like New York or Baltimore.

GUMB: Uh, did you, once you finished, once you got married and finished work as a maid, so you didn't work any more after that?

KUNERT: Oh, yeah, sure, told you we didn't have no children for four years. Sure, I worked.

GUMB: You kept working as a maid?

KUNERT: Oh, no, there was a marvelous candy place on, uh, what was it called, Border Street, where I worked, packing candies. I worked at all kinds of jobs, as long as I liked it I stayed. If I didn't like it any more I went elsewhere.

GUMB: How did you get these jobs?

KUNERT: They were very easy to get them days. You didn't have to, uh, how is it today, you have to have papers to go to another job, right?

KUNERT: Uh, well, maybe you have to be a citizen, citizenship papers . . .

KUNERT: Oh, no, I'm not talking about that. They didn't ask you if you were a citizen in them days. By then I could talk English and, I got a job any time I wanted

one. But not as a maid any more. I wasn't very fond of that. I only did it 'cause I had to.

GUMB: So, uh, how many years did you work?

KUNERT: Up until I had, oh, come to think of it, there was a hotel in Baltimore called the Greenwich. That's where I worked, too. I almost forgot. I worked there until three months before my first child was born. It was a very well-known hotel, and I was a salad girl there. Shame it isn't here any more. They tore that down, that beautiful Greenwich.

GUMB: Yeah. Were you corresponding with your family at this time?

KUNERT: All the time. I love to write, so I'm always writing. Still write home. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) No, we didn't. We never had much money, did we, dear?

GUMB: Did they have enough money to come over here? Could they come?

KUNERT: They never wanted to. Not his side of the family or my side. ( Mr. Kunert speaks )

GUMB: Did any relatives follow you, come after you?

KUNERT: No. Not a one. I'm the only one from my side, and my husband's the only one from his side that ever wanted to come. Really.

GUMB: So, uh, did you ever regret it at all?

KUNERT: Of course not. Of course, that is the truth. I'm glad we're here. And during the Second World War we helped our people an awful lot when we were allowed to send packages, care packages. We scrimped and saved to send to them because, you know, they didn't even have food half of the time.

GUMB: Oh, after the war?

KUNERT: Yes, when it was allowed to send packages, we sent all the time.

GUMB: Was there, did you ever get any, this is off the subject a little bit, but during the war, did you ever get any ill feeling from people here?

KUNERT: Yes, very much. Our children. They used to call them little Nazis, and ( husband's pet name ) was working for the government. They called them little Nazis, but we weren't, but we had to put up with it. They must have heard it from the parents and the kids were

nasty to our children. OH, yeah.

GUMB: There really wasn't anything you could do about it,  
or . . .

KUNERT: By way of mouth, that's all we could do. But, you  
know, go ahead, father, what do you want to say?  
( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) They must have heard it  
from their parents. Yeah, kids can be very cruel, you  
know. See, um, during the Second World War, there  
were people that were still crazy about the old  
country, right? And Uncle Sam had a way of knowing  
it, and they came to, they had some acquaintance in  
their house, and rooted through their belongings.  
Nobody ever came to us, so help me. Because, actually  
( husband's pet name ) and I were always for this  
country. ( Mr. Kunert interrupts ) Oh, you're  
talking about the Aryna, when you didn't go for a  
while.

GUMB: What happened at the Aryan club?

KUNERT: He couldn't go for a while. His Major told him don't.  
( husband's pet name ) it's best you don't hang  
around the German club. And he didn't.

GUMB: What was the reason, why they suggested?

KUNERT: Like I told you, there were some of 'em here, although they lived off the fat of the land, they were still from the other side. See, and we were never. So ( husband's pet name ) was warned not to associate with them. They were evidently some at the Aryan because they told him don't go for a while, so eh didn't. Yeah, we didn't have it always rosy, we went through trying times, at times.

GUMB: Uh, could you tell us what you, could you tell us what you did to become a citizen, what was involved in becoming a citizen?

KUNERT: Well, I'll tell you. WE went to night school, but not for long, only long enough to know about, uh, what is it called? House of Representatives? How many senators, how many representatives, you had to answer, you know. But when the questions came up in school, yeah. But then when we had to write out our questionnaire, they didn't even ask us that, you know. It wasn't hard to become a citizen.

GUMB: By the way, did you ever go to school in this country?

KUNERT: No. Just long enough, at night. On Greene Street there was a school right across from the University, on the right hand side on Lumber Street, Greene Street. That's where we went to night school. Just long enough to learn about, uh, what is the word? What is the word?

KUNERT: About the country . . .

KUNERT: About the United States, yeah. The questions didn't come up when you wanted to become a citizen.

GUMB: So you had to take a test to become a citizen.

KUNERT: Yeah. Sure, we had to take a test.

GUMB: And it was a written test?

KUNERT: Mine was written, yeah. Uh-huh. ( husband's pet name ) was too. HE became a citizen, I think, a year after me. We didn't become citizens right away, because I had children, and I couldn't go to night school then, you know.

GUMB: So when did you become citizen?

KUNERT: My paper's still there. No. '64?

GUMB: 1964 was the year you became a citizen.

KUNERT: No. That couldn't be it. Before the war.

GUMB: Oh, wait a minute. 1940. So you had to go to night school to learn enough to take the exam.

KUNERT: Right. That wasn't hard at all.

GUMB: Just, where did you learn to read and write English?

KUNERT: Um, I'm a great reader of all books. And I learned.  
( husband's pet name ) learned by himself, and I did.

GUMB: So you never went to a school where you were taught English.

KUNERT: No, no. Uh-uh. I told you. I went to work.  
( Mr. Kunert speaks ) We weren't no dummies. We were interested, so we learned in no time flat. And I can write almost everything now, all self-taught. Because I still correspond with people. It's good to use the noodle.

GUMB: Do you still have relatives in Germany?

KUNERT: Sure. I have a brother over there and I have one sister. We were six. Three of them died of cancer

the last couple of years. Now we're three left. My brother, my sister and myself.

GUMB: Did you ever hear about how your parents reacted to the fact that you weren't, that you were gonna stay here and that you weren't gonna come back? You know . . .

KUNERT: Well, after they found out I married ( husband's pet name ) and started to have children, they didn't mind. What could they do? I wasn't supposed to stay but a year, but I liked it too well so I never even bothered going back. And by the time I wanted to go back they were gone, see. 'Cause mine died both in '47. So it was a good while later before we ever had money to go to take the trip. You know, when you raise six children, including twins, and we sent them all to Catholic schools, although it wasn't as expensive as it is today, ( husband's pet name ) never made a fortune. Money don't mean anything. It's nice to have, but it's not the most important thing.

GUMB: Do you have any idea what your life would have been like in Germany if you had . . .

KUNERT: Boring. The little city I came from, boy, you could

walk through it in an hour. I always wanted to come State side. Unconsciously I knew he was here, right darling? We had such a good life, thanks to the dear Lord, if we live until August the 1st, we'll be married sixty years.

GUMB: This is the end of the interview with Mrs. Marie Kunert.