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RESIDENCES:

Moore: Good morning this is Kate Moore for the National Parks Service and today is the 14th of July, 1994 and I'm in Salt Lake City, Utah at the home of Dorothy Carlson who came to the United States from Germany in September, 1927 when she was 7 years old. Now why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth please?

Carlson: Okay, I'm Dorothea Forrester Carlson. I was born May 12, 1920. We came to (moved) America September 1927.

Moore: Okay, could you spell your full name please for us? Your first and second name?

Carlson: First name is D-O-R-O-T-H-E-A

Moore: And your maiden name?

Carlson: F-O-E-R-S-T-E-R

Moore: And Carlson?

Carlson: C-A-R-L-S-O-N.

Moore: Okay now what was the town you were born in?

Carlson: (moved) I was born.

Unknown Voice: [not understood].

Carlson: Oh.

Unknown Voice: You okay?

Carlson: Okay. I was born in Chemnitz, Saxony, Germany. That was after the war, the east part of Germany.

Moore: And how do you spell Chemnitz?

Carlson: C-H-E-M-N-I-T-Z

Moore: Okay. And what size town was that, do you know?

Carlson: It was an industrial city, I don't know the population but it was a good size town. Quite a bit of industry in it.

Moore: What was your father's name?

Carlson: Ernst E-R-N-S-T.

Moore: And what was his occupation?

Carlson: In Germany he was a railroad conductor. I don't know what he did, well he was in the service World War One. He was a like an orderly to the colonel or general, I forget what rank the officer had but had to take care of his clothes like a valet.

Moore: And what was his personality and temperament, your dad? How would you describe him?

Carlson: (Moved) Dad was very kind.

Moore: Mhmm and is there a story, how would you describe what he looked like?

Carlson: He was good looking. He was dark; dark eyes, dark brown eyes; dark black eyelashes; he was short and fat. (moved) This is a funny story. We lived in New York and this was back in 1938 I think, dad had an Oldsmobile, a big four door Oldsmobile. And we used to take rides on Sunday, Sunday afternoon, go up Hendrick [sp] Hudson Parkway across the Hudson Bridge and go up on the New Jersey side, up toward West Point. And this was a day in June and the traffic was terrible, bumper to bumper. We were moving slowly but there was this bumper to bumper traffic. We didn't realize until, oh half way up, that it was West Point Graduation. And here a motorcycle officer came up to the car and he says good afternoon mayor, come pull up. Follow me, follow me, follow me. So at first, dad thought what did I do? You know, just watching the traffic. Well he pulled out and followed and we went with the motorcycle officer into West Point and got parked and because dad looked so much like Mayor La Guardia.

Moore: (both laughing) That's a great.

Carlson: Very often we'd be in places in New York and people would stop and look. Was that the mayor? We'd walk through central park Sunday afternoon, (moved) always go through central park and people mistook dad for Mayor La Guardia (both laughing).

Moore: What about your mother, what was her name?

Carlson: Her name was Ella, Ella Erna.

Moore: Ella, how do you spell that?

Carlson: E-L-L-A

Moore: And Erna?

Carlson: E-R-N-A

Moore: Mhmm. And what was her maiden name?

Carlson: Fisher. F-I, I think it's F-I-S-H-E-R or F-I-S-C-H, I'm not sure on that.

Moore: [superposed] Alright, and what was her occupation?

Carlson: Mother, housekeeper.

Moore: What did she look like?

Carlson: Mother was very fair skilled, she had of auburn hair, blue yes.

Moore: And what about personality and temperament?

Carlson: She was easygoing. She was kind, loving, mother was not quick to lose her temper, at least not with me. I don't remember her ever, you know, getting real angry.

Moore: Mhmm. Is there a story about your mother that you associate with your childhood, anything she did?

Carlson: Well yes, mother in the early years when we first came from Germany, say in 1928, 1930, 29, 30, mother, women at that time did a lot of work at home, sewing hand sewing. Sewing garters, you know the fancy garters women used to wear just above the knee, and you get so much a dozen, usually cents you know. Probably a half a cent to per garter that you sold. When mother would be doing a lot of sewing and I can remember sitting around this big round table that we had, mother would sit there with her work and I'd do my homework, dad would read the newspaper or a book and Margaret would do her homework too.

Moore: Hmm.

Carlson: So.

Moore: So she was industrious in that sense?

Carlson: Yes. Uh-huh. Well and then too, they were newcomers to this country. They took advantage of every opportunity they could have but they worked hard.

Moore: Mhmm.

Carlson: It wasn't sitting back and say well the mailman is gonna bring me my government check.

Moore: Yeah, but what about brothers and sisters?

Carlson: There were just the two of us. We had two daughter-eh, two sisters that died in Germany. That was in 1923 and I can't remember either of them.

Moore: Uhuh and your sister's name, your surviving sisters' name is?

Carlson: Margaretta. [sp]

Moore: Margaretta?

Carlson: Uh-huh.

Moore: Oh, Margaritta. [sp]

Carlson: But I call her Margaret.

Moore: Margaret, right. (Carlson laughs). Now, what do you remember of your house back in Germany? Anything?

Carlson: Not, no. We lived in an apartment building, in an apartment house and our lights were gas-lights and the meter was out in the hall and you had to put a token in and use your gas-light. Very often the light would go out and mother or dad would hurry and put a token in there and get some more light for us.

Moore: And how, what about plumbing and toilet facilities and things in that house?

Carlson: They were like at the end of the hall and maybe and I couldn't remember or I can't remember how many apartments were on each floor. But we had we had a [tape appears to jump here, not understood] that you'd hang up on the wall you know. At least that's how I can remember it. But the toilet was communal.

Moore: Mhmm. Now did you have a garden?

Carlson: No.

Moore: How many rooms, do you remember, were in that house? The apartment that you were in?

Carlson: Probably four. Because my sister and I shared a bedroom and mother and dad had a bedroom and there'd be the living room, kitchen.

Moore: Who did the cooking in your family?

Carlson: Mother.

Moore: And what was your favorite food as a child? Do you remember?

Carlson: Just about everything. There were some vegetables I didn't like, still don't like, but mother made us eat them.

Moore: Did you help cook at all?

Carlson: Not that I can remember.

Moore: What about the kitchen? Do you remember the kitchen in that house? In that apartment?

Carlson: The part I remember is they had a little coal stove, cook stove, you know. And mother had a coffee grinder, they bought their coffee in beans rather than ground. She had this coffee grinder hanging up on the wall and I went to help her so I went to grind the coffee but the chair was, one leg was on the floor board on the edge there and it tipped and I fell onto the stove. I still have the scar right there on my arm if you notice and on my lip.

Moore: Oh yeah.

Carlson: And I burnt my throat, my neck.

Moore: How old were you then?

Carlson: I think about five.

Moore: Now what was meal time like? Do you remember? How did the family organize its meals?

Carlson: I can't remember breakfast and lunch noontime meals. Dad was not there but our night meal which was the important meal, Margaret and I would sit at the table, I'd help her and she being the older she had all the chores to do and I got away with nothing. And then dad, we'd always have prayer before meal, said blessing.

Moore: Did you say your prayers at night too?

Carlson: Yes, uh-huh.

Moore: Now what about your grandparents? Were they nearby?

Carlson: I never met my grandparents. See, the family disowned them both and I never got to spend any time with my grandparents or I can't remember any. I can remember when my grandmother died, we went up to that small town where my mother's mother lived and what I can remember is the hearse being driven by horses and everybody walked behind the hearse to the church, from the house to the church. Then after that, that afternoon, the kids, we children were playing and there was this mill stream, you know they had the water wheels going and they had steps down to it and the kids went playing there so I joined them, I went down the steps and lost my balance and I went down the mill stream three blocks down, almost drowned.

Moore: Oh no. No what was religious life like in your family's then? What denomination were your parents?

Carlson: They were Lutheran and then they joined the Mormon church, the LDS church yeah.

Moore: And what led up to that? To them joining? What happened?

Carlson: I imagine they had missionaries from the church come and call on them. It was right after the two sisters died.

Moore: And do you think that was, there was a link between?

Carlson: I think that was a deciding factor. I'm not, I can't say for sure, I'm just surmising from what

Moore: The atmosphere at home?

Carlson: Right, uh-huh.

- Moore: Uh-huh. Now being Mormons did you experience and religious persecution or prejudice of any sort in Germany?
- Carlson: I couldn't tell you about Germany, no.
- Moore: Now did you go to school in Germany?
- Carlson: Just first grade. Like kindergarten here.
- Moore: And what do you remember of school?
- Carlson: Very little. They had like a slate (clears throat), excuse me, a slate board, that you'd carry to do your writing on.
- Moore: Mhmm.
- Carlson: Chalk, and then you'd have a sponge on a string to wipe it all off and then you'd carry that back and forth.
- Moore: Did you have any English instruction before you came?
- Carlson: (extended n-sound), I didn't, my parents did, they took some English classes before they came here.
- Moore: What about, how did you entertain yourself as children?
- Carlson: I played with dolls, read a little, sang a little bit.
- Moore: Now tell me, how did you come to the United States? Who decided to come?
- Carlson: That I believe it was mother and dad, they just decided well let's go to, they had planned on coming to Utah, going to Utah.
- Moore: And why Utah?
- Carlson: Because that was the center of the church, that was the LDS church.
- Moore: Yeah.

Carlson: It was Zion and they figured well we'll go to Utah. And at first my dad's relative, I think it was his aunt, somebody, they were going to sponsor and loan them the money for all of us to come over. And at the last minute, I wanna say like the last of April/May, they said no we can't send you the money because the family had disowned them so they couldn't be on outs with the family. They, so well dad had enough money for one person to come over and he says I'll set up an apartment, I'll get an apartment and get a job and then have my family come over. (coughs). I wanna cough in here.

Moore: Mhmm.

Carlson: So then, this is how dad came to America first and he landed in New York because his relatives lived in New York. And I called my Aunt Ella and Uncle John. Uncle John I think helped dad get a job.

Moore: Where did they live in New York? Aunt Ella and Uncle John?

Carlson: They lived in Corona, Long Island.

Moore: Mhmm. Now, do you remember yourself coming, how did he leave before you did?

Carlson: He left in June, he came over in June and then we followed in September.

Moore: Do you remember getting ready for that voyage?

Carlson: Yes, see we had, the family had given up the apartment, sold most of their belongings or furniture and things and we had moved in with an acquaintance, a friend, I shouldn't say acquaintance, a friend, a very close friend of my mother's she was a widow. She just lived there with her son so she said I have room and you can live with us, Mother Margaret and I.

Moore: She was in the church, was she?

Carlson: Yes, uh-huh.

Moore: Mhmm. Now what do you remember about coming over here? What do you remember about leaving, do you remember leaving or?

Carlson: That's not to clear, I was on ship board, how I got there I'm not sure. I got there.

Moore: [superposed] What do you remember about on ship? What do you remember?

Carlson: I got seasick, very seasick and the doctor says children don't get seasick but I was seasick, I've spent quite a few days in the bunk.

Moore: And where did your boat leave from?

Carlson: I don't know.

Moore: Okay. And do you remember the accommodations?

Carlson: The name of the ship was the Westphalia.

Moore: Westphalia, okay. And do you remember, what type of accommodations did you have?

Carlson: To me, as I remember, it was like a closet. There were two, an upper bunk and a lower bunk, and then another bed where my mother was. Then we had a sink that fold down.

Moore: Mhmm.

Carlson: You know, and-

Moore: What about the food?

Carlson: Well for a few days I couldn't tell you anything about food.

Moore: Do you remember anything unusual happening on the ship?

Carlson: Yes, one time, and I couldn't tell you how long it was out, how long we had been on the water, but the ocean was very very rough and then they had

to anchor, they said they had to anchor to wait out the storm because it was what they call a seaquake, ocean floor and it was quite rough. The boat rocked this way and that way and every which way. It just and then two, we're playing with some of the children on the boat. They had a cargo hold down underneath, the bottom of the boat you know and they had that kind of like a canvas on the floor. Well the sailors, the ship's captain told a couple of the sailors to pump the air underneath the canvas so it was like a bubble and we'd jump on that and run back and forth and fall down and get dirty. (Carlson laughs)

Moore: Now, how, did your mother get seasick as well?

Carlson: Yes, uhuh. My mother was sick.

Moore: And you were traveling with your mother, your sister and who else?

Carlson: Just and the passengers on board ship.

Moore: Now who do you remember, do you remember what you took with, did you take anything special with you?

Carlson: Well we had luggage, cases, clothing, we didn't take any furniture that I know of, a few knick knacks, a few things that were personal.

Moore: [superposed] Like what? Like?

Carlson: The birth certificates and death certificates from the two dead sister, some of the pictures, the photographs that the family had from their family, and-

Moore: Did all those survive the trip?

Carlson: Yeah, just the three of us.

Moore: (tape appears to jump) Safely.

Carlson: Yes, but where they are now I don't know.

Moore: Alright. Now what do you remember, do you remember seeing land for the first time or the Statue of Liberty?

Carlson: Well yes, and I don't know what I was doing, but I think I was one of the few, one of the youngsters, everybody else was looking and yelling and screaming and I wasn't that excited about anything, I waited until Momma went to take me there, you know? To the [not understood].

Moore: (superposed) What was her reaction?

Carlson: She was happy, she says well we've made it, we've come and then we get into Ellis Island. Well, we're onboard, the boat's docked, the pilot boat comes and you know, tows the boat up to the pier up the Hudson River I guess the battery wherever. And then we sit there and wait and wait and wait and a youngster at seven, that is the hardest thing you know. I think that is about the only thing I can remember is a lot of waiting.

Moore: [interposed] Do you remember going into, how you got to Ellis Island? And why you were there?

Carlson: Well I understand, now I could be wrong, but to me it was everybody that was not a citizen of the United States, that were immigrants, had to go to Ellis Island and we got on like a ferry and it took us to Ellis Island and I was amazed at the size of this building, the hall, you know, the height, everything. Well I'm seven you know and everything looks so big and there are these wire, not wire, they're kind of like steel scissor type, like the little barricades you put on top of stairs to keep toddlers from falling down the stairs. This was, but they were big, they were clear up to the ceiling and when they closed them it clanked you know and you'd look now they've got me penned up in here you know but everything was so big, so enormous.

Moore: [interposed] Mhmm. Was it, what were the conditions, were they clean, dirty, what?

Carlson: No, everything looked very, to me it was clean. The floors were like kind of a marble or Teresa [sp] type floors. It wasn't like our bus stop, our depot here where people spit, gum stuck on the floor and that, I didn't see any of that at Ellis Island.

Moore: [superposed] Were you examined at Ellis Island for physical examination?

Carlson: Margaret said we weren't but I thought somebody examined us either the ship's doctor, but I can't say for sure.

Moore: Mhmm. How long were you at Ellis Island?

Carlson: I think just hours, probably.

Moore: [not understood, tape seems to jump]. Did your father come to get you then?

Carlson: My dad, he from the pier, took a pilot boat from the pier over to Ellis Island and he came and met us and he said there was some discrepancy, a little difficulty but Dad could understand the language a little bit and Mother too. Not too fluently, she could talk a little, because they did learn some of the words in English but a lot of the words that they learned was please; tell me; thank you; how much, you know. And then Dad and Mother, they had little dictionary, pocket dictionaries that had the German word and the English word for what they wanted to say and they'd always look in this book.

Moore: What work did you find, your father find in New York?

Carlson: He was wor, he got a job as probably a machinist apprentice with Caldwell and Company, now they made huge electrical chandeliers for the post office; for the train station; for the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, they made these fancy light fixtures.

Moore: And when you first went to New York, what were the conditions that you lived in? What, where did you live?

Carlson: We moved into the apartment that Dad had for us.

Moore: Mhmm.

Carlson: (whispering) Excuse me.

Moore: That's alright.

Carlson: And it was four rooms, It was like a little palace to me, you know. You know, we skipped around.

Moore: [superposed] Why?

Carlson: Well it seemed so nice and clean and everything was strange, new and different, you know.

Moore: [superposed] How about toilet facilities? Did they?

Carlson: They were in the apartment. Hot and cold water, of course the water tank was in the kitchen and you had to light it but it was there you know.

Moore: And you stayed in New York with your family how long?

Carlson: From 1927 until 1940.

Moore: And then, where did you go from there?

Carlson: We came to Salt Lake.

Moore: Was that your dream to come to Salt Lake? You mentioned earlier that you wanted to come from the beginning to Salt Lake.

Carlson: Right, well that was the parents', they always wanted to come to Salt Lake.

Moore: And how did your parents adjust to life in the United States?

Carlson: I think quite well. Of course like I said, they were starting anew, their parents, their families had disowned them so they had no ties in Germany. Why live in a city, see their parents weren't in anywhere near Chemnitz.

Moore: Mhmm.

Carlson: So why live in an area where you're with strangers? You may as well go with total strangers and have your religion in common.

Moore: Mhmm. And how about you? How did you learn English? Did you have any problems as a child?

Carlson: Well, probably a little bit at first but I think everybody [not understood] kindergarten, first grade, [tape sounds like it jumps] Started in kindergarten, first grade and-

Moore: How far did you go through school actually?

Carlson: All the way through.

Moore: To High School?

Carlson: Uh-huh.

Moore: And what, tell us a little bit about the course of your life? You met your husband, how'd you meet your husband?

Carlson: I met him here in Salt Lake, actually he worked just east of where I worked on Second South.

Moore: And is he a member of the church as well?

Carlson: Yes, uh-huh.

Moore: And did you marry and have children?

Carlson: One son, yeah.

Moore: And what's his name?

Carlson: Gary.

Moore: And what's your husband's name?

Carlson: Auburn.

Moore: Auburn.

Carlson: Mmm.

Moore: When you look back on your parents' life and their decision to come here, how do you view it? Do they made a good decision?

Carlson: I think so, I think they were happy. They had to, Dad always had work. He had a good job, he worked hard, but he tried, he learned the language like I say, they Mother and Dad at home we speak English so we all learned to speak the language. Then afterwards (traffic noises) they'd talk in German so that I wouldn't and Margaret wouldn't forget the language, you know. But if you don't use it, you, I can understand it but speaking it only comes when I'm angry and then it's fluent.

Moore: So you basically think it was a good decision for your parents to come here?

Carlson: Yes. Especially since after they left, after they left the situation, the political situation over there, my dad would never have stood for that. He-

Moore: [superposed] Have you ever thought about going back to live ever?

Carlson: No, I have thought of going back to visit the country, to see where we were from but-

Moore: So do you, how do you identify yourself now, in terms of nationality?

Carlson: Naturalized citizen.

Moore: So you think of yourself as American?

Carlson: Right.

Moore: Alright. I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for giving us the opportunity to speak with you and we'll send you a copy.

Carlson: [interposed] Thank you.

Moore: This is Kate Moore, July 14th 1994 in Salt Lake City, with Dorothy Carlson signing off for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.

END OF INTERVIEW