

A Veterans Oral History
Heritage Education Commission
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Lorraine Gerberding
Narrator

James Puppe
Interviewer

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JP: This is Jim Puppe speaking, P-U-P-P-E. It is an oral history conducted with Mrs. Lorraine, L-0-R-R-A-I-N-E, middle name Elizabeth, E-L-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H, Gerberding, G-E-R-B-E-R-D-I-N-G. Lorraine's maiden name was Froehler, F-R-O-E-H-L-E-R. Lorraine was born on September 9, 1921. The interview is being conducted at her home at 710 28th Street North, Fargo, North Dakota. And Lorraine, it's a beautiful day today, isn't it? The sun is shining.

LG: It is gorgeous. We've waited for this.

JP: Yes. Lorraine, where were you born?

LG: I was born in a little town named Eden Valley, Minnesota. It's approximately 35 or 40 miles from St. Cloud, I believe.

JP: Let's start with your mother's side. Do you know anything about your grandparents on your mother's side?

LG: The only grandparent I ever saw was my mother's father; and he was in his 90s, died at the age of 94, I believe; and I was still in grade school at that time.

JP: What do you remember about him?

LG: I remember a shock of the most beautiful white, wavy hair you've ever seen. He was a frail man and, of course, he was old at the time that I came into the picture. And that's the thing that's very outstanding. I came from German heritage and he spoke nothing but German. I understand that when we

moved to St. Cloud, I could not speak English. I had always spoken German. But my parents did no longer spoke German in the home and I lost it completely. So I really didn't have the opportunity to discuss anything much with my grandfather.

JP: Where's he buried?

LG: In New Munich, Minnesota.

JP: Now on your father's side, his parents – you did not meet, right?

LG: I think that my father's father was still living when I was born, and I have just a foggy recollection of a Grandpa Froehler, but nothing that's really of any consequence.

JP: Where are they buried?

LG: They're all buried at New Munich.

JP: Oh, they all are buried there.

LG: They are buried there. Yes.

JP: Now what was your mother's maiden name or the last name of your grandfather?

LG: Rieland, R-I-E-L-A-N-D.

JP: What was very first childhood memory that you remember?

LG: I think it was climbing up on my father's knee when he came home from work in the evening. I remember that so vividly, just sitting there for a little while with Dad.

JP: What type of work did your father do?

LG: My father was at that point in time, he was a bed setter for the granite quarry in the granite quarry at St. Cloud. He left there and became a policeman and was with the police force until he retired. I think it was '65 or thereabouts.

JP: So what city was he . . . ?

LG: In St. Cloud.

JP: So you moved to St. Cloud or did you . . . ?

LG: We moved from Eden Valley, where I was born, to St. Cloud. I have one sister who was about 13-and-a-half-years older than I. When she started high school, my parents moved from Eden Valley to St. Cloud so that she would have a better school to attend, they felt.

JP: What are some characteristics about your father that you remember?

LG: My father was a very generous man and very concerned for others. He was usually doing something that was – and a great sense of humor.

JP: Just by talking to you over the telephone and short acquaintance that we've had, humor is an important part of your life, I can see.

LG: It is that.

JP: Did you think that this had something to do with your father?

LG: Oh, I think so and we always looked for the funny side or the upper side of a situation, particularly, if it wasn't a great situation to begin with.

JP: Very important.

LG: It's a wonderful thing to have grown up with ... makes my life a lot easier.

JP: And I notice you have a smile when you say that.

LG: I do. I feel very positive about things.

JP: Yes. What can you tell me about your mother?

LG: My mother was always there for us. A good homemaker, she just tied everything together. And my dad was probably a little more short-tempered or less patient, but Mom had her way of just getting it all settled and down in place. I really had a very good childhood in the early years.

JP: How many siblings were there in your family?

LG: I had one sister and one brother. The brother died at age two. I think it was something congenital. They had taken him to California for his health and he died out there. And, of course, this was before I was born.

JP: So what year was that, would you say?

LG: I was born in '21. You know, I really don't know. He was ... I don't know.

JP: But this was before you were born, is that correct?

LG: Yes.

JP: So you have no recollection . . .

LG: No, I have no way of . . .

JP: And he's buried in California?

LG: He's buried in California.

JP: Your mom and dad are buried where?

LG: At New Munich, Minnesota.

JP: What school did you attend when, in your younger years?

LG: I attended the elementary school that was directly across the street from our home until I was in sixth grade. I had a strong desire to go to the parochial school. But back in those days we would put our car up on blocks – they called it. You know, to take pressure off the old rubber tires and all.

We walked in the winter months and my father felt that I was too young to walk that mile up to the grade school. But in sixth grade, I was allowed to transfer into the parochial school system. So from there I went to Cathedral High School. And I attended St. Ben's College for one year prior to going into nurse's training.

JP: What memory would you like to share about your grade school? Do you have, you remember a particular teacher or a friend or some activity that you can recall?

LG: I laugh, because I'm remembering something that's really crazy. I hated tomatoes.

JP: You what?

LG: Hated tomatoes. I did not like tomatoes. I would more or less almost refuse to eat them if I could get by with it.

JP: Now, was this during the time . . .

LG: This was in grade school. You wanted a memory of grade school and here it comes. With living directly across the street and our kitchen faced the school, so I'm sitting at the kitchen table eating and looking across at the school. And it was a day that we were having a party that afternoon at school, and I had gone home for lunch and intended to leave my tomatoes there but Mother had another idea. She said, "Okay. You don't eat the tomatoes, you don't go back to school this afternoon. You can miss the party." I ate the tomatoes. It's one of my favorite foods now. When I think of grade school, I think of the tomato episode. Isn't that silly?

JP: Why did you want to go the parochial school?

LG: Well, I have a very deep-seated faith. I like to have my faith incorporated in school and in anything that I'm doing.

JP: So you felt this as a child?

LG: I did.

JP: Were your mother and dad both religious?

LG: They were good Catholics. I should say they are, because they sacrificed a great deal to have the religious experiences and make it to church and . . .

JP: So did your sister attend the parochial school as well, or just you?

LG: No, she did not. She was a nurse, too. She was trained at St. Mary's Hospital in Minneapolis and she was a VA nurse in later years.

JP: A Veterans' Administration nurse.

LG: Yes, she was a VA nurse in St. Cloud.

JP: When you went to the parochial school, did you enjoy school very much?

LG: I loved school.

JP: What particular subject did you like?

LG: Mostly math and sciences.

JP: Did you socialize when you were in high school, as well?

LG: Yes, high school at that point of time was much different from now. We didn't have a prom and that sort of thing, but I had classmates. We would go skating together for example. There was lake right in town in St. Cloud, Lake George; and they had a warming house available during the winter months. So we went skating and we'd go to a movie now and that sort of thing. Hayrides were another thing that was fun.

JP: How would that be conducted in the city?

LG: Well have to ask the Methodists. I had a friend who was a Methodist. And every fall her church, they'd get the hayrack and all the hay and all the kids together and the church members' kids and the friends, and we'd just have a great time on the hayride.

JP: So in high school did you have any particular interest or were you planning for your future?

LG: I think that I probably always wanted to be a nurse. I think my classes, you know, anything that I took was geared toward nursing.

JP: So what year did you graduate from high school?

LG: 1939.

JP: How many were in your class, roughly?

LG: Oh wow, a hundred some. We were a sizeable class.

JP: And again the name of the school?

LG: It's Holy Angel's Parish. Cathedral High School is what it was called.

JP: Cathedral High School in St. Cloud.

LG: And it was at Holy Angel's Parish.

JP: So upon graduating from high school, what happened then?

LG: I was not old enough to start nurse's training that first year, so I worked for a year. I went to St. Ben's for a year, worked a year; and then I started training. And I finished nurse's training in 1944.

JP: What type of work did you do for for one year after high school?

LG: I worked for an attorney. They had a daughter that I cared for and light housework and more or less, just a companion.

JP: Was this in St. Cloud?

LG: For this girl, this was in St. Cloud.

JP: Did you live at home during this time?

LG: I did.

JP: Then the following year, you went to nurse's training?

LG: Right.

JP: And what school, again, was that?

LG: That was at St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota.

JP: So tell me a little bit about nurse's training.

LG: Nurse's training was an undertaking because we had to do all of our classwork, as well as work shifts on the floor. So it was difficult.

JP: Was it a two or three-year program?

LG: I have to stop for a minute – we had a three-year program. I'm not sure about that. I don't remember.

JP: Did you live right at the hospital at the time?

LG: Yes, I stayed right there.

JP: What I know about nurse's training years ago, they worked you very hard.

LG: Oh yes, we worked hard. We'd get up and go on duty and serve breakfast and give some baths, and then you'd have classes and you'd go back on duty during the supertime and then back to studying and back down to put everybody to bed.

JP: You took the the R.N. exam after your. . . .

LG: Yes, there is a state board.

JP: State board, and that was immediately after your graduation?

LG: Right.

JP: So 1941 the war was just starting, what was happening there?

LG: Well, I was still a student in nursing at that point. I graduated in in the fall of '44 and I enlisted while I was still a senior in training. And then, as soon as training was completed, I went into service.

JP: Did you go down to the induction station or how did you go about this?

LG: I do believe I did but, you know, I don't exactly remember what the process was at that time.

JP: So you were inducted then or you volunteered?

LG: I volunteered.

JP: What do you remember the date or the month?

LG: My memory is not . . .

JP: Well we can check those records.

LG: I can look up some of this, too, and find some of these things. But there are some days that I remember much better than others, and this is not a great day. Make a note of what we want.

JP: Once you went active duty, where were you assigned?

LG: I went down to Fort Carson for basic training.

JP: Now were you commissioned right away as a second lieutenant?

LG: Yes.

JP: So since you were a registered nurse, you were commissioned?

LG: Right.

JP: What did you do at Fort Carson?

LG: We took our basic training.

JP: Tell me a little bit about basic training. What did they have you do?

LG: I remember climbing the rope ladder and out on bivouac and that sort of thing. They really kind of ran us through what other service personnel were trained with. And rightfully should be, because we were expected to be out with the troops in all situations.

JP: So how did you deal with it? Were you enthusiastic?

LG: Yes, I enjoyed the service. My parents were very hesitant about my going into the service, and that was concern for me. I enjoyed every minute of service, really.

JP: What was the reason for joining the service?

LG: Well the reason I went into nurse's training was to help others; and, at that time, I thought that helping the service people was probably priority on my list. You see, the war was in progress while I was in training. So I felt that was where I should expend my energies and help.

JP: Did you have any idea that you would go overseas after basic training or what did you think?

LG: I knew that there was a good possibility that would happen.

JP: So what was your attitude toward that?

LG: Well, I knew when I went into the service that I would accept any assignment that they gave me. And, I think my philosophy in life is to have a positive attitude toward anything that I do because it makes it easier. Especially those things that you don't like to do very well.

JP: But what do you do to get that positive attitude now? Most everybody would like to have a positive attitude but how do you mentally make that process to be positive?

LG: Well I think you have to work at it. There must be someone and it could be my parents that instilled in me the fact that if you accept whatever you need

to do, do it well, and try and enjoy at least part of it. You'll be a happier person.

JP: Back to the military service; now, where were you assigned after you completed basic training?

LG: **Let's see, I was assigned at Fort Snelling, so it would have been up to Fort Snelling.**

JP: What was your assignment?

LG: **We had a OB Department for the wives of the servicemen that were stationed there; and prior to going into the service, OB was my preferred field in nursing, so it worked out well. I worked in the OB Department there until my orders came to join the evac hospital.**

JP: The evac hospital?

LG: **That I went overseas with.**

JP: So the evac hospital was that a group that was just forming up?

LG: **It was. We were the 139th Evac.**

JP: You received assignment then for where overseas?

LG: **We went to the European Theater.**

JP: Were you granted leave before you went ...?

LG: **We had a 30-day leave prior to going overseas.**

JP: What month and year did you go overseas?

LG: **Went over in March of '45, I would think. And we were only over there until August. We went into the concentration camp in Austria; and from there, we were sent down to Marseilles, expecting to be assigned in the Pacific Theater.**

We sailed from Marseilles early August. We were three days out at sea when the Japanese surrendered. So at that point in time, they directed our convoy, we were one ship in three in the convoy. And our ship came back to the United States. The other two proceeded on to Manila and they were – oh,

what do I want to say – troops that stayed on – can't think of the word I want to say right now.

JP: The ship was on its way to the Pacific Ocean assignment and the war was over so they turned around and came back.

LG: Sent us back to Boston, right.

JP: So did you hear about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki then?

LG: Oh, I'm sure we did. We had good correspondence. We were kept pretty well informed.

JP: I know a lot of European troops, they were getting ready and some of them were on their way, like you were, to the area around Japan; but then the war was over and reassigned.

LG: Right.

JP: So what's your opinion about the Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the bombing of those cities?

LG: You know, I really, I don't even like to get into that.

JP: That's certainly fine. When you left the states and went over to Europe was it a ship that you were on?

LG: It was.

JP: Do you know the name of the ship?

LG: I have no idea.

JP: A lot of people on it?

LG: Yes, ye there were a lot of people on it.

JP: When you landed over Europe, what was the port that you landed in?

LG: We landed in Le Havre, France ... northern France.

JP: So what happened there?

LG: We were staged there, maybe a week or so ... 10 days. I remember in this area, that it was a humongous, beautiful monastery, where we were located while we were there. We were probably there a week or 10 days and then they started moving us on. And of course, I toured Europe in the back of a truck. You know and we never knew where we were going until we got there.

JP: Were there a lot of other nurses with the group?

LG: Well there were 40 of us in the group that I was with. There was more than one evac hospital on the ship that took us over. So I can't tell you how many.

JP: So from France and after you landed, where did you initially go?

LG: Then we proceeded across Germany. We ended up in Austria.

JP: Into Austria ... what city do you remember?

LG: Yes, it was Ebensee. It's a little town in the Austrian Alps ... very, beautiful location. It was a couple of hours drive from Salzburg. I remember because one weekend, this third Army was celebrating its organization anniversary; and they invited the nurses in our unit to come to Salzburg for the weekend. We were picked up in Duisenberg cars and transported from our campsite to Salzburg. And gosh, that was my first drink of milk, or a sheet or any of the conveniences of home, that I had seen since we went overseas. They just treated us royally. It was a fun weekend and they have a beautiful theater in Salzburg. Salzburg is a cultural center without a doubt.

JP: Was there any contact with the enemy in any of these places?

LG: No, it was so late.

JP: You mentioned earlier about coming upon a concentration camp. What can you tell us about that?

LG: Well this camp was located just outside this little town of Ebensee. I do not believe that it had a name, as Dachau did. However, it was equipped with crematorium, gas chamber, all of the horrendous things Dachau had.

JP: What was going on at the time that you entered this concentration camp?

LG: At this time, there were no American soldiers. It was European people and we were to get them all back to their homelands. As soon as they were all diverted from the concentration camp, we also left the camp because that was when we were heading for Manila.

JP: Who was in the concentration camp?

LG: Mostly European, almost any nationality. Corresponding with one another was a difficult problem. Unfortunately, I had many times wished that I had been able to retain my German ancestry in language, because that would have been such a help to me.

The thing that I did was among the people that we were caring for, I found someone that spoke English and German, and then even among the displaced people there, they had set up a system of conversation with one another, too. Somebody would speak Italian and another language and they'd find this, so they would have one common language and go from one to another and by the time you got three, you could speak with almost anybody of any language.

JP: Were you performing your duties as a nurse inside the concentration camp or outside?

LG: Yes, inside.

JP: Could you tell me a little bit about that?

LG: Oh, wait a minute. No, we weren't inside the concentration camp. We lived in this little town of Ebensee and then we were transported by truck up to the outer skirts of this little town where this camp was. And, I don't remember the rest of that question.

JP: Were there people in that camp?

LG: Yes, there were.

JP: How many were there, would you say?

LG: I don't know.

JP: A large number?

LG: There were oh, there were hundreds.

JP: Were they adults, any children?

LG: They were adults. And, you know, they were so starved and abused. The young fellow that I found to do interpreting for me, in fact, I think he spoke something like four or five languages. And the ones that he did not speak, he'd find someone with whom he shared a language, so that we could continue.

JP: So you were there as a nurse?

LG: I was there as a nurse.

JP: And then you had a translator that was helping you from German to English, would you say?

LG: Yes, that was where we were going.

JP: So there were no guards at this concentration camp when you were there?

LG: No.

JP: You had all these people inside the concentration camp, probably no direction. Am I wrong?

LG: Pretty much.

JP: So you were there medically to help them?

LG: Right and food.

JP: Could you tell me a little bit about what type of care?

LG: Many of them had been so starved that their stomachs were not able to process normal foods. We had kind of a gruel or porridge sort of thing to get their stomachs to start to digest foods again ... on a gradual basis. And they had no clothes. The more fortunate ones had a belt of some sort and they would literally whoop on the next guy if he had something that they wanted, you know. They would tie cardboard on their feet to protect when walking. They didn't have shoes. Oh, it was, it was horrendous.

JP: Now you said these people were European what?

LG: Yes, I'm sure that they were people that did not accept the Nazi rule. And my understanding was that there were a lot of highly intelligent people there, doctors and what have you. Oh, I started to say this young interpreter that I had, I don't think he probably was more than 20 years old, but he looked like he was 60-ish. You know just skin and bone and so drawn and ...

JP: Where did you get the food for these people? Did that come from the United States?

LG: Oh, yes I'm sure. It must have.

JP: And how long were you there?

LG: We were there a very brief time. We were there from March until July. In July we went down to Marseilles and they staged us for the Philippines and we sailed. Let's see, I think that surrender was the 14th of August. And we were four days out at sea, I believe when the surrender came, so then we left in early August.

JP: At the concentration camp, I imagine over the period of time you were there, you saw some improvement in these people's health.

LG: Oh yes.

JP: And were there others that just didn't make it?

LG: Oh, when we first came in there were quite a few that died, you know. The thing that was happening was the wheels got moving so that these people were taken from the concentration camp and returned to whatever facilities their countries had for their return or their care. For us it was it just a matter of taking care of them until they were no longer there.

JP: Were crematoriums there as well?

LG: Yes.

JP: Do you know if they were used?

LG: Yes, they were. In fact, you could still smell burned flesh. It's a horrendous smell.

JP: Were there any railroad tracks going in and out of the concentration camp?

LG: I can't tell you. I don't know.

JP: What were the structures inside the camp, any housing for these people?

LG: There were kind of like shabby-things. We didn't see a lot of it, but I recall the wooden-shack-type thing and the beds. Because they'd have two or three of these very, very skinny men on the same bed, only a bed is a slat of wood.

Forgot what I was going to say after that. You know, it's hard. It's really hard to get back into all of that misery and think about it.

JP: I appreciate what you're doing.

LG: Yes.

JP: If we can just move on, I think there are some real interesting information in there that for historical purposes.

LG: Oh, I'm going to try to pursue it. I have a feeling that after we're finished with this, and I'm here thinking about [unclear] many things will come to mind. But I'll make notes and we'll get back together.

JP: Now these people that were in the concentration camp were malnourished.

LG: Very much so.

JP: They must have been in that camp along time?

LG: I'm assuming so. I have no way of knowing.

JP: The guards already had left, right?

LG: Yes.

JP: Do you know anything about?

LG: I have no idea. But I'm certain that they scampered as quickly as they could when the Americans came in.

JP: So this is still difficult for you? You were a nurse, right?

LG: Right.

JP: You were trained to be around sick people, dying people. Do you think about this much?

LG: As the years go by, I think about it less and less. Something that really perturbs me about this is, when I think about it and, you know, there are those that say there was no Holocaust, that really bothers me. After seeing all that horror and torture that those people endured, I haven't tried to deny.

JP: Did you ever go to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC?

LG: No, I haven't. I haven't had the opportunity.

JP: We're getting a little competition from the plane.

LG: Yes, we are.

JP: Anything else you'd like to share about your experience at the concentration camp?

LG: I had so much empathy for those poor men that had endured all they had.

JP: Were they appreciating your help? Could you tell me about that?

LG: Yes, I think that they were very appreciative.

JP: What kind of gestures would they give you?

LG: They had ... a smile.

JP: A smile?

LG: A smile coming from one of them.

JP: Did it warm your heart?

LG: Oh, my yes. You look in the eyes of people that have been so horribly tortured; and if you can see just a little gleam. It makes such a difference.

JP: And you caught that, didn't you?

LG: I did, but there were times I wouldn't have understood anything he said, but I understood the look in his eyes.

JP: Where were you when the European war ended?

LG: Well, let's see. That was in '44 ... right? No, I can't remember right now. I know that I was on duty in the hospital when war was declared.

JP: When you came back to the states then, after you left the concentration camp, did somebody else take it over or ?

LG: The concentration camp, there wasn't anybody else there.

JP: Then what happened after you left the camp?

LG: After we left the concentration camp, we went back down to Marseilles. We staged in Marseilles, left Marseilles and four days out at sea the Japanese surrendered. And then we came back to the United States.

JP: Where did you harbor when you came back to the United States?

LG: In Boston.

JP: Tell us what transpired from Boston, thereafter in your service until the time of discharge.

LG: We were sent sent down to Durham, North Carolina. There's a general hospital unit, I believe, in Durham and there briefly. Then I was sent down a burn center hospital in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. We did a lot of the skin grafts and that type of thing.

JP: From the soldiers that were ?

LG: Yes, they were, you know, healing injuries and they did a lot of graft. For example, I remember this one fellow had tubed grafts coming from his ear and he was casted so that this graft came down close to a large area on his leg.

JP: So how long were you at that station then?

LG: Actually not very long because I was discharged in August. I don't remember.

JP: Where were you discharged from active duty?

LG: At Fort Snelling.

JP: Were you glad to be released from active duty?

LG: I was ready to be released, yeah.

JP: Let's back up a little bit. When the ship came back from Europe, were you glad to arrive back in the United States?

LG: I was.

JP: What kind of feeling did you have?

LG: Oh, gosh, you know, how does a kid feel when he gets a chance to go home after being away ... after not necessarily wanting to be gone.

JP: Who else was on that ship?

LG: Oh there were a lot of troop personnel. I think there were three evacuation hospital units. I know there were a couple of band, musical units, whatever they were, because we would have dances sometimes aboard ship in the evening and different bands would play.

JP: That was an uplift.

LG: Yes, it was kind of fun.

JP: Were you discharged on your request or was your enlistment over at the time?

LG: We were given the opportunity to make the choice of whether we wanted to continue on in service or wanted to be released. I really was only there to help during the wartime.

JP: So you were discharged at Fort Snelling and what happened then?

LG: I went home to St. Cloud.

JP: How did you find things there with the family?

LG: Actually, you know, surprisingly enough there didn't seem like a lot of changes. I can't explain that, but it seemed like I just kind of left all this service-type living and went back to being a civilian at home. That was a very easy transition.

JP: Did you start working then at the time when you came back?

LG: I did. It was very briefly, because my husband had been over in the Pacific Theater. And let's see, I had been home just a brief time when he came back from the Pacific Theater, and he was home on leave, and I was on termination, I think we had 30 days, or something like that, on termination. And we decided that we were going to be married in May.

JP: May of 19 . . . ?

LG: Forty-six.

JP: Now how long did you know him?

LG: Actually, we met on a train between Kansas City and St. Paul; and this is while I was stationed at Fort Snelling. He went to the Pacific Theater; I went over to the European Theater. We corresponded a lot. Wrote a lot of letters but I can't say that there was anything that would indicate love letters in this. We just corresponded and were good friends. We learned a lot about each other, though, obviously, in that correspondence. When he came home he called, and he asked if he could come up to St. Cloud for a week to visit.

JP: Where did he live then?

LG: I was in St. Cloud. My parents were still living there.

JP: How about your husband then?

LG: His home was in Watertown, South Dakota. So he came over to St. Cloud and spent a week with the family and me. And I don't know, things just really clicked, because we drew up house plans during that week. Then we went back.

His father was extremely bigoted in some areas and one of them was against Catholics. And, of course, with my strong Catholic faith, he was concerned about how his father would accept all of this. So we went back to Watertown to see what would happen. Bless his heart, Grandpa never ever said a word negatively, or positively either, for that matter. He just accepted the whole business, you know.

So I was going to go back to work – in fact, his parents were the ones that said, “why don't you work in Watertown instead of St. Cloud?” They had a large home that was about a half a block from the hospital and offered to let me have a room at their home. So I did that and then we decided that we may just as well go ahead. We were ready. So we were married in May and

we built our home the following year. We built a basement home in Watertown the later part of that year. We lived in our basement for a couple of years, saved some more money and built the upstairs.

JP: What church did you get married in?

LG: In St. Mary's in St. Cloud.

JP: So you went back home to get married?

LG: Right.

JP: What was your husband's first name?

LG: Elmer.

JP: What type of work was he doing?

LG: When we were first married, he installed wind chargers, which was electricity to farmers. And he did that until that was no longer – well rural electric came into more prominence. Then he managed the paint department at Montgomery Wards for a couple of years and then he started as a salesman and he was in sales most of the rest of his ...

JP: And what did he sell?

LG: Building hardware.

JP: Were you working in the early stages of your marriage then?

LG: Back in those days they didn't have ICUs. There was a lot of private duty nursing and that for critical things. And so I never turned down a private duty case if there was an accident or after surgery someone needs private duty nurse. If someone needed a nurse, I always would take the case. And I also did the relief nursing for our family physician when his clinic nurse would go on vacation and wanted time off, that sort of thing, and for some of the other in the OB department at the hospital I did part-time work to relieve. But that was it. Other than that, I wanted to stay home with the children.

JP: How many children?

LG: We have eight.

LG: It was wonderful. It was a handful. With Dad on the road, we basically had a weekend father, but he was an excellent father.

JP: So you're home during the week, Monday through Fridays, with the children. Did you raise a garden back then or what did you ?

LG: Yes, back in Watertown we did have. The garden was full length of the house. It was a good-sized garden, canned like crazy. We even canned our own vegetables, you know, green beans, this, that and the other thing.

JP: So what was a fun activity when the kids were real small and your husband came home? What would you do?

LG: One of the crazy things ... we had this beautiful lake in Watertown and bless his heart, after being on the road all day, one of the first things of the weekend was to have that ride around the lake on the weekend just as family. Take our time, always stop and have ice cream cones with the kids.

JP: At the Dairy Queen?

LG: Well I don't think we had Dairy Queen, per se, but there was a spot for an ice cream cone. More A&W I think in those days.

JP: How did you all fit in the car?

LG: We had station wagon. but that was always one of the fun things that we did was to have that. Fun was quite simple in those days. You were busy, you know.

JP: What was the best memory about say the first year of your marriage? You're living in Watertown. You were working at the hospital. And he was involved with the wind chargers, right?

LG: Right, well actually, I think a lot of it was the fact that we got right into building and working at the basement. You know, we were tied up. We were busy. And it was exciting. It was fun to watch that home develop.

JP: Eight children and now you live in Fargo.

LG: Right, we moved up here in 1985.

JP: Looking back on your life, what is your most positive achievement?

LG: Rearing a family of eight, I think.

JP: I know one of your daughters, Jeannie (sp?). And she's a very positive person, very optimistic and looking always on the good side. Is this something that you would expect from your kids?

LG: Maybe something I did right? Yes, it is. That would have been what I would have wanted them to be.

JP: What was the biggest problem or worry that you ever had in your life?

LG: Oh, I can remember trying to stretch a twenty-dollar bill into a hundred.

JP: When the kids were small, right?

LG: Right, you know, as they were growing up and through the years when you have a gang, shall we say, a group that size to educate and all, it was a challenge, let's put it that way. Necessities were always there and the personal, little extra-special things with kids, periodically, but it was challenging.

JP: So how are things going with you now?

LG: They're going beautifully. I am so blessed to have these grandchildren who want me to be with them. And with my own children, I have a wonderful family. They are just precious.

JP: You're blessed.

LG: I am richly blessed.

JP: Is your faith important to you at this point?

LG: My faith is most important thing. That and family are. That's what my life is about.

JP: Do you attend mass regularly?

LG: Yes, I do. Well, actually right now, because for health reasons there are times that they come over and bring me communion and pray with me; but up until now, I've pretty much been able to get to mass.

JP: Do you have concerns about the future?

LG: Not really. I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the future, per se. I'm into today.

JP: Okay, the present?

LG: Into the present, whatever we can do to make that work well. Then, tomorrow will probably take care of itself. It'll help if we get there.

JP: So you sleep well?

LG: I sleep very well.

JP: Do you have periods of loneliness at all?

LG: Well, there are times – the oldest son visited for a week and he left last Friday. There were a couple of pretty lonely days there. You know, it's surprising when you can have a family of eight and one leaves and there's this big hole. You know, but that's what happens.

JP: Great relationships.

LG: Oh yes. So there are there lonely moments.

JP: How many grandchildren do you have?

LG: I have 14.

JP: If you had a sit down with any one of them, just right at this time, and any advice you'd want to give them? Whether or not it has to do with something personal, religiously, or worldly, just in a short sentence or a short thought; something that's profound. What would you tell them?

LG: My first bit of advice would be to stay close to the Lord. That is your source of supply for everything you really need.

JP: You know, I can tell you mean that and your faith is very deep.

LG: I really do. I would tell them to always be honest and really care for that person next to you.

JP: Do you think they know that from the past relationships that ?

LG: I think they know that and I think most of them really are doing a good job of trying to abide by it.

JP: Are you happy about that?

LG: I am very happy about that. I've been so blessed.

JP: We hear a lot about success in life today. What is your interpretation of success in life?

LG: Well, mine would be that I live each day as best I can. You know, one thing that I try each morning when I get up and say a prayer, is to ask the Lord if I can do something for somebody each day. That's my goal in life.

JP: You have all your life, haven't you?

LG: Yeah.

JP: How do you accomplish this now at this stage, helping somebody?

LG: Oh, you'd be surprised what a telephone call to somebody... I take a minute to make a telephone call to an old friend. There are so many little things that you can do.

JP: So that brightens their day, right?

LG: It brightens their day, yes. Make somebody else smile and it puts a smile in your heart.

JP: And when you smile at somebody it gives them a gift, right?

LG: Right, yes.

JP: Do you believe in a simple life?

LG: Very much so. I think you take a lot of the interest and the beauty out of life when you complicate it.

JP: So you are receiving medical care at this time, right?

LG: I am.

JP: And how is that going for you?

LG: It's going well. I have hospice and they are doing very, very well.

JP: What is the most important decision you had to make in your life?

LG: Oh my. That brings up another whole kettle of worms. Our seventh child has Down syndrome. And the most difficult choice, thing I've ever done is to decide that having her removed from our home ... was the best for her.

She's still living. She stays in a group home. Actually, when she was born, we didn't expect that she would live the first year and certainly not more than a couple of years. Sshe is living in a group home in Wahpeton and doing very well.

JP: Is your life everything you dreamed it would be, or is there some areas that have not been fulfilled yet?

LG: I don't think there's anything that I really wanted to accomplish or experience that I haven't had at least a taste of. I'm quite content with where things are and what's happened.

JP: You have a lot of memories.

LG: I do.

JP: A lot of family support.

LG: I'm a very blessed lady.

JP: You have deep faith. You have humor. You have a positive attitude that makes a complete picture, doesn't it?

LG: This is when you say, "Thank you God."

JP: Thank you, God. How would you like to be remembered?

LG: I'd like to be remembered as someone who cares, someone who is willing to do her share, someone who is extremely grateful for a lot of blessings. You're one of them.

JP: Oh, thank you.

LG: Yes, you warm my heart here.

JP: Well, I enjoyed this conversation.

LG: Thank you.

JP: And I'm very impressed with the positive attitude that you have and what you have gone through in life, as a child, and your contributions to our country by your military service, and the caring for others and representing our country in Europe, by caring and helping others. You're a great ambassador, and I can't help but think that people that you did help at that concentration camp that maybe, if they're not living today, that their children and their grandchildren are.

LG: I hope so.

JP: And you were a part of that. I think you did accomplish a lot; and I think you will be remembered as filling that role of somebody that cared, and as a Christian and somebody with deep faith. And I think your family is proud of you and you're proud of them. And memories are continuing, right?

LG: They surely are, yes.

JP: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

LG: Not that I can think of at the moment. I think we've scoped things pretty well.

JP: Well, I think we're at the end of our interview; and Lorraine, I appreciate the fact of coming over here and having this conversation with you.

LG: Oh, it was nice having you, Jim. It's been fun.

JP: And I was blessed to hear these stories and I wish you the best of health and continue with your great spirits.

LG: Thank you.

JP: And we'll close the interview at this time.