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Tori Lockler: Today is November 23, 2010. I am here with Della Rose Krieger; at birth, Della Rose Neuberger. My name is Tori C. Lockler. We are in Dunedin, Florida, in the United States of America. The language of the interview is English, and our videographers are Nafa Fa'alogo and Richard Schmidt.

Can you please tell us your name? Full name?

Della Krieger: Della Rose Krieger.

TL: Okay. And can you tell us your name at birth?

DK: Della Neuberger.

TL: Okay. And what year were you born?

DK: Nineteen twenty.

TL: Okay. What's your birth date? What's the month and day?

DK: April. April 15.

TL: Nineteen twenty.

DK: Nineteen twenty.

TL: Okay. And where were you born?

DK: In Germany. Dresden. D-r-e-s-d-e-n.

TL: Okay, thank you. And can you tell us your mother's name?

DK: Rose Seidel.

TL: Okay.

DK: S-i—S-e-i-d-e-l, I think.

TL: Okay. And can you tell us your father's name?

DK: Richard.

TL: Okay. And what did your father do for a living when you were little?

DK: He was a—God, what is the name of it? He sold things. He went from city to city, I think.

TL: Okay. And what about your mom? What did she do?

DK: Well, when I was born, she died.

TL: Okay. So, who did you live with when you were little?

DK: I had a brother, who was six years older, and we had a housekeeper.

TL: And what was your brother's name?

DK: Ralph. I guess. I knew him as Ralph.

TL: All right. And you said—is that your only sibling?

DK: Yes.

TL: Okay. And so your father was something like a travelling salesman—

DK: Travelling salesman.

TL: Okay, and you stayed with your brother—and the housekeeper.

DK: And our housekeeper, yes.

TL: Okay. Can you tell us something about your earliest memories, your childhood, or the town you lived in?

DK: Well, it was rough—it's rough to remember what went on in Germany at the time I was growing up.

TL: Okay.

DK: I was thrown out of school, but I had a friend who—I was thrown out of school because I was Jewish, but I had met before when we were going to school a lady—I mean, at that time she was about my age—and we became very good friends. Her name—we called her Puppe; *Puppe* in English is “doll.” And she was the granddaughter of a pharmaceutical industry.

TL: A representative?

DK: Hmm?

TL: A representative in a pharmaceutical—

DK: No, she was more than a representative. She was the granddaughter.

TL: Okay. Okay.

DK: And where we lived, I had to pass her house, but because they had a beautiful villa with a lake and a lot of trees—at that time, her father drove American cars, which was all very—how shall I say?

TL: Upper class?

DK: Huh?

TL: Upper class?

DK: Not on her class; but for me, it was, and I became very friendly. And to the day, she's still in Germany, she went through a lot, but she was here in America several times. And she cannot travel anymore either, but there's a telephone nowadays, as you know.

TL: Well maybe, if it's okay, can I take you back just a little for a minute? Before the war, before you were thrown out of school, what was it like where you lived? Was it pretty there? What was it like?

DK: In Germany?

TL: Mm-hm. Before the war.

DK: Before the war, yes. Well, it was—every country has its pretty sights, and plenty of people.

TL: What was the house like that you lived in?

DK: Oh, it was—it was nice, I guess, [the house that] I lived in, and I remember a few little things. They're still in my hands.

TL: Was the housekeeper nice?

DK: Yes. Well, she was nice to me. The only thing is, and I've told it so many times—see, in Europe, you have your main meal at lunchtime. And she—my tea or coffee, whatever I drank, there was no sugar in it. And our place was a long walk, and I yelled, “There's no sugar in it!” and she said, “Come and get it!” And you know, like all little girls, the heck with you, and from that day on, many, many years ago, in my tea or my coffee I cannot stand sugar.

TL: And how did she get along with your brother?

DK: Well, I guess all right. I can't remember too many incidents that stand out in my head.

TL: And what was your relationship like with your brother?

DK: Very good.

TL: Good.

DK: Very good. He sort of, being six years older, as I grew older, in a way brought me up.

TL: How often did you see your dad?

DK: Not too often, because he was travelling around. But again, there comes Puppe into my life, and through the years I had problems one way, she had problems the other way, but we still became [and] stayed friends.

TL: Do you remember how old you were when you met her?

DK: Well, she is eleven months younger. But we were in the same year, so in the same class. And she—I was her best friend, in a way.

TL: But do you remember how old you were?

DK: Well, how old are you when you are in—middle school, I think.

TL: Middle school? Okay. All right, so around middle school, then.

DK: Yeah.

TL: Okay. And tell me what you remember about her from when you were young together, when you were little together.

DK: Well, when we were young, we were real—like every young girl.

TL: What is that? Tell me what that means to you.

DK: Oy, oy, oy. Young girls, they like the boys, naturally. And she went through the problem of Hitler with me. And like all young girls, she wanted to have a uniform—not that it meant anything, but young girls liked the uniform. She belonged to the Hitler Youth.

TL: So she wasn't Jewish?

DK: She was not Jewish, no. And I went in her house and I decorated her room, but when they were meeting, I knew enough by then already not to be. Well, many years later, she had a problem, too. She was married; her husband left her after the war. But we stayed

friends. She came, she visited us here in this country several times, and she had children, I think. I don't know, two boys and a girl, I don't remember exactly. But to the day, after visiting me here in America, and now she calls me. She said, "Good for the telephones. We still can talk. You tell me what's happening to you." So—

TL: When the two of you were young, did she know you were Jewish?

DK: Yes.

TL: She did.

DK: Yes, because when Hitler came on the street, on the big street—there was a train station, there were bricks, and it was written, "*Della ist ein Jude*," if you understand that.

TL: Can you tell me what it means?

DK: Jewish. "Della is Jewish."

TL: Okay.

DK: And anyway, what comes then? To the point now—

TL: You were telling me—with Puppe, you were telling me whether she knew that you were Jewish, and you said yes, that she knew you were Jewish.

DK: And she did not care. She liked me. Like today, that's what—

TL: And when you said that she was a member of the Hitler Youth—

DK: Yes, because she wanted to have a—

TL: The uniform?

DK: A uniform, yes.

TL: So when there were meetings at her house, did she say anything to you or did you just—

DK: No, she told me there's gonna be a meeting. I knew enough not to come.

TL: Not to stay.

DK: Not to come into the house. I went home.

TL: So, during this time, you're spending a lot of time with her. You're still living with your brother and the housekeeper, right?

DK: Yes.

TL: Okay. And then you told me that you were kicked out of school. And can you tell me what happens from there?

DK: Well, you gotta give me a moment to remember; it's a long, long time ago.

TL: Sure.

DK: Uh—I think quite a few years later, I met my husband.

TL: Okay. Well—go ahead.

DK: Because he was in the army, and there were the Nuremberg Trials, if you ever heard of that. I learned how to sew. I was a seamstress. I needed a profession.

TL: Right.

DK: I knew I had to get out of Germany, so I learned how to sew. And with that profession, I could enter the United States. But my brother lived with another family in New York, and I said—I was working in a dress shop in New York, and the—when I visited my brother to tell him, because my husband—my future husband said, “You can sign up, too. You speak German. Or I’ll put you in my suitcase, or you marry me.” I had known him only ten days.¹

TL: Wow.

DK: So I said to my brother, “I’m getting married,” so he said, “Congratulations.” [DK said] “I’m going back to Germany.” With that, he jumps up and he says, “Oh, no, you don’t! If you love each other, you wait a year.”

TL: Oh.

DK: So, I went back to work, and naturally I was all (makes sound effect). And all of a sudden, the phone call came to me at the store. “Somebody wants to talk to you.” It was my husband. He said, “I’m not going. I’m picking you up. I’m buying you a ring.”

TL: Oh! So you didn’t go back to Germany at that time.

DK: Not at that time, no.

TL: And—go ahead.

DK: Later on, many years later—I mean, a lot of times went on, but I was still in touch with Puppe. But she was looking for me in America; by then, I was in America. And he said, “I wouldn’t let you go back to Germany at that time.”

TL: Your brother said that.

¹Her husband, Hans Krieger, was also interviewed for the Holocaust Survivors Oral History Project. The DOI for his interview is F60-00019.

DK: My brother said that. “If you love each other, you’ll wait a year.” And that’s when all this happened.

TL: And during this time, Puppe is looking for you here?

DK: Yes, for many, many years. She got—how shall I say? She separated. I went to America and she didn’t know where I was, but she had a—I don’t know, was it a friend or somebody? She told, “Please put in a Jewish paper where Della is.” Well, I didn’t read Jewish papers, I read American papers; I knew how to speak English and all that, et cetera et cetera. But where there’s a will, there’s a way somehow.

TL: So do you remember how she found you, or did you find her?

DK: She found me, many, many years later. And she came to—she came over here. And many years later, when the war was over—my husband, we married but we waited the proper time. I went back to Germany, after I travelled to Israel with my husband and all that. But Puppe stayed always in my heart and my mind, and she too—many years later I went back to Germany. I met Puppe and she went with us to the synagogue. What else?

TL: Do you remember—before you got back in touch with each other, do you remember the last time or close to the last time you saw her?

DK: When it was?

TL: Mm-hm.

DK: You know, so many things happened to us. My husband went to the war, went to liberate a concentration camp and all that. So it’s very difficult for me.

TL: Do you remember how you got to the United States?

DK: How I got to the United States?

TL: You said that it was with the sewing career, but how did you get here? Do you remember?

DK: Well, my father had a brother, and many years before somebody from America, a relative—I forgot the name—came to my father and said, “I’ll take one of your boys to America.” And through that, we could come to the United States after I learned my trade. If there’s anything wrong with what I am telling you, forgive me.

TL: You’re doing great.

DK: So many things happened.

TL: It’s okay, you’re doing great. You’re doing great. Do you remember how old you were when you came to the United States?

DK: I came in, I think, 1938.

TL: Thirty-eight [1938], okay.

DK: It’s in my—

TL: So, eighteen?

DK: Hmm?

TL: Eighteen?

DK: I was—I guess I was eighteen.

TL: Eighteen, okay.

DK: I must have been eighteen.

TL: Okay. (coughs) Excuse me. Do you remember other friends that you had, other than Puppe?

DK: Other friends in Germany?

TL: Mm-hm.

DK: Not really, after all that happened.

TL: Okay.

DK: With the Holocaust and all that.

TL: Okay.

DK: I went back to Germany many, many years later. But I am still in touch with Puppe.

TL: So you're still in touch with her today.

DK: Hmm?

TL: You're still in touch with her today.

DK: We cannot visit each other, but the phone. And any—she remembers everything.

TL: How many years were you married?

DK: Sixty-three years.

TL: Sixty-three years. So do you remember what year you got married?

DK: Forty-six [1946].

TL: Forty-six [1946].

DK: Nineteen forty-six.

TL: Okay, all right. When you came to the United States, do you remember who you lived with? You said you lived with—

DK: Yes, I lived with a family who took in people from Germany; they were also German. Two sisters, I think.

TL: Okay. Do you remember about how long you lived with them?

DK: Oh, quite a few years, until—I guess until I—until I got married.

TL: Till you got married, okay.

DK: And then my husband was in the army, Second World War. Yeah, well, he passed away very suddenly, and that is still what threw me. Anything else you want to know?

TL: What else would you like to tell us? Would you like to tell us a little bit about your life after the war, after you were married, about your children?

DK: Yeah, we were—we had a child. If he was born ten years later, they could have saved him. Richard, the child before Jeff.

TL: Okay.

DK: So, life altogether was not a bed of roses, as they say nowadays.

TL: No.

DK: But—

TL: You said “before Jeff.” Tell us about Jeff.

DK: Richard. He was born with a—what do you call it? Oh, God, I forget the words. A blue baby.

TL: Okay, okay.

DK: Because when he walked a little bit he started to get blue, because his aorta was in the wrong place.

TL: Okay, okay.

DK: And I know—I got my license because we had him in the Mount Sinai; you heard of Mount Sinai Hospital, New York? But they couldn’t save him. Today, they could. And then I had another Caesarean, which they don’t say anymore either now, and then I had Jeff.

TL: Tell us about Jeff.

DK: He’s sitting right there. Jeff? He’s, sadly to say, my only son. I wish I could have had more children. But when I need him, he’s there. Hopefully, he has a little further to go now. But I have help, not only—it’s not just help, it’s somebody who lives with me, who’s very good.

TL: What else would you like to share with us? A message you would like to leave the audience with?

DK: A message? As long as you live, try to live on, even if it’s hard. And remember your friends, your children, your grandchildren, great-grandchildren. I’m lucky to have some—three of them, right?

TL: Okay. All right.

DK: I don't think I—it's very difficult, and I can't remember all. I had wonderful years with my husband. We travelled all over the world, practically, to visit. We went back to Germany.

TL: What was Germany like when you went back?

DK: How was Germany like? I mean, everybody can read that in the paper. I remember. That's all I can do, really. Difficulty to see, to walk. Anything else you want to know?

TL: No. Okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate you telling us your story.

DK: You're welcome.

TL: Thank you.

End of interview