

3-31-1999

Strand-Hales, Gisela G Oral History Interview: Class Projects

Jeffrey Howard

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/class_projects



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), and the [Oral History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Howard, Jeffrey, "Strand-Hales, Gisela G Oral History Interview: Class Projects" (1999). *Class Projects*. Paper 66. http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/class_projects/66

Published in: *History 201 Oral History Interviews (1999) (immigrant residents of Holland) (H98-1351)*, March 31, 1999. Copyright © 1999 Hope College, Holland, MI.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Oral History Interviews at Digital Commons @ Hope College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Class Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Hope College. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.

Interview with Gisela G. Strand-Hales
Interviewed by Jeffrey Howard on 3/31/99
History 201 – Larry Wagenaar’s Michigan History Class
Spring 1999 Semester

JH: What part of Germany are you from?

GS: I’m from northwest Germany. Hannover is the town.

JH: Can you describe what Germany was like and what it was like to live there?

GS: As a child? Or when I lived as a young woman?

JH: Both.

GS: Well as a child it was completely different because I grew up in the War. I was a child of the War. And I experienced the War in my hometown. I was five years old and I was evacuated with my mother and my brother to Southern Germany, to Bavaria. And my younger brother was born in the last year of the War, 1944. And my mother had too much with having three children, so my grandparents came for the baptism and they took me back. And I was supposed to stay with them for about three weeks and my mother would have time to recuperate after the birth, but it turned out to be three years, and so these last year of the War, I was in Hannover and the surrounding, and that probably has had a big influence on my life because of the fears of bombs falling, and there was some terrible events. So that was when I was a child. And then when I was getting older, like around eight, we were a family again. My father came back from prisoner of war, and we were a family again. But it was very hard then for everybody. And the biggest thing was there was never any money because things were just so bad, after we had enough to eat. And then when I left, things got better in the fifties. And when I left, I left in 1961. And

I never expected to immigrate, I was just adventurous and wanted to go to America for a year, or I wanted to go to Iceland or to Australia. Well it turned out to be America. But there was no reason to leave Germany in those years, everything was, in fact the economy and everything was good, I really went for adventure.

JH: Was there anything major, other than going for adventure, that prompted you to leave?

GS: Yeah, I met an American at the University and he wanted to marry me, and he was a typical American, where he after two months he thought, “well maybe we should get married.” And I am a very cautious German, and I talked with my parents, and they said “No, why don’t you wait a little bit, get to know each other.” And we did, and I came here to America just with the idea of getting to know him, and then if we would get married, then I would, we would go back to Germany and get married there, I never thought I’d stay in America.

JH: Did you have any concerns about leaving Germany?

GS: At that time? No, because I was so full of adventure. But, when my parents took me to the airport in Frankfurt, the sadness on my fathers eye, I had not seen him cry very often, but he was crying then. And I just thought, “what on earth have I done?” Just that moment of departure.

JH: Did you travel alone to the US?

GS: No, I came with the man I knew, who was going to be my husband later, but we weren’t married at that time. So, I didn’t have that much adventure spirit that I just got into a plane and left.

JH: Why did you choose the United States instead of, say, Iceland or...?

GS: Well, I had applied in Iceland for au pair girl, but they just didn't reply and I also had made other offers to go to maybe Australia with a girlfriend but, that didn't work out either so, well, that's just... this is where the opportunity came.

JH: Where did you first go in the United States?

GS: I arrived in New York. It was... oh, and I first have to tell you something else....why this was such a shock because, we had a charter flight from Germany, and on the charter flight we had unlimited amount of luggage so we could take forty-four pounds or something like this. But, the charter flight fell apart and we had to go finally on a commercial air flight and there was a weight restriction. So what I ended up doing, I wore about three suits on top of each other plus two coats and it was August, and I arrived with all those clothes on in New York in August. And I had never been so hot in my life. I thought I was in hell. I just could not believe it, I couldn't believe the heat, I couldn't believe the noise, I couldn't believe the people, and I couldn't believe the dirt. I... in fact later written some poems about these first impressions. It was so unbelievable and also everything was so fast and so loud and so I thought, "what on earth have I done, why am I here?" And the subway and it was when I got very sick for the first time with the flu. I had never had the flu before and I couldn't get of the subway fast enough. It was just... then we stayed in a hotel which.....because we didn't have much money. And that hotel had and interesting name, "Hotel Paris," and there was nothing exotic about Paris about it. In fact it had a courtyard, an inside courtyard, which I have never seen and

all night long I had the feeling that people were throwing beer bottles out of the windows.

So, it was quite a shock to come to New York in August.....in the heat of August.

Dressed like it is a moderate climate in Europe.

JH Can you tell me why you settled in Holland?

GS Yeah. That is sort of a long about story because after New York we lived in Chicago because I went to the University of Chicago and then I got my MA there. And then I had a child and we went to Florida to teach there two years at an interesting college which was built by Frank Lloyd Wright. Then I decided that I wanted to go to graduate school too, and I worked on my PhD in Nashville, Tennessee. We went to California for two years where my husband had a position, but they would not hire me, because they had a nepotism rule, you can not have two people from one family teach at the university. And so, we had a job offer here at Hope College for both of us....for my husband and for myself. So, that's one of the reason why we were in Holland. I didn't even know where Holland was on the map before.

JH: What were your first impressions of Holland?

GS: Of Holland? After California, I mean everyone in California said "How on earth could you ever move to Holland, you're going to die there in the winter." That didn't concern me. I love it because it was a town which had flowers in front of the windows, had flower boxes, beautiful little back yards, everything looked so neat, and so, really a little European.....not really European but there's a touch of European. I think mostly in the way people had flowers here, and like flower boxes. You don't really see that in many

other places. But, there was also one other impression and I thought “Oh no,” because we were trying to rent a house and at that time. We had two children, my husband and I, and the owner of the house said yes, we can rent it but there will be weekly inspections of the house... unannounced inspections. And I thought “No way am I going to have unannounced inspections,” and be told that maybe I’m not a good housekeeper. So, needless to say, we didn’t take that house. But all together, it was really very pleasant....it was just the physical setting was very nice. And what I, of course, really thought was just the best thing about Holland is this lake. I mean, I had never expected such a big lake that you wouldn’t see the other shore. I thought it’s a little inland lake, of course you can see the other shore of the lake, but, no. So, when we came here I thought, “That’s the only place where we want to live....right on the lake.”

JH: Can you describe some of the problems that you have faced adjusting to life here?

GS: Yeah, this isok, when I was in Chicago, when I was taught at the University of Chicago at the lab school, I had a woman who was my supervisor and I think the people at the University wanted to help me because I didn’t... my English wasn’t that good yet so they gave me somebody who had a German background but it turned out that her family had perished... all her family had perished in the Holocaust because they were German Jews and she had come to America. So, that was my first contact with actually Jewish people. I had no... she was very fair to me, but afterwards when I look back, I think that must have been tremendously hard for her to be working with me for a whole year. And then I didn’t have very many other.....not much like that happened again except when I

came to Holland. I met a young colleague who was a Fulbright Scholar here at the university. And he was my age and the first thing he said to me that he hated all Germans, and he would never buy anything German and he would never associate with anybody German. And I was so shocked because he was such a likeable person. And also he and I were the same generation, we were the same age we were born....we had nothing to do with causing the War, we were children. And I couldn't understand it how anybody can be feeling this way but, he thought it is something which the Germans had done to his parents and his grandparents, and he will never be able to forget. So that was one appearance, and a few other remarks sometimes from old people here. It is better if I don't say right away that I am German. It is better to let people think that I am from Holland and then it's ok. But, some people have really still some strong feelings against Germans, against all Germans. It doesn't have anything to do with me personally, but it's because I'm German.

JH: Is it really difficult living in Holland, that's so Dutch, being German?

GS: It was difficult, but Holland has changed so much. When we came it was really that Holland was like about thirty years ago that Holland was all about ninety-five percent of the people were Dutch. If you look in the telephone book all the Vanders... Vander this and Vander that. But now it has changed so much in these years, and the Mexican population has taken on and also so many more people from other countries. So it has become much more cosmopolitan. But, at first I really thought, "Yes it's very restrictive," and I felt always I had to get away at least in the summers to feel like I'm

sane again, and I'm like more in the world. I have to see more worldly things.

JH: When you first came, how much English did you speak?

GS: The first day when we where in Chicago, I had learned English. I was in Germany, I had studied English. But the first three weeks I couldn't understand a bit, because we had learned British English and this Mid-Western, which wasn't English to me. I didn't think they really were speaking English. So, it took me quite some time to learn it, and I still have some troubles now because I hear... not much troubles, but when somebody says something which I don't quite understand, always the first meaning comes to my mind and only then I have to think well there could be a different meaning to the word because it doesn't make any sense. So only when it doesn't make any sense you think further what's the other meaning. So, I think that we'll always stay.

JH: Another thing, when you came over did you know any people here?

GS: I didn't know anybody except my future parents-in-law. They were the ones that were also my sponsors. And I was absolutely terrified to see or to meet them because they lived in a small town in South Dakota, of about 700 people and when we drove up there I decided I'm not going to go anywhere, I'm not going in, I'm not going to go, I'm just disappearing, I'm not going in. But they turned out to be very, very kind to me.

JH: Where were you first employed?

GS: I worked at the American Express in Chicago. Ah, it was a very odd job because it was when they didn't have any computers or the Xerox machine yet. I had to copy numbers all day long from one book to another book. And, I had to have a test like how accurate

my copying was. And, I worked there for two weeks and I thought, well if I'm going to have to do that for the rest of my life, I'm going to get insane. But luckily, after two weeks, I got a scholarship from the University of Chicago and I didn't have to go back to that job at the American Express. And I studied then for my MA.

JH: Was it difficult to find a job?

GS: Somehow it wasn't difficult, I had a green card. I had an immigration card. So I don't know. I walked just into there and they looked at me and said, "well can you...are you good, can you copy well, do you have good eyes, do you have a conscientious way of writing?" Yes, except I didn't write the sevens and the ones correct so they had to teach me of it. Cause in German you make a line through the seven and the other one, the American seven was the line going up is a German one, because you write one the same way. The way you distinguish them is having a line through the seven. So, I had troubles with this and everyday they would tell me, "No that's wrong...write it again." So there was a lot of frustration. And it was also a sort of frustration with the co-workers because they were very jealous when I told them after two weeks I didn't come back. Well they said they have been working all their life to get there children to the university, and here these foreigners are coming and right away they get a scholarship. I was just lucky.

JH: Is your job here at the college the only job that you've since moving to Holland?

GS: Actually Yes... Yes.... Yes. And I have really never had any other job. I have had an assistantship in the summer at Vanderbilt University. I've done translation jobs, and I've worked in California as a substitute teacher. But, I never considered that any real jobs.

This is the real job I've had all my life.

JH: What's it like teaching here?

GS: Oh, it's wonderful. This is the best thing, which you can imagine. At first I thought "Oh, this is going to be too hard for me, I cannot do it because..." and over the years, it just has gotten better all the time, it's just like ...the best thing about teaching all the students, we have a contact with the students. You know because Sarah has told you that you could be asking me. It is just really wonderful, to be involved with students exploring the world and discovering the world and discovering themselves in the process. It really is... when I think about this that really is a great gift, to be able to do that, and there are not that many professions in the world where you have such a wonderful feedback. You know instantly whether you do something good, or not. You know instantly whether that what you just said is nonsense, or was boring, or didn't come across, or whether it really came across. No body else has to tell you.

JH: How did the move affect you and your family?

GS: My family in Germany? My mother never really forgave me. I think she... she got very ill about, almost ten years after I left, and she was very sad, because she felt like it's a daughters duty to take care of the parents, and she felt like the time when she needed me most, I wasn't there. So, she died very early, I was only thirty and she died, and she was only in her sixties. I still have very bad feelings about it, because I... I never got to know her as an adult, and she didn't get to know me as an adult. So the minute I came home to Germany for visits, I would always be the rebellious teenager again, which I had been

when I left, basically. And so you fall back into that trap, to become the kid again, instead of being the adult. So, I know that my mother had a hard time, but she was on the other hand, very good to me because she sent me everything from Germany, what I needed, and the first year my parents supported me financially still, because the scholarship didn't pay for all of the tuition. And so, and also my mother beforehand had been enormously ambitious for me, because she had started a savings book, which I found after she died, which would be given to me when I get my doctor. So, she's the one that had the confidence that I can do it. My father was also very sad, but my father lived til two years ago. He lived to be a very old age. And I saw him. After I started working, I went to Germany every year to see my parents. All the money I've spent in those years, I could have bought two houses, or three houses, but it's very important that I kept up with my family. So I think my parents were very sad. I mean, why on earth did I have to move away that far. That was their feeling. But my father had forgiven me, my father had come several times. It's not that, that was a big guilt trip.

JH: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

GS: I have two brothers. They come here... or the one, the one has never come, but my older brother has come here frequently. He's coming this summer with his wife. So, that's a nice, good relationship.

JH: What did they think about your moving away? What were their feelings about it?

GS: I think they were at that time, too much involved with their own progress, economic and also professional. My younger brother was still a teenager, so it didn't affect him

anyhow. But I didn't see him grow up, because I left when he was a kid. My older brother was also too much involved in his own personal life, to really make a difference. They liked the man I was going to go to America with. But that was... My parents liked him too. I told them I don't know when I'm going to get married or anything.

JH: What traditions did you bring with you, and do you still have them in your family?

GS: Yeah. When my kids were at home, in fact, it's... ok, first of all I spoke German to my children, even though my husband didn't speak German, and he really didn't like it very much. But it's still... we have a secret language, and we still speak that way now. My children are adults, we speak German. At the table, the way you have table manners, we have continued the way.. I have cooked a lot of German foods. But I think mostly it is at Christmas and at the birthdays that we have the German traditions.

JH: What are the German birthday traditions?

GS: Well, you make a little wreath of flowers around the place setting where the birthday child is sitting, and you make it a surprise, they cannot come to the table till it's all set nicely with the candles at the table, not necessarily, the birthday candles on the cake, that is American, but you put candles around that persons place mat or place setting, and flowers, make a little wreath, and then you put the gifts all around there, and then for the breakfast you have... that's usually the biggest thing, so everybody gets together for the big breakfast, and then of course in the afternoon when there's coffee and cake again, and then a party. But its just the way the day starts, too, that you make it a surprise. They can't come down, they can't come to the table till you've called them. So, a little, a little

surprise building up. I had once an assistant, and I made her a birthday party and she had not grown up with them, her mother had died. She said "Oh, how wonderful," because nobody had ever made that for her. And that's just, that is just what we've always done, and we continue doing it.

JH: What is Christmas like for you?

GS: Oh, Christmas? Christmas was always the hardest, not to be in Germany, because, In America, it's so short. You build up this whole commercialism which goes on basically from before Thanksgiving, and you are inundated with the music in the stores, and you can't stand it anymore. In fact, I refuse to go shopping before Christmas, I will buy things during the year, and I do not go into those crowded shops. But, then by the time Christmas comes... In Germany it starts, you have four weeks beforehand when you have advent and then you sit around at home on Sunday afternoon and have a little sort of get together. You sing songs, and you try to do something together, even if it's just playing cards. We used to make gifts for each other, try that the other person didn't see it. And then Niklaus on December sixth. Of course, that's a big thing when you grow up, and I did the same thing with my children. You put something in their shoes. They put the shoe out, polish it, and then if they've been good kids, something good is in there, and if they they haven't been good, some coal or ashes or sticks or something like this. And later when I did this for my brothers, I would always put sticks in their shoes. And then of course Christmas Eve. So it starts out like this big preparation, the Christmas tree is not up at all. In the afternoon, everybody gets ready, and takes a bath, and gets dressed

up and then we would go to church, like in the afternoon and when we came out of church, everything was dark, and we went home and my grandfather had not gone to church. But when we came home, and the little bell was ringing, and the Christmas tree was ready, there were candles on it, they were lit, and we could go into the living room again, which had been off limits for us all the time. And my parents would always say every year, "Well, this year we don't have enough money for Christmas tree." And the Christmas tree would still be there on Christmas Eve. And then we would have some kind of... a little spiritual ceremony, like where we... we kids had to say poems, then we would be singing with the piano, playing, my mother played piano, we had to sing, then we would read the Bible and then we would open up the gifts, but it would be like... the gifts were, like under the Christmas tree, everybody had a little place, like maybe a tiny table, it was covered so we couldn't peek over there while we had to sing, and then we could open these and have a very fancy meal. And then the next day is the first Christmas Day and all the relatives came to our house because we lived with the Grandparents. And the second day, also a holiday, and then we all went to the relatives house. And the same thing went on, exchanging gifts, and eating and lots of merriment, being happy to be together. And here in America, you have one day, and everything is over, you have to work again the next day, that seems to me, pretty hard. And then the Christmas tree, we would only light the candles when we're sitting there, you don't light it when you're not in the room, or when people are not around. And we would leave it up to New Years Eve, that when we had the last times lighting, and we will only take it

down on January sixth.

JH: How much of that do you still do?

GS: I do still have Christmas, I mean the candles, even though in America everybody thinks it's crazy, but since the children are not, only when they are coming home. When my husband and I are alone together, because we are not really home here for Christmas, we are trying to be either at the children's places, or we take some kind of exciting trip, my husband and I to Hawaii, because it is too sad, Christmas is for children, and if they're only two adults, it is really... then it doesn't come naturally, so its better that you do something else. But I still decorate with the candles and all this, and have a tiny little Christmas tree, but I don't have a big Christmas tree by ourselves, because we haven't been at home for the last Christmases.

JH: What were some of the most difficult adjustments for you to make?

GS: In America? Well, the feeling that you always sit between two chairs. Like you are neither American nor are you German anymore. And so basically, you don't really belong anywhere. Like here, I'm always the outsider, and in Germany, I am the outsider, even though people are amazed that I haven't forgotten my German. And so I'm not that much the outsider, but I have picked the best of two worlds, however, that also means you sit between two chairs. It's very difficult to root, and I finally... I feel rooted here, but it took a long time. It took, really, a long time. I always felt like one day I would just go back again, and I would have the option, I can just pick up and go back to Europe. I tried it a few years ago, but I couldn't really find any comparable professional, and so I

decided oh no, this would be, that would be very stupid to give up this. That's all. Then I think I made that step, and also, the difficulties of the adjusting is to be so far away from your family, when you need to have advice, or when you need to have help. And so you have to solve a lot of these problems by yourself or you build up a circle of friends, and rely on them.

JH: What were some of the things you found easy to do in America, kind of the opposite...

GS: What I find so easy is that nobody cares whether your sloppy or not. Look at my office, you know whether you're a perfect housekeeper or anything like this. I've found that wonderful. I remember the first time I entertained in America, it took me three days to clean the house, and by the time the guests came I was so exhausted, then I didn't want to do anything. And then I finally developed that attitude like, my friends were coming over, they're not looking in through the corners, whether they're clean. And the ones that look into the corners, I don't want in my house anyhow, I don't want them as guests. So the easiness in which people live, but it's also that easiness is a little bit on the superficial side, because I remembered the person who interviewed me in Chicago at the University, the dean, I walked into his office and he had his feet on his desk, and I thought, "What on earth is this," like the president puts his feet on the desk. Well, now I sit comfortably too, you know? So, everything that comfort in that you have the right, basically you can do what you want. You don't have to worry so much about what the neighbors say. And that since in Germany so many people live so close together, and 80 million people in an area which is not much bigger than Michigan. Can you imagine how people live on top

of each other? So you have to be considerate of the neighbors and you cannot play the music as loud as you want to, or anything like this. So, I think that is really great. Also I think that one has opportunities here. I mean there there's, so really, maybe I just had lucky breaks, but that was really good.

JH: Why have you stayed in Holland?

GS: Well, as I've said, because of Hope College, because of the profession I have here.

JH: In what ways have you been involved with the Holland Community?

GS: Over the years, more and more, I have worked with the Habitat for Humanity. I am working in the church, in a group, it's called Stephen's Ministry, and what it means, I am like a companion for a person who has, who's in need of a companion. I've also gone over to the senior, to the Evergreens, no not the Evergreens Common, to the senior center, to the residential area, and there's an old lady living there. She's German, and she had a series of small strokes, and I thought maybe I can help her that she comes, so that her German will come back. I've only seen her once, but I have planned to go maybe like once every other week to see her. It turned out I couldn't talk to her, but she did say German words, but she also said English words, and what I'm gonna do is maybe help her with picture books, because she likes, when I was there, she pointed at picture books, and she talked about her father in German, and she said in the end, "Aufweidersehen" in German, so I think that's the way I can be doing some more things. So, I have been quite involved.

JH: Are you a member of a church?

GS: Yeah. Of the Episcopal church.

JH: What influenced your decision to become Episcopalian?

GS: I think because I went to a Catholic church in Germany. I went for nine years to a Catholic, not Catholic church, Catholic school, it was a private school, and not Catholic, I'm a Lutheran, but my mother sent me to the best school in town, and that was the school. And I think I find this is as a pretty good compromise. I went to the Lutheran church here in town first. And then I went to the Presbyterian church, but I didn't feel as comfortable as I am feeling here. And the main reason is, about fifteen years or so ago, at that time, fifteen years ago, I lost my best friend, who was a Swiss woman who I met here in this country, and when she died, the priest in the church was very helpful, I could really talk to him, and then later I just went on going, and then after my father died. So, like in the times of... hard, the times are really hard, I find somebody who... who talking to that person helped, really. And that's where I'm at now.

JH: You mentioned earlier about how Holland is becoming more culturally diverse. When you see the newer immigrants in Holland, how do you feel?

GS: I feel... I feel different than they do, because I didn't come for economic reasons. I came for adventure, and I know that most of the new immigrants come for economic reasons. But America is a big country, America has a lot of opportunity, it has been that for many generations, so it's now new, in fact. It is sometimes a little disconcerting because, I mean, they used to put a limit to the people that could come from every country, it wouldn't take only like Italians, or Greeks, or Eastern Europeans, or Central Europeans. I

know in the sixties when I came, there was a limit, and it seems now there are so many economic refugees coming, but it's not anymore the limit. I'm not sure how to handle it, because people life in their home country is so terrible, and there is enough chance here, there is enough opportunity here. So I think that isn't any problem, but I have not really got involved helping any of those groups. I'm working... Oh actually, the first thing I'm working on, I'm in a group called... well, we're working for racial unity, and its like, we're just sort of starting it where we're trying to build up some kind of a program that there wouldn't be so much inequality, but I'm not very much involved, and I've gone to one meeting, and so its just sort of being formed now.

JH: Is there a large German community in Holland?

GS: No, but there is a German club in Grand Rapids. I've gone there once, but it is... I didn't feel that comfortable. In fact, somebody said, I went with an American women who, an American couple, and the husband was very much into German things. But it turned out he was only just into the Nazi things, and I was not interested in talking to him about this. And I have found that in many instances, I have even had some students who only took German, and then tried to bring me proudly the paraphernalia which their parents or somebody had bought from a dying soldier or which had picked up at flea markets. And I find that very unpleasant, so. And right here, I've had two, actually three very good German friends here in this town. My best friend in town is German, and I met her about eight, eleven year ago, or maybe eight years ago, something like this. It just was by chance I went out to lunch with a student of mine and we spoke German, and this women

was sitting at the other table, and she just, she heard us and she talked to us, and that's how we met. And then I had one other good German friend here, she moved down to Florida, and I had one other, she died also some years ago. No, it's not a big German community, but the, there's a company in town, which used to be BASF, it's now ChemTron, that was owned by a German company, and at that time, there were a number more German people here who were like in the management, and so. And there are a lot of, there are smaller companies in the Grand Rapids area, there are actually more people, but I don't know that many.

JH: I know in Benton Harbor, there is the D.A.N.K.

GS: DANK, yeah. Oh, I have gone to the DANKfest. I have gone there with the students. It's called Deutsche Americanische Congress, oder sonst noch etwas or something like that. They are, we have gone there to the Oktoberfest, but it is also, yeah it's a good German club, but its this kind of nostalgia, and it's not, they sing about a Germany which, you know, hasn't existed for the last fifty years, the last hundred years. But it's still, it keeps it up, and it's interesting and it's fun to go there and dance and have some German food and drink. It just depends on who you're sitting with. I'm always afraid that I'll, that I, that somebody will only be interested because they're interested in Nazi's, or like something like Neo-Nazi's. There are more groups around than you think, and when I hear what these hate groups, or the militia, the Michigan militia, I'm just absolutely terrified. I can't see how people can be so blind, and even think that there are any good ideas in there. Or like this Aryan superiority, that's really scary for me, so...

JH: What are your feelings about the Asian community?

GS: I've gone to some restaurants. My husband actually, I've been married a second time, he's quite interested, and quite involved, in fact he helped some people at the Buddhist temple which is building up, and he has also gone to the zoning meeting where they were talking about whether it could be built or not. So, he's more supportive than I am. I haven't gone along, but I'm aware of it. I am sometimes afraid though, what kind of gangs are building up there among the young people. And I'm really, pretty scared of that whole development, like among Hispanics, and among Asians. That we don't have a big black population, so the gangs are among those two groups, ethnic groups. But, my husband works with some of the people there, through Buddhism, through meditation. My husband is not a Buddhist, but he's very interested in Asian religions.

JH: Have you seen the newer immigrants coming across any of the same problems or opportunities that you've had, at all?

GS: I think they have greater problems, because I think me being from Northern Europe I didn't really have any problems. The few prejudices I encountered was really from Dutch people, and I can understand it why they had prejudices. I have in general not, not really faced any prejudices, while I think that people who are from Mexico, or from the Far East, they do have a lot of prejudices against them, because people look different. I mean, if I don't open my mouth, people think I'm American. And if I open my mouth, they can still think I'm from the Netherlands. So, that has a big advantage, while you don't think that somebody comes from Mexico, that's from the Netherlands.

JH: Have you had anybody ever try to speak Dutch to you?

GS: Yeah, and I can figure it out... I spent last year, I was bicycling in the Netherlands, and I could actually pick up quite a lot of Dutch. It was really interesting. Yeah, and I can understand it when I hear people speak Dutch because it sounds a lot like a low German dialect. Not everything, but I can make out words.

JH: How do you feel about the Dutch heritage that Holland has tried to preserve?

GS: I think that's good, because that makes this town different than any other town in America. And it, I think, what this town has done is just so great. And the way we look at it, it's a little kitschy. But the Tulip Time is kitschy too, but when my kids grew up here, they were marching along there, and I was cheering them on. It's good, it's good. I mean, this was built on immigrants, why forget this all? Why mix it up completely? We have something special here.

JH: What are your feelings about the Tulip Time Festival?

GS: Oh, it's kitsch. Now I don't come into town anymore, but I do like, actually do eat once in a while. Because that's once a year when you can buy exotic foods, like Greek food or German food, or any kind of food. I wonder always, where do all these food booths come from? There never here, but in Tulip Time, everything is lined up. But the masses of people, no way. And the parade I don't look at anymore. But I like to look at the food booth. Yeah, it's really great to be able to walk down Eighth Street and all of a sudden be able to buy different things.

JH: How do you feel about the Cinco de Mayo festival?

GS: I am not really very familiar with it. But you know, in Germany, you would have the same kind of festival. It's more a political festival. What is the spring? Anything. But it shouldn't take place only, you know, to forget everything what is Northern European. But I think it's a culture, and there's also the Oriental culture, the Far Eastern, that they will have their national holidays. The more we can get the community involved, the more the fear of something strange will disappear.

JH: Do you feel that Holland tries to preserve any German heritage at all?

GS: I don't think so. I don't have that feeling. I guess some restaurants, they put an Oktoberfest, like at the Alpen Rose, but that's an Austrian restaurant, so that's only a gimmick. No, I don't think that they try to preserve it. But, you asked me before about the community involvement. I have worked at that arts... they have an arts fair once a year downtown, on the... in that park. And I've been involved there, and they try to bring, like, people from different cultures, that is more artists, like arts and crafts. So I have volunteered for that. I actually volunteered at the Center for Women in Transition, too. I try to help, but you can't help too much if you know... but I know I'm doing something, which helps a little bit.

JH: Have you experienced any discrimination here in Holland?

GS: Not really, except for what I mentioned before. You know, like prejudice.

Discrimination, I think maybe, the more discrimination because I'm a woman. And you as a student would be very surprised because women faculty are really not paid like male faculty. I started with such a low salary when I came, that all the years I've been teaching

here, I've never caught up with the men, even though I've gotten nice raises, and I get... each year I get nice raises, and I get really nice evaluations. But I think in that case, that's the only discrimination. But I know people are working on it. But I know I'm also never going to catch up because... I should've spoken up about ten years ago, and I said, "Well, you know, I'm really underpaid," and I didn't. And so I makes... you need a push yourself in order to fight discrimination, and I didn't do it enough. But that has nothing to do with my national background. That just has something to do that women earn less money than a man does.

JH: Was it like that in Germany as well?

GS: Yeah, but in Germany they have different... they can get around in a different way because, if you're a wage earner, you are... you get classified in a different way. If you do something which takes small muscles, you get paid in a different type of way, than if you use something which takes big muscles, and so they can get around this. But I mean... I'm not in a profession where I use muscles, I use brain muscles, so...

JH: What have your children gone on to do?

GS: Actually, both my children just got their PhD's. So I find I must have done right there. It took them as long as it took me to get mine, it took me six years to get mine. Then and my children too, but... so they're both professional people.

JH: Did either of them study in Germany?

GS: My son has gone in the summers, he had an internship, he worked, actually, with the government. He in the Bundestag, which is the German parliament. And then he came

back and he's worked then for the Labor Department in Washington D.C. as the expert on German labor statistics. And he works now for the census department, so he has used his German in the professional way too, yes.

JH: So they do speak German?

GS: Yes. My daughter has not used it, because she has majored in sciences. She has used it in translating, or in reading papers, yes, but not in any professional advancement.

JH: Are they very interested in your German heritage?

GS: Yeah... oh they thought at times that when they grew up mother is crazy, or mother is very odd. And especially because I... I was very strict when I raised them, because I was raised in a strict manner. And for example, I limited very much their TV watching, they could only watch two shows a week, and each child chose two shows over two... four full shows, and then we would do this together. But then later they told me, you know, they snuck up on Saturday mornings, earlier than we weren't up and then would sit and watch comics. And then of course when they grew up, they thought that was terrible. How can mother not let them watch this when all the other kids see. But now, my children do exactly the same thing with their children. They don't... my daughter does not have a TV or does not... they have a VCR. SO, you know, whatever I did, I did right. Even though there was a lot of resistance, it would have been easier the other way. But I was at that opinion that it kills brain waves, so too much TV makes people stupid, so... and there's not enough... one doesn't have enough time to really choose it all, so it's better to restrict it and do other things with their children.

JH: What would you say to a friend who was considering moving to the United States?

GS: I'd say do it. Yeah, and I have my assistant... each year we have an assistant from Germany, they all want to stay here. And some of them have stayed here by going on to graduate school here. Yes, it's good, but I think what would be ideal if one could combine it, you know, take some of the things from Germany. There are a lot of things I'm missing here too. What is the great thing in Europe, I don't know whether you've been there, but is to just stroll through the city and then you sit in the sidewalk café and you see people walking by. And also that you can just anytime do something when you really want. On the other hand, we can do here anything, too. But there is enough going on at the college, there's enough going on in town, one doesn't even have enough energy or money to do something all the time. So, the excuse for people say, "Oh, there's nothing to do here," I don't buy it, cuz I'm an outdoors person, you know, I love to be outdoors. That's what I love, my husband and I went two years ago, three years ago to Italy, to Rome and Florence, and that was the best... I want to go back to Florence, it's just... there it's really alive, well we don't have that in Holland, but it's good here! So... it's not Florence, but.

JH: Well, that's all my questions. Thank You.