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Jodie Walker

Katherine Backherms-Thornton

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Jodie Walker

Oral History 685

Transcript Summary: Katherine (Kay) Backherms-Thornton.

*long quote
should be
dropped
down into a
blockquote*

Katherine (Kay) Thornton was born on July 24, 1927. She was born at home in Saint Bernard, which is a community in Cincinnati, Ohio. Saint Bernard is also the area where German immigrants came to settle in Cincinnati. Her family was no exception. ^RMy mother's, mother's parents came from Prussia. Which was a part of Germany close to the Russian border. That's why it was called Prussia. And, I don't know, not sure where her, her other grandparents were from Germany, but I don't remember what part. My dad's mother's parents came from Bodenbod, Germany. It's a lower part of Germany, down the south. His father's parents were from Holland. So, there, we're all German, you know." Katherine does not know what made her family come to America, except maybe they were looking for what every other immigrant was ^a better life.

Katherine grew up with her two brothers, Marvin and Hubert, in her German, Catholic community. She attended the local Catholic schools. German was spoken fluently in her house, by her mother's family, her father however, knew no German. Katherine learned her German at home and then took two years in high school, "cause it was so easy." World War II would come the December Kay turned fourteen. She had just started high school. She dealt with the same experiences most teenagers did like rationing and U.S.O. dances. She would also become personally attached to the combat when her two brothers joined the fight.

Hubert would join the ARMY. He was in an elite division of the infantry. This division was called the 'Bulldog Division'. This division would be dismantled after the Second World War. Hubert's company was ordered to serve over in Italy. Hubert would not return home from this tour of duty. His body would be found in a German foxhole after the war ended. Katherine was the only one home when the telegram came to report Hubert missing in action. She had to go get her mother at a church, card party. Her brother was an MIA for one year and one day.

Katherine speaks proudly about the two purple hearts Hubert has received. The one he received due to his death. An earlier one was presented to him, when he was injured and hospitalized in Italy for a couple of months. Hubert was originally buried in a "makeshift cemetery in Florence, Italy." After the war, plans were made for the fallen soldiers there to be relocated to a military cemetery in Rome. Katherine's mother refused this and opted to have his body returned home.

Katherine's brother Marvin enlisted in the NAVY about a year after Hubert had signed up. Marvin would serve his tour in Guam. "So he worked the CB's it was called. They repaired air strips, stuff like that on the different islands, after the Japanese were gone." Marvin would not see action. He would return safely home. Katherine does not hesitate to consider losing her brother may be affecting her reaction to protestors against war. Her response to the protestors at the airports during the Vietnam War is pretty straightforward. "I thought it was terrible. No, it wasn't, what World War II was like. Everybody had to go through there and they would protest these boys going over seas. Fighting for their country and dying. And then the boys that come home to treat them the way they did? That was terrible. To me it was a sin. 'Cause those boys were fighting for

their country. They were only doin' what they were told, what the government told them they had to do. Just like the Second World War. People got killed then too. Innocent people, but what could you do? And I thought it was terrible that they would treat our men like that. Especially, when they came home."

Katherine married right before she turned twenty-seven. Her marriage would last until her husband Ray, died in 1994. They would have six children together, three boys and three girls. When Kay is asked what her best accomplishment is, she readily replies, "My six children." She is not ashamed of the fact that she was a housewife. She reminisces about a conversation she had with her husband regarding their adult children. "Ray said that one time to me about the kids coming. The kids are, are always coming and going, you know. I said, "Be glad that they love us that much." Really."

Raising her children fell second only to her faith in God. Getting through her first thirty years of marriage she attributes only to her faith. Kay maintains this faith to this very day. "if you haven't got God in your life, well, I just don't think. Everybody's got it hard. I know that. He's never promised a bed of roses to anybody. But, if you can't rely on God when it comes to hardships of any kind, like my, like I said with my life. The way Ray was, those first thirty years, if it hadn't been for my faith in God my marriage wouldn't have lasted. I couldn't have stood it. I probably would have ended up, up on Paddock Road somewhere, it was no easy task and it, it had to be my faith in God that kept me going. And, that I was able to raise my kids the way I did. I was blessed. I really was. And I'm still being blessed."

Katherine was dealt a severe blow when she unexpectedly lost her middle daughter in the summer of 2000. "Mama always said, it's really hard if your husband dies, you

know, it, it is hard. But if you lose a child that you carried in your womb for nine months and raised up, up until their manhood or whatever and then all of a sudden they take, taken away from you, and you lose part of yourself, and you really do. 'Cause even to this day, I just miss Patty so much."

Katherine lives her life having no regrets. She admits her first thirty years of marriage could have fallen into this category, but she was fortunate. The last ten years with her husband made up for those first thirty. She enjoys her home life surrounded by her surviving children, a handful of grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Jodie Walker: This is a test. We are about to do an interview with Kathryn Thornton in her kitchen and this is a test. O.k., let's sit this here so hopefully it will pick you up. I got a big mouth you don't. O.k., so. Kathryn Thornton. When were you born?

Kathryn Thornton: July the 24th, 1927

J.W: Where were you born at?

K.T: St. Bernard.

J.W: St. Bernard?

K.T: Yeah. At home!

J.W: Oh, you were born at home?

K.T: Yeah. I was not born in the hospital.

J.W: Did your parents do that on purpose?

K.T: No, we just, that's what they did.

J.W: Just had them at home?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: That's cool.

K.T: Yeah, my mother had me and my two brothers. My grandmother, I was, she died before I was born but, she was a midwife and she delivered all, mostly all her grandchildren.

J.W: Oh really.

K.T: Yeah.

J.T: But she died before you were.....

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: So, she didn't get to deliver you?

K.T: No. But, that was ok.

J.W: So, you had two brothers, was it just two brothers then and you?

K.T: Two brothers, yeah. Yeah.

J.W: So you were the only girl.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Was that fun?

K.T: Sometimes. [laughs]

J.W: Did they pick on you a lot?

K.T: Oh, all the time. And I was not aloud to get mad at them, 'cause they were only teasin. They didn't mean it. So, I had to laugh it off.

J.W: Oh, that's pitiful.

K.T: [laughs]

J.W: I would have slugged'em.

K.T: Yeah, they used to do that to me all the time. My dad would say, "Oh, their only teasin. Don't get mad."

J.W: Now, your mom and dad are from German descent.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Right?

K.T: Their grandparents.

J.W: Their grandparents?

K.T: Came. My mother's, mother's parents came from Prussia. Which was part of Germany close to the Russian border that's why it was called Prussia. And, I don't know, not sure where her, her other grandparents were from Germany, but I don't remember what part. My dad's mother's parents came from Bodenbod (?) in Germany. It's a lower part of Germany, down the south. His father's parents were from Holland. So, there, we're all German, you know.

J.W: Do you know what made'em come to America? Do you know?

K.T: No. I guess they thought it was a better life. I don't know. But they had it rough. Gettin started, you know?

J.W: Yeah. What was growin, what was growin up in St. Bernard like for you?

K.T: Oh, I loved it.

J.W: Did ya?

K.T: Oh, yeah. Everybody knew everybody else. Of course, the, there were, there were the poor people and the rich people. There was no in-between. In those days, that's the way it was. Anyplace you lived.

But, we got along. And we all went to Catholic school, grade school, yeah. And high school. What else do you want to know?

J.W: Did you like going to Catholic school?

K.T: Yeah, yeah.

J.W: Did you get harassed for going to Catholic school, 'cause Catholics weren't really looked good on were they?

K.T: I don't know I didn't know anybody else other than Catholic kids. [laughs]

J.W: Fair enough. Now did you get to learn, I know, I know your, your mom, I know talked German and I thought your dad did, but you said no.

K.T: No. No, he didn't know a bit of German. I don't know why but, he just never, never picked it up.

J.W: Now, did they teach, were you, were you born in the time period, were German was taught at school for...?

K.T: No, no, no. My mother... was. And my dad too. And I don't understand why he never picked it up, but, uh, they all had, had to learn some German. Because everybody was German. [laughs]

J.W: Ya, that is what I was gonna say. It was probably talked a lot even in the neighborhood. Just between people. So, and I know, that some schools, because there's so many immigrants in that neighborhood they say, "Oh, we're gonna teach German, 'cause if we speak German it would be easier to help them learn how to speak English."

K.T: Yeah, that's the way it was, but uh, no I didn't learn any, I learned, most German I learned was at home from my mom and my aunts and uncles. And, then I took German when I was in high school for two years. 'Cause it was so easy!

J.W: I was gonna say, did you do good in it?

K.T: [laughing] Yeah.

J.W: [laughing] Yeah? Ok, so how old were you when uh, World War II came? 'Cause I know you had a brother that fought in the war.

K.T: Yeah. I was, I had just started high school. I had just turned 14, and then the war started in December. So, I was just, has just turned 14 right before that. So, I was in high school.

J.W: How did the war effect you, being a teenager, going to school, I mean....

K.T: Well, as far as, being able to do things, to go places, it wasn't so bad. Um, there was a lot of rationing, of clothes, and food, and stuff. That we had to.. I can, I had just emptied a, a coffee can with some grease, left over grease, here at the house this morning. And I was thinking of that when I threw that coffee can away, 'cause that's what we use to do. We saved all our old grease in coffee cans and that, and then we'd take them over to the grocery store and they would give that to the, for the war department. And that's what they made their bullets and stuff with. From the grease and that, and the ... for the bullets and all that kind of stuff.

J.W: Wow, now, did um, I know they had a lot of, we talked once about like, the U.S.O's dances, stuff like that. But I guess you were kind of young.

K.T: Yeah. At that time yeah. I didn't, wasn't able to do that till I was in high school. A senior. And that, 'cause I was 17 then so I was aloud to go.

J.W: So, did you go when you were 17?

K.T: A couple of times. Yeah, we went over to Fort Knox.

J.W: Oh, did ya?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: And was it fun?

K.T: Yeah, kinda scary.

J.W: Really?

K.T: You know, at that, well, at that young age and all these strange soldiers standin around. And then they'd ask you to dance, and it's should you talk to them? And what do you talk about? You know.

J.W: They probably wanted to play kissy face.

K.T: Huh?

J.W: They probably wanted to play kissy face.

K.T: No.

J.W: No?

K.T: No. No. No. No, you didn't do that. You weren't aloud to. They...

J.W: So, somebody organized it?

K.T: Oh, they had, yeah, they had chaperones, and they kept a close eye. They had a band hall, you know, a place where they had their cafeteria, I guess. Where they had their dances and that, and, you didn't leave that building.

J.W: Oh, really?

K.T: Oh no, no, you weren't aloud to leave.

J.W: Huh! Now your brothers served in the war.

K.T: Yeah, both of them.

J.W: What department's were they in?

K.T: Oh, my oldest brother was in the Army, uh, he was in the, a division it was called the, oh, what was it? The Bulldog Division. It was, organized, during the Second World War, and after the second world war was over that, they, did away with that. They don't, they don't have it anymore.

J.W: Huh.

K.T: It was a special, special divisioning, called an elite division that he was in.

J.W: Well, that sounds special.

K.T: [laughs]

J.W: Do you know what he did? I mean what....

K.T: He was in the infantry. He was. That's all, he went over seas, in Italy. And that's where he died.

Of course, he was missing for a year.

J.W: Oh, I didn't know that. He was missing for a year?

K.T: Yeah, well see they declare him, they got, sent a telegram sayin that he was missing in action. And then they wait a year and a day, and then they declare'm dead. So, we didn't know for a whole year whether he was even alive or not.

J.W: Did they ever find his remains?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Did they?

K.T: Yeah. They found him behind the German lines in a foxhole. And they, uh, talked to his sergeant after the war was over. And he said they don't know how he got over there. But, that's where they found him. So, then he was buried in a makeshift cemetery in Florence, Italy. Then, when the war was over, they

were going to transfer all their bodies to another, regular, uh, military cemetery, in *Rome*. And they sent my mother a letter, asked her if that's what she wanted. She said, no she wanted him brought home. So, they sent him home. Instead of, leavin him over there. So, yeah. A lot of the boys, they did that. Sent them home.

J.W: Now, did your mom and dad have to pay for him to be sent home?

K.T: No. No, that, the service paid for it. If she had waited, and then maybe a year or so later decided she wanted him home, then we would have had to pay for it.

J.W: Oh, ok.

K.T: But, while they were transferring the cemeteries and everything anyway, that's when, she had it done.

J.W: How did your mom and dad take that? Now, was that the oldest child?

K.T: Yeah, it was bad. Mama lost a lot of weight. She was, when we got the telegram about him being miss'in, she was at a, card party up at, at church. And, I was home alone when they came, when they brought the telegram, and I had to go find her. To tell her. So, it was pretty bad.

J.W: Now, was your younger brother serving the same time your older brother was?

K.T: Um, yeah, he went in about a year, year after, the other one. But he was sent uh, he was in the Navy, and he was sent over to Guam, that's in the South Pacific. So, it was just on the opposite side of the world really. So, he worked in CB's it was called. They repaired air strips, stuff like that on the different islands after, the Japanese were gone. And then they would go on to the island, Guam island, and repair all the airstrips and stuff like that. So, he wasn't actually in, any shooting or anything like that.

J.W: Well, that's good.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Now, your oldest brother, he received a blue heart didn't he?

K.T: He what?

J.W: Didn't your oldest brother receive the blue heart?

K.T: Purple.

J.W: Purple heart, I'm sorry.

K.T: Two of them.

J.W: 'Cause you have that, right?

K.T: I've got one and my brother's got the other one. We, he got two of them.

J.W: Oh, did he?

K.T: Yeah. See, he was wounded, once, and he was in the hospital for a couple of months. And, he was supposed to be sent home, on leave, and the day before he was supposed to leave, was gonna come home? His sergeant of their company got wounded and there wasn't anybody to take his place, so my brother took his place, and that's why he didn't get home. 'Cause he took the sergeants place. So, then, they went into battle again, so, that's what happened to him.

J.W: Now, what was your oldest brothers name?

K.T: Hubert.

J.W: Hubert?

K.T: H-U-B-E-R-T

J.W: Now, your youngest brother is Marvin.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Is that right?

K.T: I don't know where she got those names from. [laughs]

J.W: Well, at least she named you Katherine. [laughs]

K.T: Yeah. But she wasn't going to name me Katherine. My mother was going to call me *Lois*.

J.W: Lois?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Did, your dad talked her out of that?

K.T: No, my aunt and uncle took me to church. They had me baptized?

J.W: Uh-huh.

K.T: And, my aunt did it. When she got over to church, she told them my name was going to be Katherine. So, that was....[laughs]

J.W: [laughing] So, she didn't like her sister's idea neither did she? Ok, so now, after doin that, when did you meet Ray? How did, how did Ray come about?

K.T: Oh, let's see how old was I? Twenty. Twenty or twenty-one. We used to go down to the Eagles at St. Bernard, go to dances on Sundays all the time. And that's where I met him. At a dance, down at the Eagle Hall. And we went together for almost 4 years before we got married.

J.W: You really had to think about that one didn't ya?

K.T: Yes. Because religion was involved. See, I was, I'm Catholic, and he was a bapt, he was raised Baptist. S0000, we had couple go rounds about that.

J.W: Did you want him to convert to Catholicism?

K.T: Oh no, no. No, but he didn't want a raise, have to raise the kids Catholic. He didn't think it was necessary.

J.W: And, you let him know that it was absolutely ne.....

K.T: Yes. It was either that, or not at all. He had a choice.

J.W: Did your mom and dad approve of you datin' him?

K.T: They never really said, but I don't think they did. Because he wasn't Catholic.

J.W: That's what I was gonna say, yeah, Catholic.

K.T: At, at that time that's the way it was, or it's, stayed with your own. You didn't. I don't know we just, that's the way our family was. You never. All the other kids were married Catholic and, they married Catholic men, or women, whichever.

J.W: Do they still do it that way?

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, they kinda do.

J.W: Yeah, 'cause I went, went to Mount Saint Joe.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: They do. [laughs]

K.T: They still do.

J.W: Like, I think that's one of their second questions. Are you Catholic? [laugh] Ok, I can't go out with you then.

K.T: Come to think of it, that's one of the first things my mother asked me, "Is he Catholic?" [laughs]

J.W: Is it? [laughs]

K.T: And, I said no.

J.W: And what did she say?

K.T: Well, she wasn't too thrilled but, I was 21, over 21, what could she say? You know.

J.W: Well, that's true. Now, did you live at home though until you married?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Did ya?

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, I didn't get married until I was almost, we got married in June and I turned 27 in July.

[laughs] I was almost 27 before we got married.

J.W: I didn't know that.

K.T: I was an old lady. [laughs]

J.W: Well, yeah! Pretty much. Now, he was involved in something very interesting. I think, were you guys dating when he was doing that? Because he was involved with a....

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, it was called at that time. It started at, at WKRC. The man, uh, what was his name?

J.W: Rod...

K.T: He wrote. Rod, yeah, Rod Sterling. He's the one that started that show, The Storm. And, then when he went to, to California, to Hollywood then they called what? It was still called The Storm, but then later on they, they changed the name, well that's where The Outer Limits derived...from.

J.W: Yeah, The Twilight Zone.

K.T: Yeah. The Twilight Zone. And, that's where he got, Ray got his start, at where he used to work, he used to work at WKRC television. And, he was uh, what you call the floor manager. He ran the cameras. Saw to it that, that, the sets and all that got set up correctly and all that kind of stuff. So, he was really involved in it. He really liked it.

J.W: Now did he, now he wrote, actually wrote some of the stories for, with Rod Sterling.

K.T: Yeah, he wrote along with him. There's one about, was it the old man? I can't remember what it was about something to do with the atomic bomb. And, he was out in the, lived out in the desert and they wanted this man to move because they were going to set this bomb off. And I can't remember just how it went, but it had something to do with the atomic bomb, and they was tryin to get this man to move away so they could, that's where they were gonna set the bomb off, out there in the desert. And they, the whole story revolved around this man. And, Ray said they sat down, they wrote it together.

J.W: Now, when he went to California, he took Ray with him, didn't he?

K.T: Well, Ray went out there yeah. And then uh,

J.W: And now, were you guys dating at the time, when he left for California?

K.T: Yeah, come to think of it. We were. [laughs]

J.W: Ok. [laughs] He was like bye Kay, headin to California.

K.T: That's right, 'cause he, while he was out there, before he came home, he wanted me to come out there, and get married. But, I wouldn't do it. I didn't want to. So, he was out there for, what, about a year and a half, almost 2 years, and then he decided to come back home. So, he came home in, it was right before Christmas, and then I think it was, in June, the following year, yeah, we got married. After he got home. And that's why, well, that's where the religion part comes in. It just, we just couldn't see eye to eye on things and it, it either had to be my way or not, no way. [laughs]

J.W: Well, I don't blame ya. I, I like that idea. My way! Well, you guys were married, how long were you guys married? You guys were married, how many years?

K.T: Uhhh, he's been dead 10 years. We were married in 54, 40 years? Yeah, about, about 39 or 40 years we were married.

J.W: So see, your way worked good.

K.T: Yeah. [laughs]

J.W: Now, the two of you had six children.

K.T: Yes.

J.W: And you got three boys, three girls.

K.T: And three girls. Yes.

J.W: So, you had an even number.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: What was it like raising that many, now you stayed home, you decided, you, you stayed home and took care of the kids...

K.T: Yeah. I didn't have time to go out and work, I had six kids [laughs]

J.W: Well, you know now a days, it's like, if you don't go out and work, you know?

K.T: Well, when I had, Mark, and then when I had the fifth one, Gregg, he was, Gregg was number five, Gregg was born in May, and Mark turned six in June. So, then seven years later, Kathleen came along. But I had five children in six years. So, I didn't have time to go out and work. [laughs]

J.W: No, because you were busy with other things. [laughs]

K.T: Oh, Lord. I tried it after Kathleen got about three years old. I did try to go to work, but it just didn't work out. I had to stay home, I couldn't. I couldn't go out and work and have those kids running around here. So, that's what happened with my six children.

J.W: Well, you did a fine job.

K.T: Yeah, I think they're, they all turned out pretty good.

J.W: Well, one's my best friend, so I have to say yes. And the other one was my step-mom.

K.T: I was gonna say, she's almost your aunt.

J.W: She's only aloud to use that if we're trying to make, if she's trying to make a boy not ask me out and ask her out. That's the only time she's aloud to say that aunt thing.

K.T: Oh, oh ok. Is that the way you did it?

J.W: Yeah. That's the way she always would do it! Good lookin guy come up, and it's like, oh, uh, did I tell you, Jodie is my niece? Thanks, Kathy! Yeah, it worked good for her. So, what was it like though raising a bunch of kids? I mean that's a lot of kids?

K.T: Well, Ray's mom, Memie, came here one time. She was visiting. And she said, "I don't know how you do it with these kids running in and out all day long." [laughs] What are you gonna do? She didn't think I should let all these kids, and then the kids in the neighborhood play too. I said as long as I know where they are, their safe, that's fine. I'm not going to worry about kids running in and out. At least I knew where they are.

J.W: Yeah. Now you raised them all in Catholic schools?

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, I did.

J.W: Now, Kathy went to uh, the regular high school.

K.T: Well, they all went to regular high school.

J.W: Oh, ok.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: So, you only raised'em in the Catholic school, in elementary?

K.T: Yeah, in, in the elementary.

J.W: Now, did your mom do the same with you, or did you only, did you go all the way?

K.T: No. No, I went , I went all the way through. I went Saint Clemmons grade school and then I went to Our Lady of Angels high school. And my brothers went to Roger Bacon. At that time, it was, they was separate schools. Now Roger Bacon and Our Lady of Angels is combined. Their all one school.

J.W: Oh, did they?

K.T: Oh yeah.

J.W: I didn't know Roger Bacon went co-ed.

K.T: Yeah! Oh crimeny, I can remember when I was in high school. At the, Roger Bacon let out before Our Lady of Angels did, about, oh, twenty minutes before we got out. And, the boys naturally would, cars would ride by the school and that. You didn't dare get up out of your seat and look out that window.

J.W: Nuh-uh.

K.T: Oh no, you weren't aloud to do that. [laughs]

J.W: See, I would have been thrown out! You know. I would have been hangin all out the window!

K.T: No. You didn't do that.

J.W: Was that back when the nuns, were still aloud to hit you with rulers?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Patty, always told me the story about the nun that liked to crack her knuckles with the ruler.

K.T: Yeah, when she was in school. Yeah. Yeah, well, no they used to crack us with the ruler. There was, when Mark was in the eighth grade I think, seventh grade. One of the boys drew, drew a picture on the blackboard it was a pig. Because their, their teacher, she was a nun, but she was kind a, she was heavy. She was a really nice sweet lady. And them kids drew a picture of a pig, and put a, a sister pig over the top of it. She took her book when she came into the room and saw that, she picked up her history book and went over to them. She knew who did it. And she hit him along side the head and knocked him clear out of his chair. [laughs] Well, that's the way they used to do, years ago when we were kids. And when Mark and them were kids one of their teachers. I don't know what his name, it was a man, it was in grade school.

He'd pick up an eraser and throw it at them. Mark said he had perfect aim. He'd, whoever he was throwing it at, he'd hit them every time.

J.W: Perfect aim! [laughs]

K.T: I was a good girl. I never got in trouble. [laughs]

J.W: Ok! Ok, grandma Kay. Now, if Patty was here would that story still be the same?

K.T: Yes, I never got in trouble in school. I really didn't. Maybe for talkin once in awhile, but that's about it. I was a good girl. I was too scared to do anything. [laughs] When I was a kid and you got in trouble with, at school, when you got home, you got it again.

J.W: Yeah.

K.T: So, you behaved yourself.

J.W: Don't you wish the kids now a, days thought that way?

K.T: Yeah, I wish they did. I always told my kids you get in trouble at school, you get in trouble when you get home too. Uh, those teachers are there not only to teach'em, but to correct'em. And if the, that's what's the matter with kids now a days. You can't do anything to them.

J.W: Yeah, there is no, no control in the classroom.

K.T: No. Yeah.

J.W: Definitely

K.T: Well, they weren't when I was in school. You behaved yourself or else. Like I said, you got it when you got home.

J.W: Yeah. Now, when you was bringing your kids up, tryin to think of, I know we had the Korean War, but they were probably all still little for that, weren't they?

K.T: No, wait a minute. Korean War? No, I, that war was over. But, that was over right before, it was either right before, or right after we got married.

J.W: Oh, that's right. Yeah, 'cause you got married in fifty-four.

K.T: Four. Yeah.

J.W: Yeah. So, it would have been over. It was 50 to 53.

K.T: Yeah, so we had no wars to worry about, at that time.

J.W: Just for a little while.

K.T: Yeah, Vietnam came along. That's when, let's see. I think that came along right before Mark was old enough, he was still too young to go. So, they were all too young when that came along anyway. He was about 16, 17, he was still in high school. So, we didn't have to worry about that.

J.W: Well, was he, was, did, did the kids talk about it? I mean, that war really created a lot of, there was a lot of protest, and I think that was actually the first time you seen, you know people protesting the American government.

K.T: Yeah. Oh yeah. Yeah. No, they never talked about it.

J.W: They didn't?

K.T: No.

J.W: How did you feel about people that you would see, I meanWar World II?

K.T: I thought it was terrible. Yeah. No, it wasn't, what World War II was like. Everybody had to go through there and then they would protest these boys going over seas. Fighting for their country and dying. And then the boys that come home to treat them the way they did? That was terrible. To me it was a sin. 'Cause, those boys were fighting for their country. They were only doin what they were told, what the government told them they had to do. Just like the Second World War. People got killed then too. Innocent people, but what could you do? And I thought it was terrible that they would treat our men like that. Especially, when they came home.

J.W: Yeah. I heard some of them were getting spit on and called baby killers, and, I don't understand why they did that.

K.T: Yeah. What happened was, over there, in Vietnam. The Viet Cong, they would take little children, like him, or any.....

J.W: Make sure the darn thing, I don't like this thing. Ok. So, let's see. Uhm, I know, you've seen a bunch of assassins, assassinations here at home. You've seen John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King. The Pope, somebody almost assassinated him. So, how did any and all of these assassinations effect you? How did you feel? Like do you remember where you were in John Kennedy was shot or ..

K.T: Yeah. That I remember clearly. It was Thanksgiving? Yeah, it was in November, and I was at the store, getting ready for Thanksgiving, buying some groceries and that. Greg was three years old at the time. And, I, I can remember when they, I was at the store. We were on, in the store when they

K.T: Well, what, the only reason I really remember that is because of what happened to Gregg. Uh, they were putting out their Christmas trees for sale, and they were still bundled up, the Christmas trees, and they had them tied with, you know, a bunch of them tied together with rope? And, they left the, a knife lay out that they were cutting the ropes with? And, Greg picked it up, and almost cut his finger off. I had to take him to the doctor. He had, uh, little as he was, he was only three, I think he had four stitches in his finger.

J.W: Oh no.

K.T: 'Cause he cut his finger. So, I sent the grocery store the doctor bill.

J.W: Did you?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Did they pay it?

K.T: Yeah. That's the only reason, and anyway, he was same age as John, Kennedy, when his daddy was killed, when, President Kennedy was killed, John Junior.

J.W: Oh, ok, Gregg was the same age as little, little John.

K.T: Yeah. That's when, another reason I remember that, 'cause they were about the same age, at the time, and I just felt so terrible, because I could imagine how that poor mother felt, with that little fella. I, um, how did she ever tell him about his daddy, you know, dying like that.

J.W: They say that he, she had his birthday party right after the funeral.

K.T: Well, you can't stop livin' when things happen, really. Maybe it sounds trite, but uh, I probably would have done the same thing. A child, he's three years old, what would they, what do they know? How can they understand?

J.W: That's true.

K.T: You know. So.

J.W: So, how did you feel about Martin Luther King, Jr.?

K.T: It was a terrible thing. That's all I can say.

J.W: Did you watch the protest and stuff on t.v.? Did you see any, problems in your neighborhood, or in your area?

K.T: Uh, no. No, no, no, because I wasn't raised to hate people. Regardless of who they were, or their race, or anything. We just never, never thought about it, 'cause I wasn't raised any other way, but their human beings, just like we are. You know, when they get stuck and that, they bleed red, just like our blood is red. The only difference really, we always, mom always said, "The only difference is the color of their skin." And we really never knew, in Saint Bernard you didn't, we grew up in a white neighborhood, we didn't know anything, any different. So, I never thought anything about it really, not too much.

J.W: Were you, were you surprised when you seen news reports coming out of the south with police...

K.T: No. No, I wasn't surprised. 'Cause right before that was, uh, was it in Alabama that your, the, when they first tried to uh, desegregate the schools? The colleges? And the governor tried to stop it, that one time and he got shot.

J.W: Yeah.

K.T: So, and that's not right. They had a right to go to school and to learn, just like we do, and even now. And this racism, I'm, I'm sorry, but I think racism, is their own fault, Now these days.

J.W: How do you mean?

K.T: Well, some of them are, what do you, the black people. There are some who are more racist than white people. And a lot of it they bring on themselves.

J.W: Do you think though, that when Martin Luther King was killed, do you think that, that really sparked problems though. I mean he was a peaceful from what I understand, a peaceful leader as far as marches and...

K.T: Yeah, it did spark a lot of problems. And I suspect it still does, to a certain extent. I don't know how, but it just, there are things that, shouldn't be.

J.W: Now, how did you feel about Bobby Kennedy being killed? You know my mom said she cried harder for him than she did anybody that died in that time era?

K.T: I don't know. No, I've cried harder, I guess it was because it happened so soon after John Kennedy was killed. It was within what? Two years time? Maybe? Four years? I mean it, it just, the whole, family

they lost, a son in the first World War, in the second World War, and they lost a daughter in a plane crash, and then those two, and I think there was one other child died, it was just, I felt sorry for their mother.

J.W: Rose?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: That, that'd be hard.

K.T: For a mother to lose children like that.

J.W: Well, you would know. You've just recently lost one of your own.

K.T: Well, well at that time, I think what it was, I was thinkin about my mom, when she lost my brother.

It's hard when you lose a child. Mama always said, it's, it's really hard if your husband dies, you know, it, it is hard. But if you lose a child that you carried in your, womb for nine months and raised, up until their manhood or whatever and then all of a sudden they take, taken from you, and you lose part of yourself, and you really do. 'Cause even to this day, I just miss Patty so much.

J.W: We all do. But now you know when she was sittin here, you know you would roll your eyes at her.

K.T: [laughs] I know.

J.W: Now, you know you would!

K.T: You need to talk to Chuck. But, you know, God love her. Our Patty, that's what I always, that's another thing I wanted, I'll put on her headstone. I'll put her name and all that stuff, but just put up at the top 'Our Patty', because, she was our Patty. She was everybody's Patty.

J.W: Yeah. She was the one that gave you the hardest time though.

K.T: Yeah. [laughs]

J.W: She married my father for God's sake.

K.T: [laughing] I know.

J.W: Now, you talk about going out of the religion there.

K.T: You know, the day that they got married I cried, all during the wedding. I did. Oh, it wasn't that bad afterwards, I mean, your father he, now I know that there are some people that, aren't too thrilled with him. And I'm not, I don't get, well that's Mel that's, just the way he is. What are you going to do?

J.W: Were you upset though when Patty, I mean because Patty got excommunicated for marrying him, didn't she? From the Catholic Church?

K.T: Well she married him in the non-Catholic church, yeah.

J.W: Because I remember she, she told me she got a letter that she was excommunicated, and she said she cried.

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, she couldn't uh, well she could go to church anytime she wanted to but she couldn't receive any of the sacraments. That's what happens when they excommunicate you. Can't go to communion, can't go to confession, none of that stuff. And I think it's ridiculous.

J.W: That the Catholic Church holds that kind of rule?

K.T: Yeah. I think they still do to a certain extent.

J.W: Now, you, yourself, aren't really practicing Catholicism anymore.

K.T: Not anymore. No.

J.W: Now that changed before Ray died didn't it?

K.T: Yeah. That changed because, two things. It started when Ray was sick, and his mother wanted to go down to Love and Faith. That's when they were, started out they were down at the Y. And, so I took her a couple of times, couple of Sundays, and I had been going, to, well I joined what they called, the Charismatic Renewal, in the Catholic church. And, I was going to different conferences like to Notre Dame in Kansas City, and different places. And, when I went down to Love and Faith, it was small, a lot smaller, but it was so much like any of those conferences I went to at Notre Dame and that, I just kept going. Because, I was being fed, there, where I wasn't being fed up here at church. It was just, I'd go to Mass and that was it. And you go here and you learn something about yourself and about, more about the Lord than I've ever learned before. And that's why I keep going there. I'm more at home.

J.W: Now, you've said, you've said numerous times though that if it wouldn't have been for your faith in God, and your church and all that, when your early years being married and raising the kids, that you don't know that your marriage would have survived and your kids, would have turned out the way, you know

K.T: No. That's the way I feel. Because that's the way I was raised. My parents, God came first. And I was raised that way, and, it was, maybe a Catholic church, but it was still, I can't explain that part of it. But, any, if it hadn't been my faith in God, the way my parents raised me to believe in God, and to pray, and to rely on Him, I wouldn't, my marriage would not have lasted.

J.W: How do you feel now about people, because whenever I talk to you about your religion, and stuff, you kind of seem, you know, your cool to talk to when it comes to God and stuff. Your not one of them, you don't use God the condemer a lot, where a lot people do. How did you feel about when them trade centers were hit, and Jerry Falwell came out and said that was God's way of punishing us for our sins?

K.T: Yeah, I know. Well, I don't know how to put it. I don't know if that, necessarily was God's way of punishing us. But, he allowed it to happen. But, you know, God can stop anything if he wants to. So, I think He allowed that to happen to, try, to get the people to put their faith in Him, to turn to Him for anything. You, you have to, if you, if you haven't got God in your life, well, I just don't think.

Everybody's got it hard. I know that. He's never promised a bed of roses to anybody. But, if you can't rely on God when it comes to hardships of any kind, like my, like I said, with my life. The way Ray was, those first 30 years, if it hadn't been for my faith in God my marriage wouldn't have lasted. I couldn't have stood it. I probably would have ended up, up on Paddock Road somewhere. It was no easy task and it, it had to be my faith in God that kept me going. And that I was able to raise my kids the way I did. I was blessed. I really was. And I'm still being blessed.

J.W: Yes, because you have all kinds of grandkids that are now forming around your table.

K.T: Yeah. Ray said that one time to me about the kids coming. The kids are, are always coming and going you know. I said, "Be glad that they love us that much." Really.

J.W: Yeah, that's true.

K.T: I always thank God for that. Because how many parents..... Are we finished yet?

J.W: No, almost. Mom asked the same thing about four times on her tape.

K.T: I don't know what else to say. I can tell you, say so many things.

J.W: I know, well you know, ok, uh, what do you thinks one of your best accomplishments in life?

K.T: My six children.

J.W: Your six children?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Um.

K.T: And my one and only son-in-law.

J.W: What do you find, I'll ask you the same thing I asked my mom last night. Biggest regret?

K.T: I don't think, think I have any regrets.

J.W: Really?

K.T: No, I can't think of anything I'm sorry for.

J.W: That's good. Geez, I could give you a whole list. You want, you want to borrow some?

K.T: I really don't know what it would be. Except those first 30 years.

J.W: [laughs] Now, Kay. Ray's gonna get ya for that you know.

K.T: Nah, he knows that. He knew it. The, the last, the first 30 years were, were not very, they weren't good at all. But, after that, when he gave his life over to the Lord, it was everything was great. That, all that made up for those other 30 years.

J.W: Really?

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: So, you guys had a good last 10 years together then.

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, we did. Those last 10 years were the best. They made up for it all.

J.W: That's good.

K.T: So, I really don't have any regrets about anything.

J.W: Wow. Well, like I said, if you ever need to borrow my list. Let me know. I got it for you. Um, oh, we'll finish off, because our tape cut us off before. Let's talk about Iraq again. A little bit.

K.T: I can't remember what I said.

J.W: You were talking about Saddam Hussein. You think he's a lot like Hitler. You see a lot of similarities between the two. Um, and you said that, you were talking about we need to get rid of him. Either have somebody go in there...

K.T: Either, either have him assassinated or whatever. Or put him on an island somewhere like they did Napoleon, you know?

J.W: Did um, now do you, now I mean right now their startin' protest against going over there.

K.T: Yeah, and I think it's wrong.

J.W: You, you think that's wrong?

K.T: Yeah. Those boys are going over there, the government sending them over there to fight for our country, for our rights, our freedom, and, that's not right for people to... When was it? The other night,

Sunday night I think, I had, had it on my, turned it on early in the morning, and they were showing protestors in Washington. And they were talking to this one man and woman whose son was in the Marines and going over seas. And he's protesting

J.W: The son was protesting?

K.T: No. The father was protesting and the war and everything. And I don't know what his reasoning was, but I can't understand that. How do you think that boy feels? To see his father protesting a war that he's going over to fight for his country. I, I think it's terrible. Maybe it's because I feel more strongly about it because I lost my brother. Maybe that's what it is. But, those boys going over there, the government's sending them over, their fighting for what's, their freedom, our freedom. And, who was it? Sunday morning I had uh, Charles Stanley on. And he said that, he said they'd send those boys over, and like during the Second World War, they went over seas, and, they fought, and they died so we could protest another war. Now, you know, I don't think it's right for people to, to protest. I really don't.

J.W: Well, what did you think about, you know when the union, when the twin towers fell, and all that happened? I mean, I, I hate to, you know, but, the truth is nobody hardly took and flew their flag before then. And, then all of a sudden you've got a bunch of flag flyers, and how did you feel about that? I mean did, did you think that was good thing, or did you think maybe a little hypocritical?

K.T: Not so much hypocritical, as it was uh, just a momentary thing. They're going all gong ho. They're, everybody's flyin a flag, and got'em all over their cars and trucks and whatever. And they're going to church, and two months later, nothin. I mean the church membership in the different churches has dropped. Although, it rose like crazy when that happened and now all of a sudden now they're, they're not worried about it no more. So, now they're going to protest. And the man's gonna, who knows what he's gonna do if they let him go. With the, germ warfare and all that stuff, so then they're gonna start all over again. Oh, they should have done this and they should have done that. And yet, they're gonna protest?

J.W: Do you worry though, about, I mean because you seen a nasty, World War II was a nasty war.

K.T: Yeah. Yeah, it was.

J.W: Do you worry about what we're going to get ourselves into? Russia's not backing, France isn't backing us right now.

K.T: I know.

J.W: Are you concerned about that? I mean do you....

K.T: I don't understand what their, what their problem is, there. Why, why they don't think that this man's not going to do anything.

J.W: Well, didn't a lot of people see Hitler that way, when he first came to power? I mean that he wasn't gonna, that he wasn't a danger, and he was just tryin to help his country?

K.T: Yeah, I expect, I guess they did. But, from the things that you hear that, a few things that I've seen on television, that they're, unless they're, its false. But he's, hurting his own people. Killing his own people, just like Hitler did in Germany. If you were Jewish you got shot or sent to a concentration camp. If you were Catholic you got the same thing.

J.W: I didn't know they did that with Catholics.

K.T: Yeah. They did it with Catholics too. Maybe not as much as they did with the Jewish people, but they did.

J.W: That man had some real issues.

K.T: Yeah. It's just, I, I, just don't understand why they're protesting , 'cause when, the other president Bush was in during the Gulf War, and he stopped the war. We didn't lose the war. He just stopped it.

J.W: Right, but we got them out of Kuwait.

K.T: Yeah, well. He's still in Iraq, and they're still, worried about all these, bombs or whatever it is he's making. If they had, done away with him before that, it would, all this, we wouldn't have to worry about all this. But, like I said before, he's going to go after the Jewish people. Same way Hitler did.

J.W: So, in a way, you would kinda say history repeats itself.

K.T: Yeah. In that respect it will.

J.W: A lot of people don't like to say that. They like to say history is linear. You know, it just runs and runs and runs. I don't like that either, but, you can't help but see similarities in certain circumstances, you know. Where you like, ah, maybe this is coming full circle.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: Ok, Kay, so let's get off, let's do one more here. What, you have lived a long time, you've seen a lot of things, tell me some, one thing good, and one thing bad about society now, from then. One thing good, and one thing bad, like you know, somethin that's worse now, for example, like one grandma told me, well

you can't even leave your house now, you know without locking your door, and you can't really feel safe anymore. That was her bad thing.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: So, like, give me one bad thing that you, that you can come up you know, as far as, what this world is today from what it was when you was a little kid. Give me like one bad thing and one good thing, do you see any good things?

K.T: We're going to run out of tape before I can even think.

J.W: Well, that's all right, I got two more. I can load us up.

K.T: [laughs] Um, from when I was a kid? The world changes so much all, over the years all the time. From one generation to another, I don't know. The only thing I can say is the kid's now a days, you know, I'd like to take one and put the other, hit the other one over the head with him I really mean that. You, there's no discipline, like I said in the schools. They can't do anything to'em. And so they run wild, they do and say what they want to say. [laughs] Not all of them, but any that I've run into.

J.W: I was gonna say, well you gotta teenage grandson that lives with you.

K.T: Yeah.

J.W: So, you'd be pretty up on that. What the attitudes are of the day...

K.T: Yeah. I don't know. Kids, unless I lived such a, a sheltered life and I never saw anything, but kids didn't act like that when I was a, younger. Even when you guy's were younger, you didn't act like that. Not like, some of these kids do nowadays. You know what I think, really, The one thing that did it?

J.W: What?

K.T: When they took prayer out of school. Turned it back on God. Turn your back on God and he's going to, there ain't a thing He can do to help ya.

J.W: Did you hear about that school, that a, had the Ten Commandments sittin outside, and their making them dig that plaque up? And, the school kids voted, wanted to keep it there, and the thing said no because church and state is separate.

K.T: Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's, a bunch of bull. That's....

J.W: I think that's silly. 'Cause they asked the kids, and the kids voted to keep it. Then, let the kids have it.

K.T: Yeah. What do you think our country's run on? Think about it.

J.W: Um, Liars.

K.T: [laughs] No, I'm talking about the Ten Commandments. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal.

J.W: Honor thy parents.

K.T: Yeah. Thou shalt not lie. If you lie in court, you go to jail, don't you? Well...

J.W: Unless, your name's O.J. Simpson.

K.T: Well, well, money talks. He's still sufferin. He might not be in jail, but he's suffering for what he did. He's lost just about everything he had. And he's still being sued about different things. He just got, got sued this past, last year didn't he, some guy? Yeah, something about a car accident or something, and this country is based on the Ten Commandments. The laws of the country are based on the Ten Commandments.

J.W: So, you think that's what's wrong then, 'cause like you said turn your back on that? So, now we're going to hell in a hand basket?

K.T: Yeah.