

Dr. Radke Women's Oral History Collection

Liselotte Janson - Life Experiences

By Liselotte Janson

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Box 1 Folder 14

Oral Interview conducted by Beth Twitchell

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

BT: Um, okay, to start off with, if you don't mind me asking...

LJ: Nope, go ahead.

BT: Um, what year were you born?

LJ: I was born June 2nd, 1933.

BT: Um, okay, and I guess I should have this. Please state your name for the record. I'm sorry.

LJ: Relax.

BT: Okay. I never remember things the way I'm supposed to.

LJ: Well, you'll do fine.

BT: Thank you, um, just your name.

LJ: Liselotte, well, before I was married, it was Schaffner, now it's Liselotte Janson.

BT: Okay and where were you born?

LJ: In Füllinsdorf, Badenland, in Switzerland.

BT: Wow. I've never heard of that. Was it a small town?

LJ: It was a small, little village of five hundred.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And I live way up in the... hills, hills, hills.

BT: Um, do you have any stories of your childhood you remember?

LJ: Oh, yeah, I remember lots of things. I won't be able to, I don't know if I can tell it well, I'm thinking. School in Switzerland, where I was from in the village, was nothing like here, because the teachers were very ornery, in those days. And, um, it was a nightmare for me. I did not like school too well because they had such mean teachers. First and second grade was wonderful. I was a very feisty little thing; I was very short, very petite, in those days, and um, and then when I came to the seventh grade, my folks, um, sent me away to school in Berner Oberland, and the little place was in the mountains of Interlacken. Und, ah, in school there, because it was so, because I just, start, you know, the nightmares at night and fevers because I was just so scared of the teachers. And so I stayed there two years. Ah, I had to work hard. I had to help with the little ranch. They had cows, and, and pigs, and chickens, and then to school all day.

BT: Did the school have, the school have the ranch? Or...

LJ: No, that was a family I went to.

BT: Oh.

LJ: And, um, school, we went from school, to school, from seven in the morning til four thirty in the afternoon, every day, but Saturday afternoons.

BT: Even Sunday?

LJ: No, Sundays we were off, and Saturday afternoons. But all, all year round, we didn't have vacations like here. We had two weeks off in August, and then Christmas, over to, you know, the first of January. We start back to school on the second of January. And then we, we had, ah; April was when the New Year started.

BT: Okay.

LJ: In school. So we got off a week there. And then we would come back to school and be in a higher class. And I went in Switzerland, the common people; the people who cannot afford to go the whole schule² won't be able to go. We're done in the ninth grade. And then they go to trading school, whatever they want to be, that's where they'd go. But if you were from a family that, you know, had money, you could go to the whole schule and then the gymnasium.

BT: Okay.

LJ: Ah, over there, not very many could afford, where I was from, to go to university.

BT: Okay. Did you go, um, to the Universidad? Is that how you pronounce it?

LJ: University? Oh, no. That's college [undistinguishable].

BT: Okay.

LJ: No, I wish I could have done. No, I went to trade school, then I came home, ah, I came back home when I was fifteen, and then I went to a trade school for... In Switzerland, the first thing you learn, when you become a young girl, you learn how to keep house. Knit, well, I start knitting when I was about three years old.

BT: Wow.

LJ: We made all our own underclothes, slips, sweaters, even skirts, little skirts. And we had to learn how to clean, cook, very young. Well, and we even learned it better when we get out of school. We go to another family; they sent you away, to another family with a household schule. And you learn to take care of the family. Like the family I went to,

they had three little boys. I had to take care of them, do all the washing, which we didn't have washing machines. We washed on a washboard, the white, we would soak overnight– the white, undies, and stuff– and then we boiled them on the stove, on the big stove. And then the next thing, we'd take them out, and then we'd start letting them cool off, and start scrubbing again, and rinse them, and hang them out. We didn't have washers or dryers. And I had to do that all by myself. This was how I learned. And I had to go to school, one day a week, on the Wednesday. We went to the household school. We had to report, we had to write, um, all about it, what we did for that week, from Wednesday to Wednesday. And, ah, I had to be there at, ah; I went on a train, in the morning, early, six o'clock train, from our place to Pratteln. That's where I was. And I had to be there, by seven, at least.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And start to take care, fix breakfast, um, take care of the little boys when they get up, to... Mrs. Richtenstein was the name, my boss, lady, was really a sweet lady. And she would take off all day, while I... Very seldom was she home to help take care of the children. I had to do that for a year.

BT: Whoa. And you didn't, so you didn't live with them?

LJ: No. I went home. I didn't want to live with them. I wanted to go home, because I had already been away from home for two years.

BT: Wow.

LJ: You know. Then, when I was sixteen, um, my mother wanted me to go become a seamstress, but instead, I, um, wanted to come to America. And, um, I was the youngest of seven children, so when I was, I helped Mom for a few months, 'til I got my visa and all the papers so I could come over here. And then you had to have sponsors. You couldn't come to, over here without having a sponsor, that is responsible for you at least a year. And now it's, it's so different; anybody can come over here, you know, it don't matter who they are. They investigate you very closely. You have to have good health. And I left when I was seventeen, I left home.

BT: What year was that?

LJ: 1950.

BT: Okay.

LJ: 1950. I was seventeen. And I came over here. Um, back home, all I really knew as a young child, growing up, was hard work. We didn't play like we do here, you know. We had chores to do, we helped other people. In summer we went to work on the little ranch to, just for a loaf of bread.

BT: The whole summer?

LJ: Uh-huh. Well, we would get one maybe once a month, we'd go and I come home after school, and then Mom would send me to the farmer or pick the fruit and then maybe we would take a little sack full of fruit for working, you know. And, ah, it was very, very, very different than here. We worked very hard. So when I came to this country, when I left home, it was pretty hard on Mom. I had to have x-rays, um, and there, you had to go to a doc, a doctor in Zurich to check you out. And they took an x-ray of me. When I was a very young little girl, I had, um, tuberculosis. Well, my lungs were scarred. So he said, "No, I don't think they even will let you in, because, if you come to Ellis Island, they will not let you in." And I said, oh, I said, "Okay doctor." This was on a Friday that I went. "Could I come back Monday?" He said, "Why?" And I said, "I need, I need to come back Monday, and you do another x-ray on me." He says, "Okay, if you want to come clear from Füllinsdorf, go on the train in Basel, and come to Zurich." And I said, "Yah, that's what I want to do." So, when I got home, I, I called the missionaries, ah, to come and, um, give me a blessing, and they did, and Monday morning, early, I took the train, oh, about six o'clock, and went back to Zurich to that doctor. And so he says, "Okay, we'll take another x-ray." And I waited there, and it took quite awhile those days to, you know...

BT: Oh, yeah.

LJ: To, ah, develop an x-ray. I mean, that's been, ai-ai-ai. And so, awhile back, I sat there very patiently, and pretty soon he comes out with the one x-ray he took Friday and then the other x-ray. And he said, "Tell me something. Are you a Mormon?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You know..." He, all these people usually had to go to him if they left the country and a lot of Mormons left around then. He said, "Look at this x-ray from Friday." And I said, "Yah? The other one's just fine, isn't it?" He said, "Yah." He said, "You Mormons have more faith than anybody I know."

BT: Oh.

LJ: And I said, "You can burn that one, but I will take the good one." He was the neatest guy. He said, "I can't believe it. You're so young, and you're leaving with the numbers." And I said, "Yah." He said, "Your folks let you go?" And I says, "Well, Mom says that Dad," um, Mutti, we called my mom Mutti and my dad Vati, ah, if that's what I wanted to do. Fine and I was the first one of the village to leave the town, the little village to go to another country: America.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And, ah, and when I came, when I came, that was terrible. I was sick. Oh, I had to go on a train to France, to Paris. From there, we had to go to Le Havre, the next morning. And from there, on the boat, and my boat's name was SS Stradaten. This is only because we needed to move to another room.

BT: What was the... Judaten?

LJ: Stradaten. Stradaten. SS Stradaten.

BT: Um, what, does that have any meaning, that...

LJ: It's... I don't know what the ship or if it was... I don't think it was a Swedish ship. Could have been a Danish. I didn't know these things.

BT: Okay.

LJ: But it was SS Stradaten. I wish I still had a picture of that. But anyway, the first stint of the boat start, I was fine, just fine. Then all of the sudden, oh! I got so sick. It was awful.

BT: Do you want me to pause it?

LJ: Yeah, maybe.

BT: Okay....

LJ: Now, where was I? Okay, got on the boat.

BT: 'Kay.

LJ: And, oh! I was so.... It took eight days, if you went on by boat, and I was sick all the time.

BT: Oh.

LJ: And my, and my room companion was a little old lady. She didn't get sick. She was the sweetest thing. She went out, and she called doctor and said, "We've got to get something for this young lady. She cannot keep nothing down." And I didn't, could not keep a thing down.

BT: For eight days.

LJ: Oh! And I said, oh. I said, now, what have I done, what have I done to come over here, you know? So when we got finally in- we went to Ellis Island- oh. [Undistinguishable] I was just about the last one; after that, they closed Ellis Island up, I know. But I tell you, you felt like a bunch of cattle on... I just felt like all you had to do was stand there with a hose, and hose us off. It was awful.

BT: They hosed you off?

LJ: Yes! See, we had to go up a stairway, and on top, boy, they'd watch ya. If anybody was limping, or carrying a suitcase and couldn't carry their suitcase upstairs, or had any problems, if they could tell they had any problems, that you know, not really that healthy, they went back.

BT: Wow.

LJ: Oh, it, it was very, very strict. But I was fine.

BT: Oh, good.

LJ: But I was scared. You know, I couldn't speak English. I could not speak one word of English. So the guy from the Swiss Consulate picked me up. So, he took me to the hotel. [Undistinguishable] My room was way on top, you know, it was one of these high— oh. I looked down and they were all like little ants below and the drivers— oh! And I never saw black or, you know, different races, people, we didn't have them then in Switzerland at all. That was something else. I was, oh my gosh, o my gosh. Oh my, it was just so awful. Then he says, okay, he says, "I'm going to leave you here and I will pick you up in a little bit. You freshen up, and then I'll show you the town." Well, I did, and I said, I thought, "Oh, what have I done," because I was not impressed with New York. I thought what, what have I done. And my dad said, "When you leave and you come to America, and you have problems and don't like it, don't let us know. You make your bed, you sleep in it." So I didn't dare, you know. If I would have the money, I would have went home, but, but we had to have thirty dollars if we got in, in this country. We had to have thirty dollars to spend. Ah, and I didn't spend one dime of that. So, he comes picks me up, and the missionary wanted, one of the missionary [sic] gave me a dollar and told me where to go and in New York, and he wrote it down for me, give it to the Swiss Consulate guy to a little restaurant, it was just in a little corner, and it had a little TV about like this. I never heard of that. And he says you can watch a picture show while you have a milkshake and hamburger. Well, I didn't know what that was. So he took me and I ordered that. It was just, it tasted so good, you know, after I couldn't eat for a week.

BT: Oh, yeah.

LJ: And, I was so dehydrated when I got to Ellis Island, you know. He looked at me, and I says, "I couldn't hold anything in my stomach; could I have some water?" I told him in Swiss. And then there was a man that spoke German, and he said, "Oh, sure." And so, he took me, he took me, guess what he showed me.

BT: Is this the missionary or the Swiss Consulate?

LJ: The Swiss Consulate guy.

BT: Okay.

LJ: No, the Sw—, the missionary was still over in Switzerland.

BT: Oh, okay.

LJ: No, he just gave me a dollar to go...

BT: Okay.

LJ: You know, to that little restaurant. And I loved it, seeing that little thing on the TV. We were not allowed to go to movies. We had to have parents' permission.

BT: Oh.

LJ: And we couldn't, we were not allowed 'til we were sixteen, and then it had to be a special children's movie, not any what we watch here. And so, all I ever saw was *Lassie, Come Back*. That was the only one I ever saw.

BT: In Switzerland?

LJ: Mm-hmm. And so, he took me, ah, I could not believe, to the slum. Oh, I will never forget that. I said, "Why have you taken me to such a horrible place? Is that what New York is all about?" He says, "No." He says, "I just want you to know that America doesn't have milk and honey running on the streets." I says, "Wait a minute." I says, "I am Swiss. I was [undistinguishable] taught how to work, and we don't live off the people. And you know that. How dare..." I was so mad at him. He says, "Oh, I'm, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean it that way." I says, "Yes, you did. We come, I come to this country, as soon as I speak my English language, I be to work, and I hope that's in about two months." And he looks at me and says, "Oh, but let me show you." And I says, "No. Take me back to the hotel. I am very tired. I want to go to the hotel. Then pick me up and take me to the train station in the morning. I am so disgusted with you." He was really amazed that I told him off, you know.

BT: You *were* feisty!

LJ: Oh, I was, let me tell you. So he picks me up in the morning. We had to, he took me to the train station... and that was an experience. Ai-ai-ai. And then, we waited. We had to take the train from there to Chicago. Then we waited on the train there, and, ah, he told me, the lady that met me there, she says, "Now, you stay right here." She says, "Don't move. Don't leave anything. Stay right here." She says, because, oh, there was bums, and I mean, dirty guys laying around on the benches, oh awful! And then she took me to one of the rooms where the ladies' restaurant was, and it was a sitting room. She says, "I will tell them to come and get you when the train come. You have a wait for eight hours."

BT: Eight hours?

LJ: Eight hours I had to wait for the train. Oh, and that was scary, you know. Then finally they came and got me and I got on the train there and oh! And I didn't know, I didn't

think of, I didn't, you know, I didn't want to lose that thirty dollars. I wanted to take that back to my sponsor. And, um, so I didn't eat. So this little lady was sitting by me, I had a little lady, just the sweetest thing. She said, "You can put your head right by my shoulder." Well, you know, I didn't have a sleeper or nothing like that. I sat up all the way to Pocatello!

BT: Wow. The "young man" refers to one of her nephews who had stopped by for a visit that evening.

LJ: And that was the trip. And then I got to Pocatello, and that was, oh, filthiest place I ever laid eyes on. I mean, that train station was spotless. Switzerland is spotless. I mean, it's beautiful. And I thought, "Ai-ai-ai, what have I done? What have I done?" And then I saw Indian sitting on the curb there, and, ah... look at that. Oh, I didn't know I had that. I had big test last week.

BT: Oh.

LJ: I'm really bruised; they had to poke me up. And so, finally we got to Pocatello. It took from New York to Pocatello, it took me, I took the train, probably about four days, and a half.

BT: Wow.

LJ: So I got there, and my husband's folks were sponsoring me. He was still on the mission. But I didn't know, you know, that I was going to marry him.

BT: Did you know him?

LJ: He was, he was in our branch.

BT: Oh, okay.

LJ: And he told me he would like to spons- his folks wanted to sponsor somebody. They were from Burton out here.

BT: Okay.

LJ: And, um, his mother met me, his sisters, his sister-in-law, in fact, this young man's mother; he was just six years old when I came. So, I felt so unkind; I couldn't talk to them there.

BT: Did... did they speak, is it, do you, is it Swiss or was it German that you....

LJ: I speak German.

BT: Okay.

LJ: They speak German in school.

BT: Okay.

LJ: All the books, newspapers, and magazines are printed in High German.

BT: Okay, German for coffee, German for good.

LJ: At home, they speak the dialect, which is Swiss.

BT: Okay.

LJ: And so, I couldn't talk to them, you know. So we were driving home, and we stopped in Pocatello, let the sister-in-law off and her boy, and she actually lives there. And we came up to Rexburg and Burton, and it was pretty late, so we went right to bed. And so, I get up real early. I used to get up early, early, you know. I got up and she said, "Oh, you're up already?" or something like that, I couldn't understand her. I says, "Yah, yah, yah." So she was going to feed me— breakfast! I mean, back home, they don't have big breakfast. Maybe Kaffee, ah, you know, and milk. Milk, Kaffee. We don't, we couldn't afford it to, to drink milk. We had four goats. No, five goats, and the billy goat. Just that, and Mom gave that, some of it to the poor people away and food if we had some. The only time we got cows' milk was on weekends. Sunday, we had cows' milk.

BT: Oh, wow.

LJ: And butter. Oh, that's a treat, you know? And jam, only on weekends, only on Sundays. That was our Sunday breakfast. And Mother makes züpfle. And...

BT: What is what is...?

LJ: Züpfle is a bread that's braided.

BT: Oh, okay.

LJ: It's made very special. On Sundays, and then we got, and then we, it was just wonderful, I tell ya. We could, it was, I mean. And then, well, his mother. First she brings, brings me orange juice. I never had orange juice before. I remember, what was that. But I didn't ask. I just drank it. Then she brings me milk. Then she brings me Cheerios. I didn't know they were, I never had, I mean, they didn't have cereal like that then. And I ate that. Then she comes in, cut up um, a what was it, tomato sliced and eggs and ham and hash brown, and I thought, "Oh my gosh." I says, "Oh, oh my gosh, wow." I didn't want to hurt her feelings. And this bread, which was so rich, I never had before. The eggs, she dished it out for me, and I ate it all. And then she comes, she asks me, I guess, if I wanted more. And I thought she's asking me if it tastes okay, and I says, "Oh, yah, yah." Well, she fills my plate *again!* I never in my life ate like that. Oh, well, you

never hurt people's feelings. We were brought up to not turn anything away. So I ate that. So, she asks me, and I said, "Oh, no." And I says, "Gut, gut."⁷ And she says, "Oh, you mean 'good'." I guess that's what she said, and I said, "Yah." Ai-ai-ai, I tell you. That was an experience for me, to first come to this country. And they had, Dad has a neighbor, my husband's dad, he was a wonderful man, and he had his mother call them right now to come. He was on a mission over there in Germany. Ralph Kauer. And him and his wife came over and he could translate for me. Oh, that was so nice.

BT: I bet.

LJ: I tell you, that was experience, and Switzerland is so much different than here. It's so safe. In fact, when I went home for our fiftieth anniversary, our children sent us back home to Switzerland.

BT: Oh. How cool.

LJ: Yeah, because I have a, an elder sister and two brothers, all, all my cousins, and even two aunts, my mother's two sisters, were still alive.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And, ah, it is so gorgeous over there. We went up to the Jungfrau. My brother lives in Interlaken, the most beautiful place you want to live. I think if I had lived there, I would have never left. It is so gorgeous. You'd be on my brother's balcony and there'd be Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau.

BT: Those are the mountains, right?

LJ: Uh-huh.

BT: Okay.

LJ: Those are the mountains, three of them.

BT: Okay.

LJ: Oh, they're wonderful. So, we went up there, and we had dinner up there at... That hotel is built right on the side of the mountain. It's unbelievable.

BT: How cool.

LJ: They have a story of how they did that. And we could see that whole valley. Oh, it was, I stood there and I said, what was the matter with me? Why did I leave my country, you know? My sister said the same thing. She, she's, my sister came, Emmeli Sommer, a year later. And she used to be a Relief Society president up at the college, years ago. Had

the girls over her, and boy, she's really efficient. Wonderful woman, beautiful woman, and she talks about that a lot, with all the girls. Then it was Ricks College.

BT: Did you ever go? Sorry, forget the question. Did you ever go to Ricks?

LJ: I wish, no. I got married when I was eighteen, too young. When my husband got back home from his mission, my dad said I had to stay with my sponsors until I'm eighteen. And I turned, turned eighteen the, you know, the second of June.

BT: Right.

LJ: The following year. And I was going to leave, but David happened to come home. And I went to work. I was here two months; I already could speak English good enough to go to work.

BT: Oh, good.

LJ: And I worked in Ricks', in the Nelsons', um what was it, the creamery. Nelsons' creamery, here in Rex... Rexburg Nelson Creamery, It was where the candy shop is. That's the Nelson Ricks Creamery.

BT: Oh, okay.

LJ: And I went to work there. Anything to make money, so I... And then I got me a little room, right on College Avenue, with Sister Martinson and Ruby. Ruby worked in Nelson Ricks creamery. And that was wonderful. And then I thought, "Well, now I can go Salt Lake." I always wanted to live in Salt Lake. I wanted to be close by a temple, you know, and [undistinguishable]. But then, my husband came home. And then he had so many girlfriends, you can't believe it. These missionaries don't believe anything he says. Don't ever believe him.

BT: Okay.

LJ: Golly sakes. Then he comes home. Guess his mother gave me his diaries to read, so I could learn English. Oh, yeah. Every two weeks, a new girlfriend. "Oh, I'm sure I'm in love with her!" "Oh, she is so good!" Terrific, so I never thought, you know, I'm not going to marry him, because I never dated before. My husband was my first man I ever dated.

BT: That's kind of, that's sweet, though.

LJ: And then he come home. And so he wants to date me. And the first date I went to, maybe I shouldn't tell you that on that thing, his mother came along, and she sat in the middle. And then the second date, she, um, she came with us again, but she would let me sit by him. And then the third date, we went alone. And my husband finally got smart enough not to park in front of the yard, you know, right there, because she calls and she

says, always, every time, we sat out and talk, and she would go in and she says, “You kids better get in the house or you’re going to catch cold!” I mean, that was, give me a break, it was the last of June, you know! I mean, just about. It was something else. And then he got, he asked me, he says, “Let’s get married in the fall.” And I kind of looked at him, and I says, “Oh.” Because my dad said, “If Bruder Janson asks you to marry him, you marry him. And don’t you date anybody until he gets back.” And that’s says my dad thought I’d marry a rich man, which was a bunch of baloney. He had no money. You know? Oh, so we... Oh, it was funny. And after I said, “Okay, then I was going to Salt Lake.” I already had a job. I was going to work in Monograph Bakeries in Salt Lake, Roberto’s Bakery. And he says, “Oh. Well, I told them I’d get married next week.” He’d only been home three weeks.

BT: Oh, my gosh.

LJ: And I says, “Oh. Well, I guess.” I guess it was the thing to do; I didn’t know. I married him. We got married in the Idaho Falls, um, Temple, the twenty-second of June, 1951. Sister Janson is legally blind.

BT: Wow.

LJ: Yeah.

BT: That’s fast.

LJ: Fast? Too fast! I should have went out and enjoyed life, like all these kids do. I tell ya. Golly sakes! And he, ah, went to college, graduated, it was four years, then.

BT: The... Ricks College?

LJ: Uh-huh.

BT: Okay.

LJ: It was just two buildings then.

BT: Oh, yeah.

LJ: And we lived up at College Heights, it was called. First we lived where I had the room, and then we moved to College Heights, when I got my first baby. And they called that the lambing shed, because it was all young couples and their kids. They were barracks that they made apartments out of.

BT: Wow.

LJ: It was pretty nice, they fixed it up really nice, you know, and, and, it was really nice, nice little apartments. But then, he sent me to work. When you have family, don’t go to

work, that's my advice. But, I was a Swiss. We worked hard. The man is the head of the family, and you do whatever he wants you to do. That's what I did.

BT: And he sent you to work?

LJ: Yep. And then he said, well, I worked until I had my baby, and I wanted to stay home, you know. And I says, "No, I'm staying home now; it's up to you now." Well, I can't do that. So he comes home one day and says, "I got your old job back." I was flabbergasted. Oh, I was angry. He says, "My mom and my sister can take the baby." And I says, "That's my baby. The Lord gave me this baby to raise. Not your mother, not your sister." But I went. And I worked, oh, golly sakes; I've worked for thirty-seven years full time. I was a nurse. Not counting all the other years I worked forever. You know, I got a job, then I became a nurse. We moved to Idaho Falls, and I said, "If I have to work, then I'll work something I like and work nights so I can be home with my baby." And that's what I did. And then we moved to Seattle and as soon as I retired, I was happy because of my eyes, David was already retired, we're going back to Rexburg, because that's God's country. Now I'm not sure anymore, all this growing.

BT: I know.

LJ: You know, when I came to this country, it was so nice. It was wonderful, small and wonderful.

Now, sheesh!

BT: I know.

LJ: Unbelievable. That anybody...Switzerland is the most wonderful country. This is a good country, don't get me wrong. America's the best country in the world, even the way things are going right now. It's still better than anywhere else. And I love this country; it's a good country. But, you know, where you were born, that's never out of your blood.

BT: Yeah.

LJ: I was brought up in Switzerland and maid school was rough. If I could have went to school like you young people have a chance, oh, gosh, I would have learned and learned and learned. But, they don't, they didn't give me a chance then. It's different now.

BT: Oh, okay. Good.

LJ: It's very, very different. I mean, the kids are just like American kids. I've watched them. One day I was, we went walking, and I meant walkin' in Interlacken by a school. And I said to my— two sons went with us, the oldest and the youngest and a child of each one. Daniel took his oldest daughter and Darrell took his oldest son.

BT: How fun.

LJ: So, we walk, and um, and I says, "I'm going to sit here." I wanted to see how these kids act. And they says, "Mom." And I says, "Yeah, you guys just go. I want to see the change." Well, they got out of that schoolhouse; it changed. [Undistinguishable] ... doors, I followed a bunch of them. I said, "All American. They're all American." Now traveling the mountain village would be different, because those people, people are just in the mountains in the villages there, you know, where you hear the boys, the cowbells going, and, and I used to have to take my goats up in the woods, on the hills. You know, they had little bells on, and milk the goats, and clean the stalls. And the stalls over there, they did not leave the animals out like they do in winter here. That still just bugs me. That's so mean, the poor animals.

BT: I... its cold.

LJ: Yeah! I always had to clean the stalls and clean everything, and put new straw, and the animals were just treated so good, so different now here. Oh, I just ache when I see the horses out in that cold, you know.

BT: Yeah.

LJ: You never saw that back home, when I was home. So, Switzerland is a beautiful country, if you ever have a chance.

BT: I'd like to see it.

LJ: Go.

BT: I hear it's gorgeous.

LJ: It's beautiful. It's the cleanest, cleanest country you'll ever want to see. The food is wonderful, the, the sausages, and the cheeses, and the pastry, and the bread. I mean....

BT: And the chocolate.

LJ: Yes, the chocolates are marvelous. Oh, you got, you got to go over someday.

BT: I do. I had a friend who went over and brought back Swiss chocolate, and it was so good.

LJ: Oh, yeah.

BT: And I've had a friend who is from Germany, and she brought back German chocolate and I thought it was pretty good until I had the Swiss.

LJ: It's not as nice as Swiss. No.

BT: Swiss is the best.

LJ: Yeah. But I think, I think, oh, I would like anybody go see it if they have the money to go. I want to go back one more time. When we sell our house in Seattle, I thought we would sell it, we're going to sell it in the spring and then we buy this. Ah, then I'd like to go back one more time, to see my brothers and my sister there is still alive. And so, and if my aunt's stay alive until then, I would like to....

BT: That would be nice.

LJ: And my mother— my mother died very young. She came over here for a visit. She got so homesick, very ill; she had kidney disease— that's what she died of. And, she, Dad and Mom had the papers to stay, but Mama says, "I've got to go home, Liselotte. Tell Dad I need to go home. I'm sick." So I had to tell Daddy, and she died a year later. And I couldn't go home.

BT: Oh, that's too bad.

LJ: That was hard, not being able to go be with my mom. I mean, here I was, a nurse. And the same with Babett, my oldest sister, she was so amazing as a little girl. She was only forty-nine, and I couldn't go home.

BT: Oh.

LJ: It was rough. I had only been home four times in sixty-five years.

BT: Wow.

LJ: Yep, and that, you know, was, um, these children, these children have different lives here. So much freedom for these kids, I mean, what do they do in summer here: nothing.

BT: It's true.

LJ: Get in mischief. You know, it's kind of sad. First I came, at least they worked in the spuds, all the kids. But now, why do they let them out of school if they don't even work in the spuds?

BT: I don't know.

LJ: I think they should just let that go, and the ones who do have to help, maybe, let them go. But most of them don't

BT: It's, it's true. My sister just sat around and played games all week.

LJ: Yeah! What would they do without our videos, without the TV and all the games?

BT: Yeah.

LJ: You know, and the T– my word, oh we, we would never sit, my mother would never even let us sit, just sit. She would come with our knitting. We would knit, knit, you know.

BT: Wow.

LJ: Oh then, on Saturdays, we scrubbed. I mean, the house, the floor was so shiny you could eat off from. We cleaned the kitchen floor; I had to scrub three times a day: after breakfast, after lunch, after dinner.

BT: Every, every day?

LJ: Every day, three times a day.

BT: Wow.

LJ: The kitchen floor got scrubbed.

BT: That would be clean.

LJ: It was clean. And the living room, it had hard wood, we never saw carpet, our mothers, they had hard wood for floor. [Undistinguishable] It was that way I wish I had hard wood. I would have mine shine so beautiful, you know? So, but, so do I need some more? Do you need more?

BT: Um, we need fifteen more minutes.

LJ: Okay.

BT: I, I did have a couple of questions.

LJ: Okay, you ask.

BT: Okay. Um, were you a convert? Or were you born, were your parents Mormon and...

LJ: No. My father was not LDS. My mother joined the Church when I was three years old.

BT: Okay.

LJ: And, um, and then when we were old enough, she would let us join when we want. Now, see, over there, they did not like the Mormons in our village.

BT: Okay.

LJ: They did not. And when they found out that we, that we were Mormons, that we joined, and that's, that's why they were so mean, too.

BT: Oh, the teachers?

LJ: The teachers.

BT: Okay.

LJ: And we weren't rich. We couldn't bring a side of meat, you know, like, from like a pig, ham and stuff. We didn't have it. I mean, Dad— We raised, Dad raised the pigs so we could eat in winter. Mother bottled the meat, and you smoked all the ham and the bacon. But, we were, we were the biggest family in the village: seven children. You don't see that very often, back home.

BT: I didn't know that.

LJ: Uh-uh. Usually Swiss have two or three.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And we were there with seven. So we were kind of look down on. But, I was glad Mom joined the Church. And then my dad did not join the Church. I was in this country already about twelve years before I, my mom announced Dad had joined the Church. And I prayed for Dad, even as a little girl: "Please, Father in Heaven, let Daddy join, so we can pray together."

BT: Aw.

LJ: And finally he did.

BT: That's good.

LJ: Yeah. And then, before they went home to Switzerland, back home, we took them to Salt Lake, and one of the old mission presidents that spoke German sealed us to, on Monday night, to Mom and Dad in the Salt Lake Temple.

BT: Oh.

LJ: But that was, that was wonderful. I never thought I would see that, you know my dad and...

BT: Yeah!

LJ: I was so proud of him.

BT: That's neat.

LJ: Yeah. That was wonderful.

BT: Um, was there a church in the village, or where was the closest meetinghouse?

LJ: No, we had to go to Pratteln. We had to go, most the time we had to walk. Mom didn't have the money for the train. It was probably about four miles away to walk.

BT: Wow.

LJ: On Sunday morning early, and then we walked back home. And, ah, no, we didn't have, the Church rented, the Church rented, um— There was not a church yet. We just rented a place, they had a big room for all the members, then have extra rooms we go in. But when I went home last time, they got a big church house in Pratteln now.

BT: Oh, good.

LJ: A big chapel. Oh, and it's growing, too. But the Swiss people are very stubborn. I don't envy those missionaries when they have to go over there. Because the people, you know, they're, they're, ah, Catholic, and then they're Presbyterian— is that what it's called? It's Swiss reform school, reform church. And then, and there, the Catholics and them did not like us, no, not the Mormons. But I think it's better now.

BT: That's good.

LJ: You know it's better than what it used to be. Oh, they used to really chase us and throw rocks at us and stuff, you know.

BT: Wow.

LJ: Because we joined the Church. And the missionaries, boy, they see them come; they showed them a rough time. They really did. Yep, that's Switzerland, you know.

BT: Yeah.

LJ: That was Switzerland. But, I'm glad to be back in Rexburg, even though it's growing like crazy. Aiiiiee, I've got to get used to that.

BT: I know; me too.

LJ: I say don't come to Rexburg: it's too cold in winter time!

BT: Was it colder here or in Switzerland?

LJ: It's colder here. Because I lived in Füllinsdorf, close to Rhine, close to the German border.

BT: Oh, okay.

LJ: But then my brother moved to Interlaken; he, that's where the mountains are. But you know when we went there for our fiftieth, it was February, and there, really in Interlaken, half the trees blooming, flowers growing, little violets. That's up in the mountains. That be, it's cold. Yeah, we went up there, and we had to take our winter coats up there, because it's cold up there. But we have snow all year round on the mountains. All year round, you can ski, even in summer.

BT: That would be fun.

LJ: Yeah, wouldn't that? Yeah, yeah, it was, it was a good country.

BT: Did you have any traditions, like Christmas traditions that you guys, or your family did all the time?

LJ: Oh yeah. Christmas, don't, they don't celebrate all month. On Chris– on the fifth, fifth of December, Santa Claus comes. And Santa Claus– we were always scared to death of him. He come with a little donkey and his sleigh, and he had a black thing on, with a bunch of white cotton that looked like snowflakes. And he carried a bag, and when he come, ah, Santa Claus day, they ring and ring, and they come in. Ai, and so all of us had to tell him a little verse, and I will tell you what mine was: [Recites poem in German.] And then he would give us a lebkuchen⁹, and that was special. And a [undistinguishable] chocolate, you know, about this long and around this big. Oh, that was a chocolate! And I loved it. And that would last me– I would take a little bite every day, because we didn't have treats like you. We had only special– Christmas time, Mom made cookies for Christmas: anistroessel, zimtsterne.

BT: Are these holiday cookies?

LJ: Holiday cookies.

BT: Okay.

LJ: We don't make them through the year. Lebkuchen. And, then the Swiss [undistinguishable] and then Santa Claus goes... back again. But then, Christmas Eve, you hurry, go to the milk house and get your milk. That's when we got cow's milk, too, for Christmas. And then we go to bed real early because the Christmas angel and Santa come. That's when we put the tree up.

BT: On Christmas Eve?

LJ: Mm-hmm. And you don't help; you're in bed. And, oh, that'd be so exciting. We never got much. Mom could not afford it, and Dad. And maybe, Mom knits us a sweater, or she knits us socks or maybe when I was old enough to go to, um, to learn about sewing and that, I got one of those sewing little boxes.

BT: Oh, okay.

LJ: And, um, and then I never had a doll til I was about twelve. And the little old lady gave Mama her doll. She said, "I want you to fix this up for Liselotte." And she had it on Christmas and I couldn't believe it. I had a— And I was so— can you see twelve year olds playing with dolls?

BT: Not anymore.

LJ: Ah. I was so thrilled. I took it to my granddaughter in, in Seattle; she had leukemia. And I took it, and I told her, "Now, this, this dolly is a hundred and six years old, so take good care of it, because you're my first grandchild. This dolly will help you. My mother had red hair with [undistinguishable], my mother had that cut of hair years before. She made a wig out of it, which is great. And that doll has my mother's hair.

BT: That's neat.

LJ: And it had joints, right here and here. And I had to get it put back together because parts of it were out, you know. But I tell you, it's the most beautiful doll. And then I have old pants and little buttons, you know, with the big [undistinguishable], like many years ago. I was thrilled when I got my first— that's the only doll I've ever had.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And then, when my mother came over, she brought me my doll. I was just, ah, it was wonderful. And with that doll, I said to my granddaughter: "Honey, don't let the little girls play with it, please, because that's got to last, forever!"

BT: Well, yeah, a hundred years.

LJ: Yeah, you know, the lady was close to ninety that gave that to Mom. And she had it about since she was about ten.

BT: Wow.

LJ: And then, I got it when I was twelve, now figure out. And I'm seventy-two now.

BT: Wow. Yeah.

BT: You don't look it.

LJ: I feel it at times. But anyway, do you need more questions? I talk too much. More, I'll tell you, but you have to come another day now.

BT: I know! Um, I just wanted to ask, um, what you remember about, um, World War II. I don't know how much that affected you.

LJ: Oh, okay. Yeah, we were right close to the German border, see, by Basel.

BT: Yeah.

LJ: And, ah, the Nazis were terrible. Here, in school or at home, at night, they had to close all their shutters, for the planes go by, you know, they couldn't see the town. We turned all the streetlights out as soon as it started to get dark, at night. And all the shutters were— and they say if you go outside, don't turn the light on. Just go out if you have to, but don't— And then, when the sirens come, we go in shelters. Um, we had under the beds; each of us had a pillowcase. We put everything in, what we will need, ah, like toothpaste, toothbrush, soap, nightie, a change of clothes, you know, stuff like that. And ah, so when it come, we would go into shelters, we would get our little thing and go to shelters. Now in school, it was the same thing. Every time the siren go off, we go into the shelters. Schools have big shelters, in the buildings. And, ah, in Switzerland, they're ready. The military— all the men go to be in the military for, they start when they're eighteen, and they get trained 'til they are fifty-five. Every year, you have to be retrained.

BT: Wow.

LJ: They have, they have uniforms at home and the rifle. It's always there. And there, you have shelters in the mountains. It's the, when's it dark, those shelters, you know, each village would know where to go, and they will take you all up to the mountain. We have, actually, ah, in some of the mountains there; they have, um, like hospitals, stores, where they can take care of the people. We were all ready if Hitler would have come. And he wanted to. If the Americans wouldn't come, he would have taken over Switzerland.

BT: Because I always thought Switzerland was neutral.

LJ: It is neutral, but we're always ready.

BT: That's probably smart.

LJ: Yeah, but Hitler, if he would have won, he would have taken over Switzerland. He had it all in mind. He was a wicked man. I saw him; I was just a little girl. 'Cuz Daddy was born in Germany, so we went to Berlin, and he, we went with him. And he had a big parade going on, with all those Nazis and the soldiers, you know, the way they march. And Hitler was coming in that car, that convertible. Boy, there he was. And now the "Heil, Hitler!", you know, they all went like that, and I remember to this day, and I was

just a little girl, about four, Dad said– the war wasn't on yet, but it was starting. He was in charge of everything. He said, "That man is going to try to conquer the world. And he won't care how he will do it."

BT: Wow.

LJ: He was wicked. Oh, all those poor little people. We went, after the war was over, I went, some of our school, to some of the concentration camps. That was when I was in the household school. They took us to Germany. I tell you, that, I just sobbed. I just, people don't realize what war can do.

BT: It's true.

LJ: Oh, it's horrible. That was terrible. And I, I used to go up to, um, the soldiers there, they had a [undistinguishable], not very far, and, they always told us, "You come and get food from us. We always have a lot of food left." So, I have a little bucket, Mother sent me a little pot, and, you know, hand light, with a handle, and a little kettle, like. And I went there every evening; we even got food for school.

BT: From the soldiers?

LJ: Yeah. They'd fill that all up, and, and one time– and I love pasta, spaghetti, and they filled it up to the rim; oh, I loved that. And they always said, "Now, little one, you be here tomorrow night."

BT: Now, were these the German soldiers, or were these...

LJ: They were Swiss.

BT: Okay.

LJ: No, we didn't have German ones in– And they were always ready in the borders, like in the French part of Switzerland, because it's connected with French, but it's cut off. All the Swiss soldiers were on the border.

BT: Wow.

LJ: All. They were so protective. And I tell you, they, the Swiss, they know how to fight. They're ready.

BT: That's, that's very good. That's very wise.

LJ: Yeah, it is. I just wish that war was over in now, oh, it's terrible, those poor people. It's bad. But, we, you know, we made it. But you know, things are so bad out there now, they even hate the term [undistinguishable] anymore. But if we live righteously, we don't have to worry.

BT: That's right.

LJ: Our prophet knows and he always tells us not to worry, just live a good life. And I do feel, you know, it does, like with that storm¹⁰, that's about faith.

BT: Yeah, it could be.

LJ: That's about faith. It is. And there's going to be a lot more things happening. I wish people would wake up and repent, you know? They lack faith. So, but, we will make it.