

Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series

Anna Ostergaard Interview

Conducted by James Newberry

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Transcribed by Isabel Mann

Born in 1929, Anna Ostergaard grew up on a farm in Denmark. After Germany invaded in 1940, she stayed away from the cities, where air raids sent people fleeing into bomb shelters.

Ostergaard's family survived on a consistent supply of vegetables from the garden. Ostergaard married after the war and immigrated to the United States in 1955. She recorded her oral history interview at Kennesaw State University in August 2018.

Full Transcript

Interviewer: This is James Newberry and I'm here with Anna Ostergaard on Thursday, August 8th, 2018 at the Sturgis Library at Kennesaw State University. I want to thank you for sitting down with me and ask if you agree to this interview?

Ostergaard: Yes I do.

Interviewer: Ok, well wonderful. Well, we'll just start at the beginning. If you could tell me your full name?

Ostergaard: My name is Anna Madsen Ostergaard.

Interviewer: And could you spell your maiden name?

Ostergaard: My maiden name is M-A-D-S-E-N.

Interviewer: And what's your birthday?

Ostergaard: January 6th, 1929.

Interviewer: Ok, wonderful. Let's talk about where you were born. Tell me the town, the island, the community.

Ostergaard: I was born on the island Funen in a little town, sort of in the middle of the island. It's near the city of Odense and its name is Brylle, B-R-Y-L-L-E.

Interviewer: And this was in Denmark?

Ostergaard: Yes.

Interviewer: And you mentioned earlier that this was the second largest island?

Ostergaard: Yes. It's the second largest island. It's kind of small but it's the second largest island in Denmark.

Interviewer: And what was the landscape like?

Ostergaard: It was very, almost flat. There were a few little what you call rolling hills but mostly it's a flat island.

Interviewer: Were there forests?

Ostergaard: Mostly it was little farms and a few forests and of course, there were smaller cities too.

Interviewer: So, could you tell me your parents' names?

Ostergaard: My father's name was Hans Julius Madsen and my mother's name was Gudrun Pedersen Madsen.

Interviewer: And could you spell her first name?

Ostergaard: Her first name was G-U-D-R-U-N.

Interviewer: And what about siblings? How many?

Ostergaard: I had two brothers and two sisters.

Interviewer: And what were their names?

Ostergaard: My oldest brother was Claus, C-L-A-U-S. My youngest brother was Svendarne, S-V-E-N-D-A-R-N-E.

Interviewer: And then your sisters'?

Ostergaard: And my sister, my—one sister was Kieran and the other sister was Edel, E-D-E-L.

Interviewer: So where did you fall in the lineup?

Ostergaard: I fall—I had a brother that was two years older than me and then I came. Two years later, another brother. Two years later, another—a sister. And then two years later, another sister.

Interviewer: So you were the oldest sister?

Ostergaard: Yeah. I was the mother figure. [laughs]

Interviewer: [Laughs] I was going to ask, what did it mean to be the oldest sister?

Ostergaard: It means I got told many times “you look after the little ones” but the little one was almost as big as me.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Ostergaard: Yeah.

Interviewer: You mean they were just tall?

Ostergaard: Well, one of them was taller and the other one was short like me.

Interviewer: So can you tell me what your parents did for a living?

Ostergaard: We had a farm, a small farm. A dairy farm [inaudible] with some cows and on the land he grew wheat, rye, oat, and barley and he also grew sugar beets and, well, for the household he grow vegetables and stuff.

Interviewer: And you mentioned a dairy farm, so did you have—.

Ostergaard: We had—we—we had maybe 11 or 12 cows and the milk got sent to a dairy that was—I don't know exactly what you call it but all the farms delivered to the same dairy and my father had a milk route where he picked up milk from the other farmers and took it to the dairy and that, of course, was a horse—drawn [inaudible].

Interviewer: Did you, did the family have a car?

Ostergaard: No.

Interviewer: Were cars common?

Ostergaard: No. Some people had cars but during the war years there was no gas for the private cars. So, the one that had cars were blocked up. [inaudible]

Interviewer: How close was the nearest house, like neighbor?

Ostergaard: We kind of mostly looked over the family than to look to the neighbor but I would say about two miles from, on the street. We had private road about half a mile of private road from the public road to our farm and then you had to go a little bit on the public road and then up another private road to get to their farm.

Interviewer: So a good ways away?

Ostergaard: Yeah.

Interviewer: And can you tell me what your chores were on the farm, other than looking after your younger siblings?

Ostergaard: Well, I learned to cook and sew and those kinds of things and for several years, I was sort of in charge of the chickens and pick up eggs and that kind of stuff. And then I learned to milk the cows because that was done by hand.

Interviewer: What sort of things did you cook?

Ostergaard: Well, we—for every day, we cooked—if it was Sunday then sometimes we would have a chicken and then once a year or maybe twice a year we would slaughter a pig and have a—but we didn't have freezers and stuff so it was mostly—we put it in a big, kind of, like a, I don't know, we called it a car. [unsure of spelling] It was a big oval, one made out of, with wood and then you would put salt in it and salt a lot of it.

Interviewer: And then what was every day food?

Ostergaard: Every day food under the war a lot of times we would have just barley, kind of, cereal but cooked in milk and then we would have potatoes with a little bit of bacon in it like fried up.

Interviewer: So could you describe your home?

Ostergaard: My home was an old—fashioned, it was four square—like—in the middle there was like a courtyard and on one side there was the place where we lived, living quarters, and on another side was where the cows and the horses were on the other side that was maybe where the pigs were. And then there were where we kept grain when we harvest in—brought it in because we brought it in and then we got it taken care of later to get the grain off.

Interviewer: Did you have to share a bedroom?

Ostergaard: Yeah. We had very small rooms and my two sisters and I, we shared a room and the one sister and I we shared bed. [laughs]

Interviewer: And what was the roof made out of?

Ostergaard: Straw. It was made out of wheat straw that was tr—. we had a special machine that took off the kernels of wheat and then the straw got nice and smooth and straight.

Interviewer: Did that take upkeep? Did you have to take care of it?

Ostergaard: Yeah. It got—there was people that was their job. We hired people to come and they would—I remember a couple of times during my years living there that they had to replace certain parts of the roof. They took it off and put new straw on.

Interviewer: How long had the home and the farm been in your family?

Ostergaard: It has been there probably a couple of hundred years.

Interviewer: Because you mentioned your father was born there.

Ostergaard: Yeah and my grandfather was six years old when he had gotten there.

Interviewer: That's a long history.

Ostergaard: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, I wanted to ask when you were young in the 1930's, how much interaction did you have with people from the city?

Ostergaard: From the real city, the big city, the only connection I had was my father's brother. He lived in the big city and he worked with a place where they made—at first, I was going to say soft drink, but there was, like, it was like a non—alcoholic beer or something. It was kind of a drink they made there where he was working.

Interviewer: And where was he?

Ostergaard: He was Odense and there was another one that was in Copenhagen and I don't really know exactly what he worked with but there was a couple of them that lived in the city. Then my father had a sister who also had a little farm about maybe six miles away from where we lived.

Interviewer: Did you ever travel to those places as a child?

Ostergaard: No. We, well, we had—my father and mother tried to take us into the big city, to Odense, to see the Christmas decoration and they were very sparse but it was nice but we didn't get—actually, with five kids we didn't get to go too many places except my grandparents, my mother's parents, they lived about 20 miles away from where we lived and we walked to their place or when we were a little bit older we rode a bicycle to there.

Interviewer: So tell me about your education in those early years?

Ostergaard: I'm sor—.

Interviewer: Your education?

Ostergaard: Oh, yeah. We had some old schools and in the late thirties they had all the plans made up for new schools to be built and more teachers to come in but in 1940 we got the German occupation and we could no longer get material for new—so I only went to two different buildings and the first one we went for three years and the second building was for four years. We got out of school when we were 14 unless if our parents had money to send us to a boarding school.

Interviewer: And what sort of subjects did you learn?

Ostergaard: We learned regularly writing, arithmetic, reading, and we had a lot of songs, there were a lot of songs going on. Everybody was singing. [laughs]

Interviewer: What kind of songs?

Ostergaard: Well all the—the national song—Denmark has a lot of and the island I came from they call that the singing island, but my voice is not that good. [laughs]

Interviewer: So you went to school through 14?

Ostergaard: Yeah. From 7 to 14. And when you started school the teacher expected us to know your alphabet, be able to count and do quite a bit of stuff we learned and if you had older brother or sister, they were supposed to teach the younger siblings before they came to school. We did go to school three days a week and the other three days we did home— like homeschool.

Interviewer: How did you get to school?

Ostergaard: Walk. Because we were five kids and for a long time, we only had one bicycle. [laughs]

Interviewer: And what sort of clothing did you wear to school?

Ostergaard: Well, the girls wore dresses and the first teacher I had she required the girls wear apron because she was very economic. She said that we would get our dresses dirty and they would have to be washed too often. I don't know about the boys though, but they didn't have to wear apron. [laughs]

Interviewer: So how was your family impacted by the Depression?

Ostergaard: Well, they mostly were impacted—there was a, we had—well, of course we couldn't have too much light on and at night we had to have black curtains for when there was no light supposed to be able to shine out and then the electricity get rationed out. I don't know exactly how but I guess when—it was never shut off in our place but if you used too much I guess they just shut it off on you. So, we had when we were getting a little older, 12, 13, 14 years old, we liked to listen to something on the radio and I know my parents would maybe go early to bed and we would have the choice—do we want to have the light on or do you want to listen to the radio? We turned off the light. We have 15 watt light bulb.

Interviewer: So you would turn off the light to listen to the radio?

Ostergaard: [Laughs] Yeah because we had to know the latest songs.

Interviewer: Did you always have that radio or do you remember purchasing it?

Ostergaard: We had—when I first remember about it, we had—I think I remember sometime during the war we did get a new radio and it had a record player and we had a few records we listened to.

Interviewer: So I know you were young in the 1930's but did you have any knowledge of larger events happening in Germany at that time?

Ostergaard: The only thing I—I—well we, in the—when the war started, they hadn't come to Denmark yet, I remember the day when everybody was listening to radio and they said that the war had started or that the Germans had started the war but at that time Denmark was not too much involved with anything but then in April of 1940 that was when the Germans came in.

Interviewer: Well how did your parents react to the news?

Ostergaard: Well, it was sort of a sad thing but they always told us we were lucky we lived out on the farm. We didn't or wasn't in the city where there was like where the Danish soldier had been—they called the caserna.¹ The Germans, they all—the Danish soldiers—I really don't know exactly how it happened because they said when the Germans come in it took three hours or so resistant and Denmark was so

¹ Danish word meaning barracks.

small and they had to give up and the Germans took over the all the military posts and everything and they raised the swastika.

Interviewer: So let's talk about the day the Germans invaded.

Ostergaard: [Frowns] Yeah. That was early in the morning and we were in bed and we heard a terrible noise and then we realized it was big German airplanes that came in and I know the people that lived by the water which there's just a lot of coastline all around in Denmark, there was the Germans' boats and all the fishermen they had problem getting out to do their job getting fish and get back in cause there were mines in the water and everything.

Interviewer: So you remember hearing airplanes?

Ostergaard: Yep. I was laying in the bed and my sister wasn't there so.

Interviewer: Was there any warning?

Ostergaard: Not that I as a child know but there could have been but I don't know because I was only 11 and I lived out on a farm and I thought everything was, you know, going day by day.

Interviewer: And what about your parents?

Ostergaard: Well my father, he had that milk route where he had to go around to all the farms and pick up the milk and I remember him being very sad and very—he, I don't know, he usually was always smiling and whistling and stuff and he was very quiet and very sad and my mother, she was just going around the house and we didn't know—we were not, we didn't really know what we had never, you know, experienced anything like that. So it was altogether different but we got our family life together again and had, in spite of it all, kind of a happy family life but there was a lot of things we couldn't do anymore, we weren't allowed to do.

Interviewer: What weren't you allowed to do?

Ostergaard: Well, there was a lot of curfews and stuff. Sometime, they had curfews at many different hours. Sometime it was six o'clock in the evening and we couldn't get on public road and we couldn't have—sometime we couldn't have no more than ten people. Like if there was a get—together like in the community hall, they were not allowed to have more than ten people come in and then some—they let people come to church and we also had exercise but there was always German soldiers around somewhere. We didn't always see them real close but we know they were there when they came around.

Interviewer: How did you learn of these rules like the curfew?

Ostergaard: To tell the truth, I'm not sure, a hundred percent sure how it came out but we were always told by our parents what we could do and what we couldn't do and we better listen because there was people that went out after curfew and kind of

disappeared. Some of them came back again but some—I don't know what they did.

Interviewer: And you mentioned seeing German soldiers. Did you ever have an up—close interaction?

Ostergaard: Well, the German soldiers they—some of them was SS troops and some was more civilian. Well they wasn't civilian, they were soldiers but they didn't disturb other people and some of them kind of looked like almost like they liked to be in Denmark because it was away from the where the real war zone was because in Denmark it had end— the actual fighting but there came—there was—we mostly experienced in the war was we—the airplane that were flying over from England to Germany for bombing in, mostly in Hamburg and when we look outside in the night sometime we could see the light in the sky from the burning and well, there, you know, there was some like everywhere else there was something going on sometime. Like if a girl, some girls got involved with a German and somebody got upset and they had something going on but most of that—when we lived out on the farm, away from the city, we didn't experience too much of that.

Interviewer: You mean young Danish women?

Ostergaard: Yeah, there were some of them.

Interviewer: And they were fraternizing with— ?

Ostergaard: Yeah some of them but they—people was not kind to them later.

Interviewer: Because—.

Ostergaard: Because of what they did.

Interviewer: I see. I wanted to ask you quickly about the king.

Ostergaard: The king, he was a—he was put on a pedestal and he did not want any guards around him. He rode on his horse down the street in Copenhagen, all by himself. No, no life guard or anybody around him. No secret service or anybody around him. He wanted to be by himself so he, he was a proud man.

Interviewer: Why do you think he did that?

Ostergaard: Because he wanted to show the Danish people they have to stand up for their rights, they had to—but, but of course, they didn't have a whole lot of rights in those days.

Interviewer: So you mentioned the radio. Could you—what sort of news could you get?

Ostergaard: Oh, the Danish news that got filled by the Germans but there came news from England but there came so much noise on the radio when they were sending news so we could hardly hear it but enough so you could actually hear the truth where the Germans were and how far they went into different places. And of course, for

quite a few years they were making progress. They were moving all along, all the way.

Interviewer: What did your parents think of the Germans?

Ostergaard: My father, he, he was the one, he was the head of the family. He, he said there is good and there is bad Germans and we have to think of some of them as put there against their will so he didn't want us to agree with or be friendly, you know, come out and get friendly with them but he did not like some people—they would go and when a German passed, they would turn around and spit on the ground or something. He said don't do that. It could be your brother that was forced to go to a different country and, you know, occupy some other place but he definitely did not want us to get involved with any Germans at all.

Interviewer: Now you mentioned the airplanes coming over, the English planes.

Ostergaard: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was—tell me about the incident

Ostergaard: They had—they mostly at night when you were in bed. You would wake up and you would hear a certain humming sound and then they got louder and the English airplane had one particular sound and then it would go maybe a few minutes or maybe half an hour and then you heard another sound and that was the German coming after and then sometime you could hear them shooting. We had, we didn't have basement but if people had basement, they went in the basement and if you were—if it happened in the daytime and you were in the city, there was a siren going off and you have to go in the first basement, whether it was private or if it was a store or anything, you have to go in the first basement and if it was dark, there was hardly any light. There was just a tiny little light, you have to go in there. So we didn't go too many places around from, too far from home really but—I never, I never had, I—some people had experience where they went into the city and the siren went off and they had to go in strange people's basement. They were scared and of course, the people, if it was private people especially, they would be afraid who would come into the basement because they all had to go off the street.

Interviewer: How did your family protect themselves?

Ostergaard: Well we didn't have basement but when we heard, if we could hear both kind of airplanes then we went up and we sat underneath the kitchen counter. So in case, if the window should be scattered by one of the—when they were shooting, there came some shells down—then we wouldn't get hit by the shells.

Interviewer: How did you feel during that time?

Ostergaard: Yeah, that was a strange feeling. Somehow, we felt kind of, somewhat scared, but still we feel safe with our parents. We sort of believed we were going to come out of it one day and we did.

Interviewer: You mentioned a battle between English and German planes where a plane went down?

Ostergaard: Yeah, that was one springtime. That was in the daytime, mostly they were at night we heard that but this was like in the mid—morning. We heard the English airplane coming and then we could hear the Germans coming and apparently there was an air fight close, not too far from where I lived and somehow the Germans shot down the English airplane and well, being kids we had to look out the window and see what it was and here comes like a big fireball through the clouds and then there came all these parachutes but people in them that was the English soldiers coming down and the Germans' tank—well not tank, trucks—they were coming around, coming in all kind of roads and all around there but there was a few of the English that got away and got into a Danish place. There was a man in the little town where I lived, they—he got one in and he got his parachute. He kept that parachute material and after the war, when their daughter got married, he made her wedding dress out of the parachute material. So, that was a big wedding. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, I want to talk a little more about the—I know you had to give some of the crops to the Germans.

Ostergaard: Oh, yeah. There was some people that got hired by the German come out to see how many acres of land we had. Now ours was not the biggest farm but they come anyway and they checked how much—how much we'd—what else did we have on our farm and then they decided and this was in the springtime after the seeds were in the ground but they hadn't grown up yet and they decided how much wheat and rye. They would, they wanted wheat and rye for their bread and then they would say now if there was a good year, you know if the weather was nice, and you got a lot of grain then you would have enough to fulfill what—they did indeed give you money for it but it was a moderate amount of money. Then, they—if you didn't get enough of that, if there wasn't enough wheat and rye then they would take some, I think it was barley mostly. They would take some of that and they would give the same amount of money for the barley as they did for the wheat and rye but then, if the—we had like pigs that needed to be, have some of the grain from the barley and things like that. And if you needed it yourself, you could buy it back but it cost more money to buy it back than what you got for it in the first place.

Interviewer: So was it ever significantly difficult to feed the animals?

Ostergaard: No. We always were able to get taken care of things but sometimes—well, it was hard to be a farmer because sometimes they would lose money instead of earning

money and sometime like I remember we grew some vegetables that we were going to sell and they were going to go on the railroad. We had tomatoes out in the—we called it the free land tomatoes without the hot house or anything—and we had them in boxes and they got to the railroad station. Well then the railroad got bombed and for two or three days the rail couldn't go so all our tomatoes rotted. So that was just—it was a hard time for many. Just the way it was.

Interviewer: Did you ever have fear that there wouldn't be enough food?

Ostergaard: No, out on the farm we always had enough because there was—we had potatoes and if we didn't have enough. We usually had potatoes and then some bacon fat leftover and then we put some onion in and fried it up. We ate the potatoes with little bits of bacon or maybe just onions, whatever. And we had beets. We pickled beets. We had stamps for sugar but we—like for canning and stuff—but it wasn't, it wasn't a whole lot but you just canned it and did the best you could with it.

Interviewer: Who issued the stamps?

Ostergaard: To tell the truth, that I don't know. I know we got them from the little community center where there was an office where they handed them out but I don't know who decided in the first place what we would get.

Interviewer: How long of a time did they, you know, cover? Was it like a week?

Ostergaard: Well, no we usually got it for I think three months. I think we got it for at a time.

Interviewer: So were there any other items rationed? Non—food items?

Ostergaard: Yea— well, let's see. I don't remember under the war how it was but there were things that we could—that we didn't have stamps for like for example soap and detergent and stuff like that but we could only get but I don't remember having stamps for it but we could only get a certain amount when we bought it. I don't know how we sorted that out but I know one thing like the soap like the hand soap when you rubbed it, it felt like it was clay. It hardly gave any foam on it. [smiles]

Interviewer: Did these things—the rationing and the stamps—did that happen all at once under the occupation?

Ostergaard: It happened, so soon—I don't remember it before 1940 but I think it had just happened in 1940 and then it went on and it went on a couple of years after the war. But we got better rations and, but like under the war we couldn't get coffee and tea, real coffee and tea. It was something they made up from other kinds of stuff. So when they first came in, we got like one quarter of a pound of coffee a month per person or something like that and we still had those stamps in 1951, we got married and we still had some of the stamps at that time where we couldn't get just everything we wanted.

Interviewer: So those shortages persisted?

Ostergaard: But, yeah. The Germans was mostly in charge, you know, for the five years but it took several years before the Danish people got back to sort of normal.

Interviewer: So, let's transition to resistance. I know we talked about this a little bit on the way. Could you give me sort of an overview of your knowledge of resistance efforts?

Ostergaard: All I know was that they had groups that met in secret and they planned to— they did quite a bit where they — because they were having troop trains, trains going by the German troops and they would bomb the oil route where, so they would stop, so they interfere with their—and there were mines in the water. I don't know the mines, how they got in but that was—the Germans I'm sure put some in somewhere but I don't know exactly but the Danish fishermen, they did a good job try to resist around all the coastline because they had a lot of coastline and they got a lot of people to safety in Sweden, from Denmark and over to Sweden.

Interviewer: So did you have any interaction with people who were working underground?

Ostergaard: I don't really know if my parents had any and I was too young to be into it but my husband was three years older than me. His family, they had, up in the northern part of the country that's where he was born and raised and some of his family had been and they would be—I don't know how they get contact with England but there was English airplane that dropped supplies for the underground and there was a part of, a little, well, a part of, a northern part that was like a wilderness where there were swamp and trees and bushes and stuff. And they would drop some weapons and some different stuff down for the underground. And they would do that at night and I know that some of his family was involved with that but I don't know much about that part.

Interviewer: I know many of the resistance efforts were to help Danish Jews.

Ostergaard: Yeah, well, the Jews, of course, was the ones that were worst off down in Germany and they tried to get across the border over to Denmark and some came by the water and some came by land and most of the Danish people, they were very—they liked to be very kind to the Jews but it was very hard. It seemed like the Germans were ever—all over. And then there was some Danish people you weren't sure whether they were friend or foe or whatever you want to say. They had to be very careful because otherwise they might all go and some of the ones they tried to save, they just went bad and some went good. It was—but then, I didn't know about it at that time but later on, I heard about that there was some of the Germans, they were not hap— they were soldiers— they were not very happy with the Germans and they turned around and looked the other way when the boats took off for Sweden full of Jews.

Interviewer: Oh, you mean there were German soldiers who looked the other way?

Ostergaard: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok, in helping—.

Ostergaard: They actually—they couldn't physically help them but they could look well they didn't see the boat go in and out.

Interviewer: I see. You mentioned a shoemaker.

Ostergaard: Yeah. I don't really know him that much but I know, my parents knew who he was and he—I don't know if he had come from Germany years ago or if he had been in Denmark a long time but he had a little shop where he did a pair of shoes and as far as I know he made special shoes for people that had to have a special shoe made up if they had deformity of a foot or something. He was a shoemaker and whatever.

Interviewer: Do you recall his name?

Ostergaard: No.

Interviewer: Was he the only Jewish person in your community?

Ostergaard: Well in my community that's the only one that I know a hundred percent that was Jewish and the only thing, the reason I knew he was Jewish was because most people they had Sunday was their holiday but he had Saturday was closed and you know, when you're a kid, you wonder why would somebody not be there on a Saturday or something. But anyways, I don't know anything about him.

Interviewer: And you don't know—.

Ostergaard: And I don't know if he survived. I don't know—I don't remember if he was there all the time under the war or if he disappeared or whatever. I don't know.

Interviewer: So let's see. Was there ever a turning point? I know you were getting the news reports, some of them, from England. When did you get a sense that Germany might not win?

Ostergaard: I'm not completely sure of the time when it was but I remember people, they were more and there were certain time in the evening that news would come and they would get, what we called the 'better news' and there would be hardly any people out. People would be inside and listen to their radio. The news was followed but sometimes we could get the news and sometime there was too much noise so you couldn't hear what they says.

Interviewer: You called it the "better news"?

Ostergaard: The "better news" was probably drowned out but I don't know.

Interviewer: For those people trying to listen into that news, would there have been some punishment if that was discovered?

Ostergaard: Yeah, I'm sure they would but I don't know anybody that got taken listening to it. I don't know. Nobody—see we lived out on the farm kind of by ourselves. We were not close enough to anybody, lived close enough to anybody to really know but from my little town, I don't believe there was anybody that got in trouble but if there had been the Germans had been around, they would be in trouble but they couldn't be everywhere. I mean, the Germans couldn't be everywhere.

Interviewer: So, towards the end of the war, did it become—did it remain sort of difficult living under the Germans or did it ever get any better towards the end?

Ostergaard: No, they didn't get better until they were gone. And the time when, the time came when they were surrendering from Denmark. I remember many of the German soldiers, they walked all the way back to Germany from wherever they were and I guess we were sort of mean. We went to the big road that was the main highway across the island and then— that was the time when actually when the war in Europe was ending and we went and we stood by the road and saw them walk by and I guess we were mean and kind of was happy to see them walk by. And they were walking and they were carrying little wagons and stuff with some things in and some people says, "yeah you can carry it all the way you want but when it comes to the border they going take everything away from you." But I don't know if they did or not.

Interviewer: Did you say anything to them?

Ostergaard: No.

Interviewer: [Laughs]

Ostergaard: My father had told me not to be mean to anything of them because I wouldn't know if there was a few good Germans between two. [laughs]

Interviewer: And you, just to—.

Ostergaard: But I didn't cry either.

Interviewer: You didn't cry?

Ostergaard: No.

Interviewer: So to quickly clarify, there was one bridge linking the island to the mainland?

Ostergaard: Yeah. We were linked to this peninsula that is connected to Germany. There was connection by land but that's the only land connection that Denmark had.

Interviewer: Ok. And the end of the war, the Germans go home and what was life like immediately after?

Ostergaard: Afterward, there wasn't too much improvement for a while but they were trying to find ways to build up because there was a lot of catch up for five years where they—from the thirties was depression and they were behind with buildings and

things like that and then came the war and so by the time in 1950—45, there was a lot like there was boat schools and some hospitals and stuff like that. They have to do a lot of building and they couldn't get enough building material to get everything done right away but there was plans to make things better and actually, we left in '55 and it was getting better at that time. But, I was married in '51 and at that time you—young people, they had a hard time. They couldn't find an apartment. They couldn't find a house for young people and at that time it was like you don't get married, if you can't find a place where you can live. So, well, my husband, he was in the Danish Army from '48 to—he was in a little over a year. Well, anyway, we were engaged by that time but we didn't get married until '51 and at that time, he found a job where part of the pay would be a house we could live in. It was in an apple orchard. And the man, the owner, his parents had lived in the little house next to the main house and if he got the job we could live in that little house. So that's our first home we had in there.

Interviewer: And how did you meet your husband?

Ostergaard: He worked on a farm in the little town where I was and we just—all the young people, you know, we wanted to—we went—we didn't date so much and we just went in mostly a group of young people like went—we had a little place—when we went to the movie there was a little community hall where they set up a screen and some chairs and, or benches and we, maybe we were five, six, or seven or maybe more. We went on our bicycle and went to a movie and I guess we got to sit next to each other. [laughs] Well, somehow, somehow we must have met. [laughs]

Interviewer: What was his name?

Ostergaard: Tage. T-A-G-E.

Interviewer: T-A-G-E?

Ostergaard: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what was his last name?

Ostergaard: Ostergaard.

Interviewer: And tell me about that name. What does it mean?

Ostergaard: That was his either grandfather or great grandfather or somebody before him had had the eastern farm in town because O-S-T in Denmark is ø-s-t and /øst/ that's like east here. So, they had go farm [unclear]—So they had to farm in the eastern part of the country.

Interviewer: So, you met at that time and I just want to ask about those post—war years. How did people talk about the occupation then? Did they talk about it?

Ostergaard: After the war— well, we talked something about it but you know young people they—we had our own ideas but nobody was happy about it but we were happy that, we all thought we were going to have better times coming. But then, his family that was already in the United States, they came back to Denmark to visit and that got us the idea that we would like to try to get to U.S.A. and he said if you come over, we will sponsor for you and then, if you don't like it, after a couple of years we would help you get back to Denmark again and we didn't have any chance of—he worked on a farm when we left but he would like to get into carpenter work and his cousin was into that kind of work. So he said, I could get you in and get started and you could get in. So we took our chances and then we applied to come over and then it took about 13 months before—they did a lot, the American Embassy, they did a lot of checkup about our background, whether there had been any connection with Nazis or anything else and if there had been any sickness and stuff like that. They didn't want that, us to come to the United States if we couldn't take care of ourselves and his cousin had to send his tax papers and stuff over to show that he could support us for a whole year if we couldn't do it ourselves. We couldn't get federal assistance and luckily, we never had to do that either.

Interviewer: So the wait period was 13 months?

Ostergaard: Well, it all depends how fast they get all their—some people have more and some people have less. It depends on what they are looking into because my husband's mother had died when he was a baby and she had tuberculosis and they didn't want anybody that had any but my husband didn't have it and we all got tested for tuberculosis before we could get our papers and stuff. There was a lot of things they—they checked a lot about the underground and on the Nazis, see where people stood at that time and things like that.

Interviewer: What did you know about the United States?

Ostergaard: Well, actually I have to say I didn't know a whole lot but I knew we would have more opportunity to further ourselves both with education and with his work he could get in sooner. We didn't speak English but we learned pretty quick, with an accent. [laughs] But we knew if we worked hard, we could probably make it. And within three years, we had saved up money and built our own house and we couldn't have done that in Denmark.

Interviewer: How did your parents and family feel about you leaving?

Ostergaard: Well, my mother had passed away and she would have been very much against it because she was a homebody and she wanted everybody [unclear]. But my father, he was more of an adventurer and he wished he was young enough so he could have someday but he couldn't leave the farm because he took over the farm from his father.

Interviewer: And you mentioned something had happened to your home?

Ostergaard: Oh, there was the old farm where something happened. In 1961, lightning struck and it burned down. The whole thing was gone in ten minutes.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you heard that news?

Ostergaard: Oh, I cried. [laughs] I wanted my daughter to come over and see the whole place. But everybody got out and they got just about all the animals out and that was that because the first thing on a farm if things like that happen was to get the animals out of the barn and with a straw roof it didn't take long to—for the fire to go around.

Interviewer: How did you travel to the United States?

Ostergaard: We went—we got tickets on a Norwegian boat, one of their older boats that was making its last tour across the Atlantic and we sailed from Copenhagen to Stavanger in Norway and then to Bergen in Norway and then to Halifax in Canada and then to New York.

Interviewer: Do you remember the name of the ship?

Ostergaard: Yeah. Stavangerfjord.

Interviewer: And you had mentioned that the family members who were sponsoring you, they were in Illinois.

Ostergaard: Yeah but meanwhile they were when we first filled in the paper but then during these 13 months, they had moved to Florida, to St. Petersburg area and they asked, said to us they thought we should come to St. Petersburg area. At least for the beginning and then they would help us to get started and if we needed help and then we could decide where we wanted to go. But in the fifties, the St. Petersburg/Tampa area was growing fast and building was really going strong and my husband he worked as a helper, carpenter helper or some—all around handy man and everything whatever first and then he got into real carpentry and cabinet—making. And then, he worked for different contractors during the years and then he became, the one place—they pumped up the big island down with St. Petersburg and the Gulf of Mexico and they built million dollars home out there and at that time, he had become a finishing carpenter and he really enjoyed doing all this custom work on the houses there.

Interviewer: And tell me about your children?

Ostergaard: My oldest daughter was nine months old when we took her across, come from Denmark to the United States. And then, we didn't have another child for eight years and then our youngest daughter was born in St. Petersburg and they went to school in St. Petersburg in what they call Seminole, right outside of St. Petersburg. The second house we built was outside city limit. It was on—in

[inaudible] Pinellas County and they went to Seminole school and they both, you know, went to elementary and high school and then they went to junior college and the oldest one she went from junior college into the hospital. They were connecting with junior college and other school for x-rays and later for MRI and all those kind of things. So that's what she has been working with in her life. And the younger one, she went to Pensacola in Northwest Florida and she became a computer—it was when computer was just sort of coming in, although they had been there for a while but they were really taking off—and she went in and she has worked as analyst and programmer with ADP in Georgia.

Interviewer: And how did you complete your education?

Ostergaard: I went—well, first I started going, I went to—they had elementary school education at night. So when my husband came home from work, I took the bus and went to a school board that gave those classes. You could go to class and there was a teacher and we got the book and then, we could do as much work at home as we could handle. And with me being home with just one girl there at that time, I did a lot of work in my home and then I would go to school one, once or twice a week, I forgot which one. And then, I finally took my 8th grade test because I had to pass that before I could get high school course. So I did that and high school, I went when my oldest daughter went to kindergarten. She was gone all morning, so I went, there was a morning class in one of the schools down there that gave morning class in high school education. So I went for that for several months and then there was a G.E.D. test so I took that and got my high school diploma and then I got into L.P.N. school and that's where I got it from in '69. And then, I worked in Saint Anthony's Hospital down in St. Petersburg for 20, a little over 20 years.

Interviewer: So, what did you think of Americans interacting with them? How did you get along with people?

Ostergaard: I'm getting along fine. [laughs] I probably wouldn't have stayed if—well, I, you know, it's like every place else. You meet a few people you get along with very, very well and others it's just more cordial, hello and so on but I never met anybody I couldn't get along with really. And people was very, very nice. When I first came, people were so helpful. They saw I had that baby and all and everybody wanted to help with the, you know, they gave me some clothes for the baby and things like that. They had children themselves and some they outgrown. It was nice but I, when I first had been there for a while and we had our first house, after a while I got a license and kept like a little daycare. I had, I could have four children in my home and take care of and then I had a license for that for some time.

Interviewer: Have you kept up your Danish?

Ostergaard: Yeah, I can speak Danish. I speak to, I talk to my sisters.

Interviewer: And how do you communicate with your sisters now? Because they still live—.

Ostergaard: By telephone, by telephone mostly. Well we— they don't want anything to do with computers, the two sisters and so, it's— and we don't write as many let— [laughs] We used to send quite a few, regular letters but it's not so many now. Now it's more by telephone because we like to hear each other's voice. And then, we have been go— we have gone back, my husband and I— when he was alive— we went back to Denmark several times and visit with the family. And we usually would have, be able to take a month off and go and visit for a month over there and as long as my brother had the farm we mostly stayed there and then have a rental car and went out and visited around different places.

Interviewer: So when you think of your identity, do you— what do you call yourself?

Ostergaard: [chuckles] Well by—I feel I'm more American than I'm Danish but I have Danish roots and I never forget that because it is where I come from but my life is here and I have to say if anybody today would ask me if I wanted to live in Denmark, I would say no.

Interviewer: So I've got one more question.

Ostergaard: Ok. [smiles]

Interviewer: How did you end up in Georgia?

Ostergaard: Well, I lived down in Florida and ten years ago, my husband died so I lived alone in my house and was taking care of things around. It was getting a little more complicated to take care of everything and upkeep with the house. So my daughter that lives on the east side of Canton, she had gone around and looked at facilities up here where there was independent living for seniors and she liked it out at the Lodge where I live and she made an appointment. I came up to visit them and we went out. We had an appointment and I liked it right away and I signed up for an apartment but at that time, they were full. There was no apartment available but my daughter said, "let's put your house up for sale and then if it sells and you move out, then you can live with us." I wound up living with them before the house was sold, a little bit before because my house— when the real estate come in, our house was built in '66 and she says, "if we do a few upgrades it will be a better market." So my son-in-law and daughter that live in Florida, they took time off and they came in and started and they started tearing apart quite a bit and they says, "Mom it's better if you move out because this is going to be such a mess." So, I moved up to my daughter and lived there for five months before I—and then there was an apartment available for me.

Interviewer: And I did forget one thing. You had mentioned—so then we're going to go back in time a little bit— you had mentioned a Jewish family that was in hiding in a barn—.

Ostergaard: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Ostergaard: That was when I was in elementary school. It was probably in the early forties or something. There was a lot going on with Jewish people trying to get out of Germany. But anyway, what happened was I had a—well, I had several friends in school but one of them, I was pretty close to and she didn't tell anything. During the war years, she had never told me but we kept contact for several years and after the war, she says, "we had one time, we noticed that there were some eggs that disappeared." And they didn't know why— they thought the chicken was eating the egg and they didn't know why. Well it— they— well, her father had looked into it and he found a Jewish family. I don't know if it was father, mother, and some children. I don't know anything about that but they were up in the hayloft. And they— see these people— it was in the spring or early summer and they were growing vegetables. They hadn't noticed that some of the vegetables had disappeared too but they had been taking vegetable and raw egg and that was what they had lived on. And how they had lived up in a hayloft, I don't have any idea. But they got picked up by some of the underground and going and whether they made it to Sweden, I wouldn't know.

Interviewer: Well, do you have anything else you would like to add as we finish up?

Ostergaard: No. I'll just say thank you for you took—taking care of that this doesn't get forgotten because it—it's something that we need help remember that this happened and that there's things happening all over the world today and it's not pleasant when things happen. I was lucky to live out in the country where I was and all my family came out alive and that was, you know—I've been very happy to be in the United States. [laughs]

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much, Anna Ostergaard.

Ostergaard: Well, you're welcome.

Interviewer: And we'll end there.