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Schwedhelm, Luci interview

Victoria Whiteman

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

by Sally Miller

SCHWEDHELM, Lucy (German)

August 1980

Interviewed by Victoria Whiteman

Transcribed by Robert Siess

[TAPE 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape.]

VICTORIA WHITEMAN: Could you tell me something about what your life was like living in Germany, what your childhood was like, just your early life?

LUCY SCHWEDHELM: I was raised on a farm. We were five girls at home. My sisters and I went to high school to get another job. But everybody could live on the farm when they were growing up.

WHITEMAN: Yeah, five's a lot.

SCHWEDHELM: Then it was the Depression in the '20s and '30s. I finished high school in '31, but there were no job openings for teachers, and you couldn't even get into college at that time. I took business classes. I took business classes, typing...

WHITEMAN: Typing and things like that?

SCHWEDHELM: Typing, yeah. Secretary. But there was no job when I finished. I stayed home. We had enough work at home, but not the money. But, well, the time had gotten better and better, and after a

while, I finally got an office job, and I worked a couple of years. My mother passed away in-between. I lived at home and went to the next city to get a job. I got married in '39. My husband came over here. He came from the same village. He was visiting in '37 when we met. He came back in '39 and we got married. Then the war broke out, and he was an American citizen. He had to go back here, otherwise he would be in trouble, and my papers didn't come back from Washington, and I had to stay here.

WHITEMAN: Until when?

SCHWEDHELM: I was pregnant. Nobody thought the war would last that long. My girl in '40, in '40 she was born, and we thought maybe half a year, year we could leave. But then the war stretched out and stretched out, and we had to wait until '47. My girl was raised over there...

WHITEMAN: How did you feel living in Germany, being married to an American? That must have been very difficult.

SCHWEDHELM: It was [unkind?]. I lived in a little village on a farm. We didn't have the things that we'd have here. We had enough to eat. That was the main thing, is just clothing for my little girl. He couldn't send me no money or no support at all, nothing.

WHITEMAN: Did the community accept you even though you were married to an American?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. That was no problem. You see, he came from the same village, he was German, but he was natural. His father came here and he was a citizen. But that has nothing to do with that. I mean, they gave me food stamps and things. Ration stamps. And a little village was always different than in the big city. Then in '47, I finally came here.

WHITEMAN: Can you tell me what your birth date is? Just approximate if you want.

SCHWEDHELM: My birth date? I was born in December 14, 1914.

WHITEMAN: Wow! You hit the world wars there!

SCHWEDHELM: Yes, that's right! Both of them.

WHITEMAN: Did you come to the United States right away, or did you go to Canada first?

SCHWEDHELM: No, I came here. My daughter was a citizen. You see, my husband was a citizen, and then she was a citizen, but and I had to pay for her passport in dollars, and I couldn't have no dollars. I mean, [] I got my dollar bills. They wouldn't accept no German money in those days. Lots of trouble to go through the paperwork. I never would do it again when I came here.

WHITEMAN: It's kind of like applying to college.

SCHWEDHELM: Oh! Yes.

WHITEMAN: So you brought your daughter over with you?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, well yeah. She was seven years old then.

WHITEMAN: And you had no other children yet?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: You couldn't have any other children yet. I mean, you could, but... [laughs]

SCHWEDHELM: [laughing] '41? Yeah.

WHITEMAN: Did you live with just your husband, or did you live with a grandmother or an aunt and uncle?

SCHWEDHELM: When I came here? No, my husband.

WHITEMAN: Just your husband and your child?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: Did you go to school here?

SCHWEDHELM: He had a little place in French Camp.

WHITEMAN: That's pretty nice out there. I like that.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. He had a little place and we stayed there. It's just, I couldn't drive a car. I couldn't go back and forth. That was one problem. That's why we moved in town.

WHITEMAN: Did you ever go to school again besides high school?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yeah. Yeah. I got my high school diploma, yes.

WHITEMAN: Oh, good for you, good for you.

SCHWEDHELM: See, high school over there is similar to junior college here. I had through high school.

WHITEMAN: Yeah. That's what a couple of my European friends have told me. They said we have it easy while we're in high school, because the last two years over there, you might as well be in junior college.

SCHWEDHELM: That's right.

WHITEMAN: What was your parents' educational background?

SCHWEDHELM: They're all farmers.

WHITEMAN: But they didn't go to high school or anything?

SCHWEDHELM: No. Over there they have 8th grade. That's all that they had. Everybody had to go through the 8th grade. But in the 8th grade, you learn as much as you learn here in high school. Even more.

WHITEMAN: I think it's better. It seems to me that when I was in high school, I wasted a lot of time.

SCHWEDHELM: My grandparents, they could perfectly read and write and arithmetic, while when I came here, I found out that quite a few even didn't finish grade school here. Over there, everybody had to go to 8th grade.

WHITEMAN: And what about your parents' religion, is it the same as yours?

SCHWEDHELM: Catholic, yes.

WHITEMAN: Do you think your religious views have changed since you came from Germany to here?

SCHWEDHELM: My religion?

WHITEMAN: Just your religious views. How you look at things.

SCHWEDHELM: No. It is not quite as strict no more like it used to be. Our religion's changed quite a bit, in the last ten years especially. But in Germany it's the same thing in our religion. We were over there, and it's the same thing like here.

WHITEMAN: Did your mom work outside at all at a job?

SCHWEDHELM: Just a farm.

WHITEMAN: Well that's not just a just, that's a whole lot of work.

SCHWEDHELM: And five children! Wash them by hand, cooking and baking and everything.

WHITEMAN: It's hard work. It'll wear you out.

SCHWEDHELM: That's right.

WHITEMAN: You know, and my relatives are farmers.

SCHWEDHELM: Are they too?

WHITEMAN: Hard work!

SCHWEDHELM: They didn't have machinery back then.

WHITEMAN: No electric mixers.

SCHWEDHELM: No. Milking cows, you didn't have no milking machine. Things like that. Making butter. Everything by hand.

WHITEMAN: What did you think when you left Germany? How did you feel about it? Did you feel good or bad?

SCHWEDHELM: To leave the family behind, it's always sad. But, like after the war, it was so sad in Germany. They didn't have anything. You had the money, but you couldn't buy anything. Anybody who could get away at that time was glad to get away.

WHITEMAN: You mean you would have felt different at another time?

SCHWEDHELM: Before the war, yes. You see, we had everything – like now, my family over there, they're well off. I think they're better off than my children here sometimes. They have money, and they have insurance. The state takes care of hospital bills.

WHITEMAN: Do they live in West Germany or East Germany?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, West Germany. Everybody built a brand-new home and big houses and nice furniture and everything. They don't have to worry about it. To build the house, you save so much money every year, and the government gives you the same amount free. You save 300 marks, the government give you 300 marks. You save 800 marks, the government give you 800 marks a year. That's why they could build houses. But also comparable things what we have here too. Washing machine and dryers and electric stove and everything like we have here. Everything has the same. Their cars nowadays. In those days we didn't have nothing.

WHITEMAN: Sometimes I think people my age don't appreciate what we have because we grew up with it. We just accept the fact that...

SCHWEDHELM: It has to be that way.

WHITEMAN: If you're hungry, you can put a frozen pizza in the oven if you don't wanna cook. You couldn't do that before.

SCHWEDHELM: None of those things.

WHITEMAN: What did you like most about living in Germany? What things do you remember that made you the happiest?

SCHWEDHELM: We live in a smaller community, and family gets together. Now here, I don't have no sisters or anybody here now. That makes it especially on the holidays. Christmas.

WHITEMAN: Yeah. Lots of people in the house for Christmas.

SCHWEDHELM: That's one thing. But as long as you live here and you have your family here and children growing up.

WHITEMAN: What didn't you like about Germany, besides say the lack of appliances and things like that?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, that was everything I liked, it's just I got married that time. That's why I came here, otherwise I never would have come here. Sometimes, you know, when two people get together nowadays... My father didn't want me to come here. But my husband came back in '39. That's why he went in '37. He wanted to get married then. Well, as long as your parents are alive, you always listen to them.

WHITEMAN: You have to. What do you think or what do you remember about your life when you first came to the United States?

SCHWEDHELM: In New York! [laughs]

WHITEMAN: Oh!

SCHWEDHELM: I got lost on the subway! It was 5 o'clock rush hour. I stayed with a friend in New York, in Long Island. We went shopping. My husband came here to pick us up, and we went shopping when it was 5 o'clock rush hour. We went to the major city, and wanted to go home, and here I got lost on the subway. And they thought I didn't have no money to get out. She told me, "Get off on the next station." I get off and they didn't come, and then I went on again, and they couldn't find me no more. And I took a bus home, a streetcar home. I had little money with me, but my husband sent to me [] or gave me []. And they didn't know that I had money on me. If you have money, you can go to a place. I went home to my friend's house, and when they came home, they were so surprised that I got home first, and my little girl was so excited. She didn't know her daddy too much. That was quite an excitement for her. And then we came here. We went to New Mexico. An uncle lived there. Visit him, then we came here to Stockton. My husband and my sister-in-law lives here in Stockton. We stayed there for a while, and then we went off to French Camp. My husband had a little house here. We lived there for a while. That was altogether a little different. I come from a farm and we had a nice big house, and here in French Camp, he only had a small house. But we were on our own. That was the main thing. And then next year, well naturally, we bought this house. We're still living in the same house. '48.

WHITEMAN: Wow! That's a long time.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. We had a little boy in March '48, and in September '48, we moved in this house. We never moved again. That's what the German people do. They buy the house and they stay. They hardly move.

WHITEMAN: Yeah. There's too much moving here, I think. It's hard on little children.

SCHWEDHELM: Every couple years, yeah.

WHITEMAN: What kinds of things did you expect to find when you got here, and what did you think about when you got here?

SCHWEDHELM: People talk about it. Like I said, in Germany, we didn't have much during the war. I mean, you came here, all the food and everything, go in a grocery store, you pick up your own food. You still cannot do that in Germany. We have in the supermarket, but most of them, the vegetable that

people have to. If you want to go through the apples or oranges like they do here, they don't like that. The other thing was, baked goods and everything more... There, during the war, after the war, they didn't have much, but now everything, you can buy anything you like. And the baked goods are better over there than here.

WHITEMAN: Yeah. They use diet margarine here.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: Was there anything that surprised you when you got here? Besides the food, was there something where you were just kind of like, "Wow! I didn't expect that at all?"

SCHWEDHELM: My husband talked about it before, and those cars and things like that that we didn't have in Germany. But then again, after the war, after that was built up again like now, I mean in '50s already, it's all changing. Machinery and things like that. I know that everybody had a car here when I came here. I was so surprised about that.

WHITEMAN: When you first got here, did you live with people who were mostly from Germany?

SCHWEDHELM: No. We didn't have close neighbors at all in French Camp. They were French. There was a very nice French family. They had children, and my daughter could play with them. She had to learn English first. We came in January, in February she went to school, and in the summer months she was reading English and German, and in the fall she skipped the second grade and went into third grade. She was happier in Germany in school when she could read and write, and I didn't even know that she could read German. And she really picked up.

WHITEMAN: She surprised you!

SCHWEDHELM: Yes.

WHITEMAN: Sometimes kids can do that. Did you have any problems when you got here? Was there something that you couldn't understand or scared you?

SCHWEDHELM: No. You see, I took English in school. I could understand. I couldn't speak it too well, and obviously the accent. I could read everything and understand, but to talk to the people, that is very hard. To live with the people when you grow up in the country is altogether different over there.

WHITEMAN: Because I can read Spanish, but if you ask me to speak a sentence in Spanish to save my soul, I couldn't do it.

SCHWEDHELM: You have to learn to Mexico to learn it really.

WHITEMAN: Some day. Did you speak just German when your kids were growing up, did you speak German and English?

SCHWEDHELM: Here? When our boy was born, we spoke German to him until he was two years old, but when we go some place, he never would say a word. Then I said, "You can't keep this one up." Then we

start English, and that was the end of it. Then they didn't want to speak German no more. I was reading with them and talking, and they kept it up until they went to school, that was it. You know, after the war, the German people were hated here. That was one thing, we didn't keep our German language after that. But nowadays it's different again.

WHITEMAN: What about the grandchildren? They don't speak German?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. They read in German. I can read a storyboard if you want.

WHITEMAN: Who lived in your house? Just you and your husband and your children then?

SCHWEDHELM: Mmhmm.

WHITEMAN: No grandparents or uncles or anything?

SCHWEDHELM: Nobody.

WHITEMAN: Did your children have regular chores to do? Take out the garbage, wash the dishes, that sort of a thing?

SCHWEDHELM: When they grew older, yes. They had []. But as long as when they had schoolwork to do, then I told him I would do it. But they were pretty good. Especially the oldest one. She took care of the little ones.

WHITEMAN: Was there any difference in what you expected the boys to do and the girls to do?

SCHWEDHELM: No. They had to participate. When you come in this country, you have to adjust to the country where you live in. That's what I think. You have to learn the language where you live in.

WHITEMAN: I think that's something Americans don't understand, is that when we go to visit another country, we visit that country, so we don't have to absorb their culture. But when you come to America to live, you have to change a lot of things that you think and do, and it's very hard work.

SCHWEDHELM: But I think anybody who wants to come here, they should learn the language.

WHITEMAN: Oh, yeah. In the end.

SCHWEDHELM: When they go to school, my children didn't have lessons or something like they do nowadays. My oldest one came here, she went to school, she had to learn English, and that was it. Nobody helped her in school to translate it. Nobody could speak German in school. She has to figure it out for herself.

WHITEMAN: When they're young, it's easier for them to figure out.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah, and children learn faster. And I think they're making a big mistake nowadays, teaching two languages in school.

WHITEMAN: Who made most of the family decisions as far as, think in your parents' household? Was it your father or your mother?

SCHWEDHELM: You mean in Germany?

WHITEMAN: Yeah.

SCHWEDHELM: They went together.

WHITEMAN: They made them together?

SCHWEDHELM: My parents didn't fight about anything.

WHITEMAN: What kind of influence do you think your mother had in deciding things? Do you think she had a fair influence, or did she just say, "Yes dear?"

SCHWEDHELM: No. Like I said, they agreed. They wanted to send us to school. Like I said, my father... They know that not everybody could stay home and take over the farm. We had no boy at home. We had five girls, and somebody had to learn something and go to school.

WHITEMAN: So your parents thought education for girls was a good idea?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. Uh huh.

WHITEMAN: What kind of customs do you still observe here? Christmas things, or things like that?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. It's just now... I'm here that long now, and my husband's here longer yet. It's just the Christmas things are a little bit different. You see, we open our Christmas presents on Christmas Eve. We still do that now, and the children enjoy that. The Easter egg hunt, that was over there. When we had our children, we had that too. It's still the same. And I believe in... To give the German responsibility, give them money when they start out, and not to spend all the money on junk food or things, but start saving. When they learn in school, then they know when they're grown up how to handle money. That's one thing that our parents taught us and that I taught my children too.

WHITEMAN: A good thing to learn.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. Not to go in the store, and these machines. We didn't have them. And our mother, when we went to school, we always had money with us, that we could buy something if we really needed something.

WHITEMAN: Did you tell your children German folk tales, or did you ever had a special kind of a holiday thing that you would celebrate in Germany and here that the rest of the Americans wouldn't celebrate?

SCHWEDHELM: Saint Nicholas. When our children were little, we had Saint Nicholas the 6th of December. With the shoe by the window, and then they'd have candies and nuts and cookies.

WHITEMAN: And then regular Christmas too! They made out.

SCHWEDHELM: Christmas was more other presents, but for Saint Nicholas only apple or nuts and cookies. We always did that.

WHITEMAN: What kind of groups did you belong to when you were growing up? Was there like a Girl Scouts or that kind of a thing? A glee club or something?

SCHWEDHELM: No. When I grew up, we didn't have it. The girls, it was from church. Our group went together. With the Girl Scouts, that came up when Hitler came to power. Then they had started a Girl Scout exactly the same. With the boys too, Boy Scouts.

WHITEMAN: Did you ever bring friends into your house? Just your girlfriends to play, or to make paper dolls?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yes. Yeah, like when you go to school, you know all your friends, and we had our birthday parties that time too already and celebrate. But when you're young, no boys, only girls. And then when you get older, and teenagers, then they could get boys or go to the dance and things like that. It's not like here. The chaperones – the girls go in together and the boys go together, and they dance and have fun.

WHITEMAN: Did your parents set any rules about dating or things like that?

SCHWEDHELM: Not really. We could go out. They trusted us.

WHITEMAN: Did they give you a curfew?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: No?

SCHWEDHELM: No. We knew that ourselves. But you couldn't stay out longer than – when there was a dance, it was always over at midnight, twelve o'clock, always. Never being told. And they trusted us, and I trust my children too.

WHITEMAN: That's the best way to do it. I think a few more things, when it's harder to get up to go to school the next day is the best teacher in the world.

SCHWEDHELM: See, we had school six days a week. And I think they still have to have six days a week. I'm not sure. We had the first two years, there was two classrooms, one teacher had the first four years. Third and fourth year in the morning, and first and second in the afternoon. Two hours only, the first and second year. And we learned more in the two hours than they learn here in eight hours.

WHITEMAN: I think if you spend six or eight hours in school when they're little kids, it's too much for them. It's better just to teach them to read.

SCHWEDHELM: They only have from eleven to one for the first two years. That's all. And then they had homework to do.

WHITEMAN: Did your parents have anything to do with you getting married? Did they actively encourage it, or did they actively discourage you from getting married?

SCHWEDHELM: No. They gave us a choice. We could marry who we wanted. Some parents do, but our parents wouldn't tell us. You see, like I said, my father didn't like me to go to America to marry over there, but he says, "If it's your will, then you have to go." And then after the war was over, then he was glad that I could come here.

WHITEMAN: This would maybe apply more to your children than yourself, but do you think that children from Germany would have a difficult time growing up in Stockton, or would it be good for them to do so?

SCHWEDHELM: When they're born here? No. They adjust to the schooling.

WHITEMAN: But what about the eldest one? Did she just pick it up?

SCHWEDHELM: Mmhm. Like I said, we lived in French Camp, she went to French Camp to school, then the next year we sent her to the Catholic school here in Stockton. We were fortunate to get her in. There was a long waiting list. But we didn't have no church in French Camp, and they took her right away. And she adjusted during that.

WHITEMAN: Do you think it was helpful in your case to have sisters while you were growing up? Did that make things easier if you had an older sister to talk to, or a younger sister to tell what was going on?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes.

WHITEMAN: When you went to high school in the United States, what was that like? Did you go to night school?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah, night school. I didn't have to go too long. You see, it was three [] Stockton High School. And I only had to take the history classes. I had my report cards over there, and I had to take tests in arithmetic and English, and I only took the history classes. My history classes, I was so surprised when I went to school here, I tell you.

WHITEMAN: Why?

SCHWEDHELM: All my tests I had As and once or twice a B. But there were so many that flunked the tests who they went here already in school. And I went just to night school to finish a diploma. They didn't know where Spain was or where Germany was on the map, and things like that. American history, I had to study the history, but they couldn't remember the dates. If they didn't want to study or they didn't want to, I don't know. I couldn't believe it.

WHITEMAN: Yeah. I'm a history major. I always get frustrated when people don't like history.

SCHWEDHELM: No. To know the country, where is Paris? They don't know the main cities. They should have learned that in school. They had an excuse. We never heard that in school.

WHITEMAN: It's understandable if someone doesn't know where Nepal is in a way, but little ones like Paris, you should know where they are.

SCHWEDHELM: Big cities. Yeah.

WHITEMAN: Some of these questions I'm gonna have to skip because they pertain more to if you had gone to school as a young child here.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. All those that came here, they all came maybe in their 18 or 20s. I was older already at that time. But like this Miss Lowman, I think she was in her 20s.

WHITEMAN: I need to give her a call when I get back.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: How did you learn to speak English? Just from school?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: What was your family's attitude toward the school?

SCHWEDHELM: In Germany? Oh yeah, they had to pay for it. You see, high school you had to pay already. Only grammar school was free in those days, but high school, not many could afford to send their children to high school.

WHITEMAN: Did your parents try to help you with your problems in school?

SCHWEDHELM: No, not really. You see, my parents had only grammar school, and they didn't have the help. When I went to grammar school, my oldest sisters were twins, and when they went to school, the first day when they came home, they had to write three letterSCHWEDHELM: D, E, I, and I think A. And they had to know how to hold blackboards. We had blackboards to write on. They didn't know how to make a line even. Here they come and [] standards and lines, and they didn't know how to hold that. And my father had to teach him how to sit with them and teach them how to hold the pen.

WHITEMAN: So could your sisters help you, say if you had a problem in school?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yeah. When I went to school, nobody had to sit beside the door. It's natural in me.

WHITEMAN: Do you recall any kind of a funny thing happening while you were in school? Something that would make you laugh?

SCHWEDHELM: Funny story-telling and things like that?

WHITEMAN: Or the teacher whopping the students?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. Oh, they spanked the children in those days. Not the girls that much, but boys they did spank. In those days it was allowed.

WHITEMAN: What do you think would have happened if you had had a brother? Do you think he would have gone to school longer than you did?

SCHWEDHELM: No. He would have taken over the farm, and in those days, they didn't go to school as long. You see, my father had a brother. One got the farm, and the other one studies. My mother has two brothers. One got the farm, and the other went to study, became a teacher or worked on a railroad or something like that.

WHITEMAN: Did you participate in after-school activities at all?

SCHWEDHELM: We had, like they play ball and gymnastics, and then we had needlework to do. Everybody has to learn knitting and crocheting and things. But that is included in the school. It was always in the afternoon. Everybody has to learn.

WHITEMAN: Did you participate in neighborhood or church activities?

SCHWEDHELM: We didn't have neighborhood, but we had a Catholic church. We'd go to church there every Sunday. [Every day?] we had Mass, or when something was coming up, we always went with our parents' encouragement. Grandparents already after that.

WHITEMAN: When you were in high school, did your parents give you independence?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. We had lots of freedom. Our parents were not strict at all.

WHITEMAN: Did you have any special hopes or ambitions while you were in school? Anything you really wanted to do?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes, I wanted to be a teacher. Especially in sewing and stuff. But in those days, there was no way to get in college in the first place. As a teacher, they never had jobs. Until after the '30s, then finally there are openings there. And then after the war, there was more jobs than anything else. Or during the war already.

WHITEMAN: Did your school there and here help you understand how people live in the United States and what life is like here?

SCHWEDHELM: No. When I was in school, we never had that. We used to study names from the United States and things like that. I never thought I would come here.

WHITEMAN: Can you think any differences between life when you came here and the lives of your children now? Your children or grandchildren.

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yes. Our grandchildren. In those days, when I came here, we didn't have much money. We had to live on what you make. And that was not much either. My husband was a fireman, and he didn't bring much money home. It was little by little. I went back to work, I start off in the cannery again, then I go to the bakery, and that's the last job that I see to make money to send them to college. They all went to college.

WHITEMAN: Where did they go to school?

SCHWEDHELM: We had all their classes paid for here in high school, and our oldest daughter went to Dominican College in Sacramento. The boy went to USC. And the two girls went to San Diego.

WHITEMAN: Did you ever think about sending them to UOP?

SCHWEDHELM: They didn't want to go to UOP. In the first place, UOP was expensive. It's still expensive. Dominican College, my oldest daughter, she graduated from Sacramento and she had a scholarship in music. She played organ in the church, and she was very good music. That's why she went there. UOP would have been good. She was in the music camp there for two years.

WHITEMAN: Are any of the customs that you celebrate in your home, like Saint Nicholas Day, do your children celebrate them with their children now?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: No?

SCHWEDHELM: It's not that much.

WHITEMAN: Do your children have anyone living in the house with them besides their husband and their children?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: Do your children assign their children tasks and jobs to do after school, things like that?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. Yes.

WHITEMAN: Do your children have husbands and wives of the same background? Did they marry other German people, or did they marry people of other backgrounds?

SCHWEDHELM: My oldest daughter, her husband is the German background. And my son no. My other daughter, she went to Austria one time, she got married there. But she came back alone. It didn't work out for her. She has two little girls. She's still divorced. She's single. She lives here in Stockton. She's a registered nurse now. She just graduated as a nurse.

WHITEMAN: You sound like you're a musical family.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. Now the grandchildren, she's working half the time, so we really raised them here.

WHITEMAN: Did you like having the chance to raise more children, or did you find it difficult?

SCHWEDHELM: No. If she wouldn't be here now, then we would be all by ourselves again. The youngest one's not married. She's in Sacramento. She's working there. She had a teaching credential, but she acts as counselor more, and she works for Cedar now.

WHITEMAN: If you feel upset, it's okay.

SCHWEDHELM: It's okay now. It's okay now.

WHITEMAN: These things are very hard.

SCHWEDHELM: No, it's okay now. [mild laughter]

WHITEMAN: Would you prefer to live with your children if you could, or do you just like the situation you have now?

SCHWEDHELM: No. Better this way. As long as possible, it's better the young people by itself when they're older.

WHITEMAN: What do you think about the kind of lives that your children are living? What do you think are some of the best things about their lives and some of the least desirable things, the things you don't like?

SCHWEDHELM: When they have a nice family together. Like I didn't like it when my daughter separated from her husband. But he didn't want to come here and she didn't want to stay there. But life over there is different, but she didn't think about it at first. The money situation's different, and the language and everything, and she found out about that. But she is a good mother and she makes a good living now.

WHITEMAN: Do you think it's good for her to have had the chance to blow it and come back, or do you think she should have stuck it out?

SCHWEDHELM: No, she came back with the children and she went back to try it again after two years. And then after that, when she came back again, she says, "I cannot do it." "You better go." I didn't want at first, but then I said there is no way. We have to let her go to find out, otherwise you're blamed for it, if you tell them to stay here. And then she was having trouble and she came back.

WHITEMAN: What do you think are the things you don't like about how your children are adjusting to life in America?

SCHWEDHELM: It is altogether different. It's too much freedom sometimes. Like in college too, when they went to San Diego, I think that in the '60s, that was not a good influence, living there. UOP, same thing. They changed too much with the boys and girls in the same dorm and things like that.

WHITEMAN: But you would be surprised. A lot of people think that's a bad thing, but it turns out to be good, because there's not a lot of sex and those kinds of things going on in the dorms. You treat those boys like your brothers. It's hard to fall in love with someone when they're going down to the bathroom to brush their teeth in the morning.

SCHWEDHELM: The young people think different than we do. It's altogether a new generation. That's what I think.

WHITEMAN: I think it works out better. I think it gives you a healthier idea about what men are like.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah, I think so too. In our days in school, I went to an all-girls school. That's not so good either.

WHITEMAN: Well I went to an all-women's college. It can be good.

SCHWEDHELM: You see, Dominican, when our daughter went there, it was only a girls' school. You see, in those days it was altogether different. But her children, now again, they like to go out and they've grown up differently.

WHITEMAN: What do you think life was like here for people from Germany?

SCHWEDHELM: They're ambitious. They're all work, and they all make it. There are only a few [boat rats?] that came here that came here that went back that I know of. But the others are all settled, and they make it, and I think they worked hard.

WHITEMAN: So you think life is generally being good for them then?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. I mean, you couldn't... Get up higher than in Germany. In Germany, we didn't have chance those days when I came here. Like with Miss Fish, when she came here, there was not much change at all for a woman here to get a better job. That kind of schooling was too expensive.

WHITEMAN: Do you still feel close to the old country? Do you still write your sisters and go back?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yeah. We went back three years ago. It's nice to go back to see it, but not to live over there.

WHITEMAN: Do you feel affected by what happens to Germany? Do you think it affects your life just as much as something that happens here?

SCHWEDHELM: It was too bad that war broke out that time. I mean, everything was built up, it was nice, but then there was so much destroyed, and it was really sad. But they built it up. They're ambitious. They go to work, and they made it again.

WHITEMAN: What do you think makes a person Italian or Chinese or German or German American?

SCHWEDHELM: I don't know. The Chinese, they're sticking closer to their home base. The Germans change. You want to stop for a minute?

WHITEMAN: Sure. [break]

WHITEMAN: When you went back to Germany, what was it like?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, everything was beautiful. All the new buildings in the cities, everything was built up again. We went back the first time in '70.

WHITEMAN: What kinds of things did the parents of your neighborhood friends do when you were growing up in Germany? Were they all farmers?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes, farmers and worker people mostly. A couple of businesspeople.

WHITEMAN: Since you've been here as an adult, do you often relate to people who aren't just German-speaking or German, just relate to everyone?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. [] find good people [] happy.

WHITEMAN: I think that's something that people don't understand? There's good and bad in every ethnic group?

SCHWEDHELM: That's right.

WHITEMAN: What kind of recreational things do you like to do? Just if you have a couple hours.

SCHWEDHELM: I read and I do crocheting and stuff like that. Sewing.

WHITEMAN: What do you like to read?

SCHWEDHELM: Any book.

WHITEMAN: Who is your favorite author?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, right now, I don't know. I don't have anybody.

WHITEMAN: Are you as active in the church today as you were when you were growing up or when you were younger?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: How about in the community?

SCHWEDHELM: Not really. When the German were in school, we were active, but then you getting away working, and I didn't have much time anymore. I've just quit working now.

WHITEMAN: So you're retired?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: Next question is, can you tell me about your job and the different things you've done in your life?

SCHWEDHELM: I started out with office work, and then at home. When I had my child over there, I didn't work from home. And when I came here, with language and going into office, I didn't have enough experience in that, and I start off in the cannery. Part-time work. I had my children. I did all my sewing and cooking and things like that that belong to the household. And then when the children grew bigger, I started working longer hours in the canner, and about that time I went to work in the bakery. When he sold his bakery, I went in by See's and put my application in and got hired right away. Since that time I've stayed with See's in the winter time, and in the summer time I worked in the cannery.

WHITEMAN: So you stopped working when your first child was born, and you started working again when you came here?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes.

WHITEMAN: Do you think it was good for you to work outside the home?

SCHWEDHELM: No. It was for the money.

WHITEMAN: You didn't enjoy it?

SCHWEDHELM: Not really. I just wanted to get my children through college, and it cost most money. One paycheck is not enough.

WHITEMAN: When you first got your jobs over here, did you feel like there were some jobs you couldn't get because you were a woman, or some jobs you couldn't get because you were a German woman?

SCHWEDHELM: No, it was the language. And in the office, we have to be perfect in English. Like all the writing I could have done, but then I thought [].

WHITEMAN: Did you ever join a union?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, I had to. Right away.

WHITEMAN: Did you like it? Were you active in it? Did you think it did good things for you?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes, it does good things for you, but the union goes a little bit too far. That's what I think.

WHITEMAN: Why would you say it goes too far?

SCHWEDHELM: The union, you get more paid, but you go to the store, you pay twice as much for that. I mean, like in the cannery, we had a union. A girl from high school comes to the cannery, gets six dollars an hour, everything else goes up. Without experience, without anything, goes to the cannery and gets six dollars an hour. What job you get six dollars an hour without experience?

WHITEMAN: I would like if my job was six dollars an hour without experience!

SCHWEDHELM: They don't hire so many, they had too much machinery. They had to put the machinery. They couldn't hire the people no more. When I started out I think we got a dollar twenty an hour.

WHITEMAN: Do you think there was anything difficult about working while you were raising a family? Was it hard on you?

SCHWEDHELM: No. You have to make adjustment, and the children have to learn to be on their own as they get older. You see, my youngest one went to school, I started working in the summer time. And when she get older, it cost more, and they have more independence. They can help more.

WHITEMAN: Did you ever feel you had too much work to do, working outside the home and inside the home?

SCHWEDHELM: No. I wanted my children to have a better life than I had, a better position to get in school.

WHITEMAN: What was it like being married?

SCHWEDHELM: Taking on responsibility. But you don't think about the responsibility. You think it's just somebody to be with when you get old and be alone. But it's not easy.

WHITEMAN: People don't think about that. It takes a lot of hard work to be in a relationship.

SCHWEDHELM: They all think it gets better when you get married, but it doesn't get better. Everybody adjusts.

WHITEMAN: You have to talk to your husband, tell him what you think, otherwise bad things happen. How did you meet your husband?

SCHWEDHELM: He came to visit Germany to find a German girl.

WHITEMAN: He wanted to marry a German girl?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes.

WHITEMAN: And his parents are from Germany then?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. They are dead already.

WHITEMAN: Can you describe your courtship a little bit?

SCHWEDHELM: His cousins brought him over the first time when I met him. And I just saw him for a little while, but I was working those days. I had no education coming.

WHITEMAN: Okay, we're running out of tape.

[End of Tape]

[TAPE 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape.]

WHITEMAN: So you only saw just for a few days?

SCHWEDHELM: For one day that day. And then when I came back from my vacation, he was still there. But his time was running out. He had only two or three more weeks he was over there.

And my father didn't want me to go to America. "Okay." He left alone, and I stayed back. And then we wrote to each other, and in '39 he came back, and then we got married. Then I quit my job. We had a nice honeymoon. And then war broke out and he had to leave, and I stayed there.

WHITEMAN: What did he do for a living when you first married him?

SCHWEDHELM: He was a baker. He worked in a bakery in Lodi.

WHITEMAN: So he'd been in Stockton a while.

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yeah.

WHITEMAN: When did he come over here?

SCHWEDHELM: '36. He lived in French Camp. He had a little farm there. He worked in an office in Germany too, but when he came here, the same thing. The language. He wanted to keep that place there, his farm in French Camp. He had to make a living. He did any job.

WHITEMAN: So he became a baker.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: How did your husband's job compare with the other jobs of German men in Stockton? Was it about the same kind of thing?

SCHWEDHELM: He was in the [service?], and when he came back, then they offered him this job as a fireman.

WHITEMAN: So has he been a fireman the rest of the time?

SCHWEDHELM: No. Then they had to cut down after so many years. Then he was in the warehouse. And then they cut more down and he was transferred off his government job, his retirement. He worked there until he was 67 I think, then retired.

WHITEMAN: Do you like having him around the house now?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yeah. He does all the work. When I was working, he did all the housework most of the time these last couple of years.

WHITEMAN: Did you find that unusual? Say different from the experiences some of your contemporaries had, where the husband wouldn't lift the dust mop if he had to?

SCHWEDHELM: When he was in the service, they put him in the bakery, and he knew how to bake and to cook. And it was when I was working in the cannery and he had his vacation, he was home with the children. He knew how to cook for them, and he liked to cook. And that's it.

WHITEMAN: Did he ever help with the window-washing and things like that?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, once in a while, yes. He'd take the hose and wash the windows.

WHITEMAN: After you were married, how did you make your decisions?

SCHWEDHELM: We talked things over. We both have money, both together.

WHITEMAN: That makes it easier I think sometimes.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. Yes.

WHITEMAN: That way you're like, "Hold it, hold it! Part of it's mine too!"

SCHWEDHELM: No, I didn't. [laughs]

WHITEMAN: So you kind of divided the household responsibilities then?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. When he was home. When he was working, he had to get up at six o'clock in the morning, seven o'clock work, then I did the work. I worked usually in the afternoon, or the first couple of years, night shift.

WHITEMAN: I worked graveyard myself. I'll never do that again. It's hard on your body!

SCHWEDHELM: I didn't mind.

WHITEMAN: I didn't like it much. Who made most of the decisions about your children? How they were going to be raised or what kind of schooling you thought they should get?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, we decided that we'd send the oldest one to the Catholic school, and naturally all the rest of them. College the same thing. They picked their own college.

WHITEMAN: Why did you decide on a Catholic school?

SCHWEDHELM: We're Catholic.

WHITEMAN: But instead of regular public education? You thought it would be better for them?

SCHWEDHELM: When we lived in French Camp, there was no church, no religions at all. I come from a Catholic family. That's why I wanted to send them to Catholic school. I thought they had a good chance, that they'd learn more than in public school.

WHITEMAN: How do you think you brought your children up differently from your mother?

SCHWEDHELM: I think we had the same privilege at home that my children had. They were all good students in school. Our teacher in Germany always said, "I have the parents in school, I know what children I get next generation."

WHITEMAN: Were your children demanding of you? Did they say, "Mom, why can't you make the cake for the PTA?" even though you had to work, or did they just understand?

SCHWEDHELM: Mmhmm.

WHITEMAN: Did you help your children with their problems in school? With their homework and things?

SCHWEDHELM: When they started out, like spelling words or when they took German class a little bit. But with the others, they didn't need no help.

WHITEMAN: They just got it all by themselves.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: How did your relationship with your parents change after you were married? You lived with them, didn't you?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh, my mother passed away before I got married. And my father was easygoing.

WHITEMAN: So did you kind of take on the responsibility then, living at home?

SCHWEDHELM: No. My sister was married, and my sister and her husband had the farm. So they took care of the farm. And I lived with them. Then my brother-in-law had to go to war, and naturally we had to do the work at the farm. My sister was glad that she me there.

WHITEMAN: How did you feel knowing that your husband could shoot your brother-in-law?

SCHWEDHELM: He was not sent overseas. I didn't hear from him for a whole year a couple of times. Until the Red Cross, 45 words a month.

WHITEMAN: That's not a lot.

SCHWEDHELM: No. It's just "How are you?" and things like that.

WHITEMAN: What is your greatest satisfaction as a mother? What makes you proudest of your children?

SCHWEDHELM: When the children grow up and graduate and have a good job and work out alright.

WHITEMAN: You see that you gave them a good start in life and they can make it too?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes.

WHITEMAN: Is there anything that your children have done that you've been especially proud of?

SCHWEDHELM: Seeing my boy, he's with American Airlines. He was in the Navy for 17 years, and they sent him a recommendation that he was a good pilot and he could get his wings and things like that.

WHITEMAN: What do you think you worried about most as a mother? What things bothered you the very most?

SCHWEDHELM: When something happened. I mean, you worry when they go on a bicycle or they go the first time in the car, driving alone, and things like that. Going out. The mother knows the child goes there and should be home on time. You go away to college and you don't know nothing that they do, and that don't bother you so much. They're home, you worry.

WHITEMAN: Out of sight, out of mind. I was always glad my mother couldn't see all the silly things I was doing.

SCHWEDHELM: [laughing] I know.

WHITEMAN: So you were kind of scared that they were independent, but their independence makes you the proudest?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: What ages did your children really start to be independent?

SCHWEDHELM: Oldest one, already in high school, but the others more when they went to college and they come home.

WHITEMAN: How would your interests have been different if you hadn't gotten married? If you'd just gotten a job and stayed in Germany?

SCHWEDHELM: I don't know. During the war, there were so many positions, I could have been a teacher. But I was married already and things like that. A couple years before, I could have gone back to school. When you're older, sometimes you pick up again and go back to school. Now it's different, but not in those days. You didn't do it in those days.

WHITEMAN: My mom went back to college, so no matter how old you are, you can still go.

SCHWEDHELM: Still go to college. I felt, I worked so long for my children, I needed some money when they were going to college, really. If I would have gone to college, I couldn't have helped them, and they needed it more than I did.

WHITEMAN: Now that your children are on their own and far away in different cities, how often do you get together to see them all?

SCHWEDHELM: All together? The holidays, but always somebody is missing. You see, the boy, he's in LA, and he drives out from there. But he comes Thanksgiving or he comes Christmas or he comes when he is able to come here.

WHITEMAN: Are you still in touch with your sisters? Do you still write and talk to them?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yes. Oh yes.

WHITEMAN: Did they ever think about coming over here?

SCHWEDHELM: No. One of my sisters would come for a visit, but her husband has heart trouble and she can't leave him alone. And the others got set and have their families and have troubles like we have.

WHITEMAN: Did your children's activities sometimes involve you in different things? Like the PTA that would let you meet new people?

SCHWEDHELM: Not in the last couple of years, no. You see, it's only this one that lives here. She's only in Stockton now, but not here.

WHITEMAN: I meant when they were younger. Did you meet more women?

SCHWEDHELM: Oh yeah. Yeah. In the school, yes. I knew all the parents when the children were growing up, yes.

WHITEMAN: Did you get close to them?

SCHWEDHELM: A couple of them, yes.

WHITEMAN: Do you think that was a good way to meet people?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. Yes.

WHITEMAN: Overall, how do you think your family compares with other families from Germany, or living in Germany, and in the United States?

SCHWEDHELM: Most of them that came here, they came over here when they came later, they like to go out more, have good time and things. We had four children. Most of them had one or two. You know how that is. You can't bring your children along, have to find a babysitter all the time, and I didn't care much to hire a babysitter. We didn't go out too much.

WHITEMAN: So you didn't go out as much as they did?

SCHWEDHELM: No. They have no children, they going together you know, with a couple of friends. But the younger people now again, like we are in the older generation again. After the war, those people that came over here, they're younger. They like to play cards and drinks and things like that. Smoking. And we were not up for that.

WHITEMAN: What about some of your contemporaries? People who've been here? Mrs. Slovan I know, Mrs. Fishley. How do you think you compare?

SCHWEDHELM: We just meant the Slovans through the club. The German club. We don't go otherwise.

WHITEMAN: Could you tell me something about the German club? That's interesting.

SCHWEDHELM: We have two. There's [Fidelity Club?]. Most older people, like Mrs. Fishley and Miss Lubman only belong there for a couple of years. See, they lived in the Dakota and they came. Like Mrs. Fishley was one of the first one. And then they have the other club, the Hermansons. They are younger people. They came after the war. They all belong to the Hermansons now. Fidelity is started a long time ago already. They don't go together now, the two clubs.

WHITEMAN: Oh, they should. What do you do when you go to the club?

SCHWEDHELM: Fidelity have meetings twice a month. They have the hall here in town. They rent the hall also to other people, and they have dinners for New Year's Eve, the dinner dance. Like older people, they don't dance much. They only have record players.

WHITEMAN: Do you have fun? Do you like the club?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. It's pretty good to go out there once in a while. Then in the springtime, they have the [], when the fall they have Oktoberfest. They sponsor the dinner. They have to pay for it. And the Hermansons, the younger people, they have dances and they want to make money. They want to raise money. And then they have [] is from all California they come. They have the installation for the offices in the springtime. But we don't belong to the Hermansons. You know sometimes, with every crop it's the same thing. When you work and have children,

then you can only do one thing. That's why we are not people that go out so much, that have drinks and slow dance and things like that.

WHITEMAN: No wild life.

SCHWEDHELM: Not wild enough. Some other groups.

WHITEMAN: Would you say that all things together, you're pretty happy with the way your married life turned out?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. I'm happy.

WHITEMAN: Was it what you expected it to be?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. We have to work.

WHITEMAN: Did your expectations change any after you were married? Did you look at the world any differently?

SCHWEDHELM: No. Not really. Like I said, if I would have come before the war, but we had war in Germany, then I would have here. Maybe it would have been different. But now I went through the war over there. That was part of the experience.

WHITEMAN: Do you think the goals you have for your family are different from the goals your parents set for you?

SCHWEDHELM: Our parents had the same idea. That we should have better in life. That's why they sent us to school. That's what we did for our children. It's the same goal really. That children should accomplish something.

WHITEMAN: Do you think your husband generally felt the same way?

SCHWEDHELM: Mmhmm.

WHITEMAN: Do you think that's why he wanted a German wife?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. [quiet laughter] Yes.

WHITEMAN: Did he ever say anything to you as to why he went back to Germany to get a wife?

SCHWEDHELM: No. He came from a big family that time, and even out here, but he always wanted to go back. And that was the first time when he came back in '37 or '36.

WHITEMAN: How about your relatives or children? Do you think that they have the same goal? Do you think they want their children to make it better?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. I think so.

WHITEMAN: What kind of things happened in Stockton that affected your life and your family the most?

SCHWEDHELM: Stockton grows. How the city grows now. This Stockton Arena. It doesn't affect the family really. It's only this one that you see in Stockton, but she doesn't want to live here in Stockton. She wants to go up in the mountains some place when she has the chance, when her children are a little bigger. And go in the country more.

WHITEMAN: In some ways that's better for the children. Stockton's still not that big a town.

SCHWEDHELM: You see, both of them say they want to be farmers when they grow up. They want to have horses.

WHITEMAN: Oh, I love horses. Horses are good things to have.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. Stockton's not like LA or San Francisco.

WHITEMAN: It's not. I'm always shocked when I drive to the edge of town and there's nothing else there, because in the Bay Area, it all just sort of melts together and becomes one big thing.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. I don't like a big city. I love staying in Stockton.

WHITEMAN: You became a U.S. citizen, and that's why you took the history?

SCHWEDHELM: No. I wanted to have a different job. But it didn't turn out that way. I can't. My children were depending on me.

WHITEMAN: When did you become a U.S. citizen?

SCHWEDHELM: 1951.

WHITEMAN: That's pretty soon after you got over here.

SCHWEDHELM: I could have been after two years.

WHITEMAN: How do you, or how did you, feel about the United States, just generally speaking?

SCHWEDHELM: I became a citizen, even I knew I would stay here and have children here and grow up. And I always thought they live here and they never know what happens, and it's always nice to be a citizen.

WHITEMAN: Are you scared now or do you think about how the United States seems to be changing?

SCHWEDHELM: It is scary.

WHITEMAN: How things are different, and they don't seem to be as good as they were before?

SCHWEDHELM: Not as good? No. Like all these strikes that are going on nowadays? Not good.

WHITEMAN: What besides strikes would bother you?

SCHWEDHELM: They give them too much freedom. I was on the jury duty a couple of times. I mean, I don't think it's getting worse by the day.

WHITEMAN: What would you define as too much freedom?

SCHWEDHELM: See, they can do anything they want to do in this country. You can't say nothing. Like for the draft now. They don't want to sign up, what can you do with them? Put them in jail? And in jail they don't have to be drafted at all. That's another thing.

WHITEMAN: But don't you think it's good that you have the chance to say no, rather than being forced to do something? You said the war in Germany was very destructive. What if those people hadn't been forced into the army, forced to fight for something that maybe they didn't even really understand? What if they'd had the right to say no?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes, it only goes that far. I mean, freedom is good. I don't want to say nothing. But there has to be law and order in the country. That's the thing I think it's most of them. You can't give them everything for nothing like it is nowadays. They demand.

WHITEMAN: Well, some of us still work. Considering your whole life, what do you think is the best age to be?

SCHWEDHELM: At my age, I don't know. When you're young, you feel altogether different. You feel good when you're old, but you know it's not much. You live from day to day.

WHITEMAN: Do you like that better, or do you find it sad that you don't think you have that much longer?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: Okay. Now thinking about your own life again, what would be the worst stage to be?

SCHWEDHELM: Now the teenager's the hardest time. I know from myself that time, I was only a teenager when my mother passed on. That was a rough time for me. We have to help at home, get the farm going. That was a rough time.

WHITEMAN: It's hard when you're a teenager, I think, because for so long, everyone tells you you're not a child and you're not an adult, and you just don't have a place. And I think it's so difficult.

SCHWEDHELM: It is.

WHITEMAN: I would never want to be 15 again. Never, never, never. I would much rather be 95.

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah. Well, maybe not 95. As long as you can get along to be on your own, it's okay. But if you have to go to a convalescent home, I'd rather be here.

WHITEMAN: I intend to be a wicked old woman! What are some of the great changes that have happened in your life? Some of the things that gave it a new direction?

SCHWEDHELM: There's nothing really. When you graduate. You have to go up from year to year. When you're young, then with the children, growing older with the children, then as soon as grandchildren come along, gradually.

WHITEMAN: So you see it as sort of a river flowing, not any big deal?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: Do you feel like you've ever been affected by the larger events of the world?

SCHWEDHELM: Not really.

WHITEMAN: Not at all. Why do you think that is? Do you think it's because you've had such a close-knit family to take care of you?

SCHWEDHELM: It could be.

WHITEMAN: What about the Depression? How do you think that affected you and your family? It was very severe in Germany.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. In the '20s, I was awful young then. I knew that our mother didn't have no money, and especially for the farm in those days was hard. The soil didn't cost anything, but everything they had to buy was expensive. Especially clothes. For the children, she by August had to see that they could get enough money together to clothe the children. Mother comes last. She doesn't live no more.

WHITEMAN: You might feel guilty about the fact that Mom always comes last.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. And I did the same thing for my children again. So I bought something for myself, I bought for the children first.

WHITEMAN: Did you or your parents ever make a major purchase, like a dishwasher or something, that made a big difference in your life?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: No? Not like a car or nothing?

SCHWEDHELM: No, we never car. When we got our first bicycle, we were proud.

WHITEMAN: Are there any government programs that you enjoy, or any that you don't like?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: None?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. To help the poor people and to help to get their education for everybody, but they have to make a point, not everybody's able to learn. You see, there's always advantaged, disadvantaged, and things like that. You see, now everybody can learn, but everybody's different. Everybody has a different gift. Not everybody can go to college. And I think that's where they make a mistake. To put everybody in college instead to have to learn another job, like a trade. A carpenter or mechanic or things like that. Instead to go to college, let them learn a trade. That's what we have in Germany. You had to learn three years before you could get a job. They graduate from grammar school, then they learn three years the job they want to do. And then they get a job. That's better than college.

WHITEMAN: Yeah. If you're not set out for it, it's sad to send you there, because you're not gonna make it.

SCHWEDHELM: It is. It is. That's right. And the government makes a big mistake doing that.

WHITEMAN: Have you ever heard of the women's liberation movement?

SCHWEDHELM: Yeah.

WHITEMAN: What do you think about it?

SCHWEDHELM: They're crazy. [laughter]

WHITEMAN: But you have to think about it. In a way, you had some of the advantage of it. Being able to work outside the home, and having your husband... He seems like he's pretty far ahead of his time if he would help out with the housework.

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. It has to go to one extent. A woman is a woman and a man is a man. The younger generation doesn't think that way. My children don't think that way. I'm old-fashioned that way. Right out.

WHITEMAN: So you think there are certain things women should do and certain things men should do? But what about... Do you think a woman could make a good nuclear physicist if she has the brains for that?

SCHWEDHELM: Yes. But the labor. Not in the labor part. Why have a woman as an auto mechanic or a plumber or something like that? Or climb up on the pole. I think that is too much.

WHITEMAN: Are there any other kind of things that have happened in Stockton that have really affected you and your family?

SCHWEDHELM: No.

WHITEMAN: Well, this is the end of the questionnaire. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

SCHWEDHELM: No. I don't think so. We covered everything.

WHITEMAN: What do you think of the questionnaire?

SCHWEDHELM: That's quite a bit!

[End of Tape]