

Transcript for Oral History Interview

Conducted for University of Maryland Course HIST 428M - Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr. Anne S. Rush

Interviewer's name: Kevin Dunlap

Interviewee's name: Regine Dunlap

Interviewee's Country of Origin: Germany

Interviewee's Current Residence: Suitland, Prince George's County, Maryland, U.S.A.

Date of Interview: October 11, 2015

Place of Interview: Suitland, Prince George's County, Maryland, U.S.A.

(Note: Whenever a word ends with a dash then space that means the thought was not completed and the replacement thought begins immediately after.)

Kevin Dunlap: Hello, my name is Kevin Dunlap. Today is Saturday, October 11th and I'm interviewing my mom, Regine Dunlap um a German Immigrant and uh we're interviewing in our home. Uh okay. So, Hello, uh.

Regine Dunlap: Yeah, hi. Hi Kevin.

Kevin: Okay so um where did you live in Germany?

Regine: Oh I lived all over the place. I was born in Hanover which is north west. And then um when I was two my parents, because my father was military, we moved to Koblenz which is south, further south, and it has all these nice castles so I grew up with all the Rhine castles. And then um we moved to Düsseldorf where I did um ended my elementary school years and then went on to high school, gymnasium, and um then, when I had my baccalaureate, I went to Bonn to study economics and then um I did not get along with statistics and math and (laughs) thus switched my major and did uh theatre science in Munich. I lived in Munich for 10 years um studied and worked there, did my masters degree. Um and then I found a post graduate education um as PR uh person and I went to Frankfurt. And from there um I had met your father uh in '86. Um I moved to Washington fin- DC finally, to America.

Kevin: So wait, what year was it that you moved to Washington, DC?

Regine: Um I came over in uh the beginning of 1989 the historic year for Germany (Kevin: uh yeah) which I did not think was really this important. I thought the Russians would, you know, fight back or do something. I I did not believe that Germany would really uh have a chance to become reunited but, yeah, in the course of '89 it turned out that way.

Kevin: So were you there for the fall of the wall? Or was it ...

Regine: No I was already living in America and your father had proposed to me and I was happily married to him.

Kevin Cool, so how does your schooling in Germany compare to what you experience through your children in the United States?

Regine: Um uh I would say very different. um Elementary school is only four years in Germany. And of course, I mean, there is a historic uh difference. uh I don't know but I think you know the elementary school day usually ends around lunchtime so twelve, one and uh children do not eat lunch at school they go home in elementary school and um and then have um the afternoon to do homework play etc. see friends. In America the school day in elementary school I find is almost too long for children. They um are very tired when they come home and there is uh very little interaction possible outside the family, the house, um unless, you know, you have kids in the neighborhood. And so in elementary school and fourth grade teachers write a recommendation for children whether they go- go on to gymnasium which is like college preper- preparatory school or uh whether they go to so-called Realschule and learn a craft and and do like an apprenticeship. And um so when you go to gymnasium, high school, uh there there is a selective crowd there and thus uh the curriculum um is more demanding than what I have seen in high schools in the U.S. um My sons, both of them, went into a science technology program, so that was a little bit more challenging than the average program, but uh still I feel that um in some subjects um time was wasted. um And it uh the consequences of that show up in college where you have all these general Ed courses, uh which are only necessary because the high schools in America who are taking everybody um have a lower standard, a lower level of education. So uh compared I mean both of my sons uh did college, I mean Kevin is finishing it up, but um when I went to university um I did I could um start straight with a major that I wanted to pursue, so I didn't lose time there. On the other hand, um back when I went to University the study was very little regulated. Of course I went into soft science, after my failed attempt for economics, I did theater science, uh poli- politics, and um English literature um, and so that has the tendency for students to prolong their studies. um Which is furthermore um made easier since you don't have a huge college tuition. Like, I mean, when I went to university I just paid like social fees which was like in today's money about you know \$30 and um now students pay a tenth of what uh students at for example, University of Maryland, pay per semester so they pay like €700 instead of \$11,000 per semester. And uh that makes it so that everybody who has the ability to go to college um and get a degree has the ability to do so. It's heavily funded by the federal government.

Kevin: So with your education uh what occupation did you have in Germany? What occupations did you have in Germany?

Regine: Okay, so um my very first job was uh since I did theater science I was uh, “oh Gott¹”, dramaturgist at uh the city theater of Regensburg, a small Bavarian Catholic capital, provincial capital, in Bavaria. And um I did not really like it, um I felt confined. I felt, I mean it was the switch from Munich, a huge million, it had several million inhabitant city, to a small city and um I felt all alone. And I um felt that the the working times at the theater, which were always in the weekends, always in the evenings, and and the days doing research to uh about plays uh it was a good job but I didn't really want to go through with it. I had a boyfriend in Munich and, I mean I, felt that that yeah I uh could not really make it there. And then all the actors they played the little kids and I was in my 20s and they you know came with all their problems. I felt just totally

¹ German for “oh God”

overwhelmed and so I quit and then freelanced um for papers and went into advertising. Then um got a job with uh Avon, the cosmetics company, and worked there as an editor for the um advertising brochures and um. Yeah, I didn't really have any, I mean I I I would've wanted to become texter um and and have glamorous meetings downtown etc. etc., but I never got the chance. um So I quit there and um started uh PR education, postgraduate education, in Frankfurt with an American company who um had an office in DC. And um actually I met your father when I was still working for Avon and we uh met on a on a street festival as alternative to the Oktoberfest um in the neighborhood. And uh we started carpooling and then we we developed a relationship and um. So, yeah, I was I was eager to work with an American company to um get have the opportunity oder² create the opportunity to come to America work in America, yeah.

Kevin: Okay uh so what brought you to the United- United States then?

Regine: Love (laughs). Yeah, yeah so uh I mean what it was, I um knew your father for three years and um so um we said I would like to live in America and we kind of test out. I mean we were not the youngest ones anymore, um your father is nine years older than me I was uh 30 when I met him um so we wanted to see if we could live together and so I organized an internship uh with uh the Washington office of Hill & Knowlton. Very glamorous in in the um uh in Georgetown at the um, wie heisst die?³, Washington Harbor right next to the Watergate building etc. etc. And so um I was living with your father for a couple of months and then he proposed, yes, and I said yes. So that made me stay.

Kevin: So, what did your journey to the United States look like?

Regine: My journey, I flew with a plane. (Kevin: Okay, yeah) um I mean back then you know the plane rides were much nicer, you could smoke, you could have unlimited beer, um you could get you were not squeezed like a herring in in the seat, so it was kind of okay.

Kevin: Okay. So how would you describe your relationship to America before you came?

Regine: Um, it was rather negative. I um had been to America in 1985 to visit my sister who had moved to America. And she, back then, lived in Medford Lakes, New Jersey a tiny, tiny, tiny little village. And um so she had uh three little kids and I babysat a little bit um and uh the rest of my time I spent in uh sightseeing Philadelphia. I took a long bus ride, it was an hour each way, and um I had a map uh that pointed out exactly which districts I was safe in and what districts I could not set foot in so, I was, I mean... I have been traveling a lot before but I have never really been scared so much as I was there because I said, you know, if I'm going to be killed, there are guns there uh you know you don't know. So, but yeah, I enjoyed being in Philadelphia, I'm a city kid, and so yeah, that that was okay, but I um didn't like the lifestyle um kind of isolated. You had these pure living areas, whenever you wanted to go grocery shopping, whenever you wanted to do something you had to use the car you could do nothing on foot. And um even my sister you know in this tiny little village, she lived in she pointed out that there was like like somebody suspected to be a murder and she didn't want her girls come near his house and stuff. I mean it it it was kind of an oppressive atmosphere uh and then I didn't like, you

² German for "or"

³ German for "What was it's name?"

know, I mean I I I remember I took took a photo of this rest- Mexican restaurant which said “food factory” and I said oh God this is no culture. I mean do I want, you know, a mass-produced food? Do I want to sit in a factory and dine or eat? I don't like it so much. So yeah, it was, um it was not um friendly, and um, I mean, had you asked me back then whether I wanted to live in America, I would've said no way.

Kevin: So then why'd you end up living in DC?

Regine: Okay, so DC is a big city, a beautiful city. And um I before I came over in um '89 I had visited your father for a week or two and I um did extensive sightseeing in DC, of course, I walked everything like a good German does and um na ja⁴, if you are downtown I mean it's a couple of blocks but it is walkable down there. And uh so yeah I I went to the Supreme Court, the White House, the FBI, uh all the museums, uh the Smithsonian. I mean yeah it and I mean I like the city and um I mean I also liked um when I worked in uh Washington Harbor, um it was was, I mean Georgetown had, you know some students there and young- lots of young people cafés so it is uh kind of European-style. And Washington doesn't have all these skyscrapers as well, so this I mean I liked it.

Kevin: So um what are some differences though between DC and your hometowns like uh Düsseldorf or Munich?

Regine: Yeah. The big difference is that uh you have this separation between living areas and amusement areas and shopping areas. And it's not there is no connection in between so I mean if you go downtown during wor- on a day during work hours the roads are pretty emptied of pedestrians. Um you see um many people coming out around lunchtime to go in the nearby restaurants to to grab their lunch. Um but, yeah you I mean people don't live there really. You have the office buildings uh you you yeah and and and then you have the people who work in these offices but you do not have people who live there. So you do not see many kids there you do not see many old people there you see just the working age population rushing by because they're always in a hurry. They are much less in a hurry in Washington than New York but still compared to Germany its hurry. There is no pub- I mean there is no real public transportation um you cannot live without a car close to DC. We live 8 miles from DC. I mean okay I- it takes me like 30- 20-30 minutes walk to the metro which is kind of new. I mean it wasn't there when we moved in this area. um And then I mean, God it takes, I mean if I go downtown to my dentist it takes me an hour on the metro. And um this is kind of frustrating everybody in the me- I mean nobody talks in the metro. They have the buttons in the ear and listen to music or uh have phone calls they have a book in front of their nose or newspaper in front of their nose. Um it is it it it ... everybody is isolated, kind of, that that's what my impression is.

Kevin: So how does the culture, otherwise, here differ from Germany?

Regine: Um yeah what do we mean by culture. um The museums in America I think are excellent. They are um really, they make it easy and inviting to explore the exhibits for people of any age. Um I I um fondly remember taking my sons to all the museums downtown and we

⁴ German for “well”

always had a great time. Um that culture I like. Um I like that Americans are very polite. um Like in Germany, in the trolley car, somebody can stand on your foot and smile in your face not saying excuse me, whereas here people people very quickly say excuse me and they are very careful not to hurt you, to insult you, something like that. Um uh culture, yeah music is good. American music is good, Michael Jackson, for instance Bruce Springsteen. I mean DC has great theaters, um great art museums, paintings, um great artists, um photographers, uh Andy Warhol the most prominent that comes to mind right now. Um now what what concerns the culture of food I am I am pretty disgusted because, I mean, Americans cannot use fork and knife period. When you give them equip them with those they put the fork on one side and the knife on the other side and switch it around and then they they they they don't don't use the knife, cut things with the fork um have one hand under the table god knows what they do uh. And um yeah it it I mean the food culture I mean there are very good restaurants in DC. I mean you have international cuisine. I mean you have Greek cuisine, you have uh French, uh you have Irish, its um so um Indian, um Chinese, um Afghan, you name it. I mean, uh I guess these places are fine and I mean the the eating manners are alright um but I mean then America is a- the birthplace of fast food. So that is the side of food culture which I don't like. And also all these ready prepared stuff nothing is done from scratch, um but that has to do with yeah um Americans um don't take time for things. They rush, they are always on the go and and and uh the fast food industry you know um uh just caters to that um intent uh yeah. (Kevin: okay) That is all I want to say about culture at this point.

Kevin: Heh, okay so what about German foods that you brought over from Germany you make-prepare here?

Regine: Um uh yeah what I mean yeah I mean okay so in the beginning in '85 I used to travel with Nutella and gummy bears for my nieces. Um now um since Aldi had sprouted like a mushroom in this area, and all over America as I could find, um I am able to buy those things there or in in regular supermarkets. Um uh the bread is starting to improve slightly. Uh I mean food that I bring back from traveling to Germany is uh chocolates mostly alcohol filled uh Kandis⁵, Pralinen⁶, um bread, um certain kinds of mustards, um Camembert, Brie, um yeah I mean the the selection of cheese is is much bigger in uh Germany. Um I bring good wine, I bring um Fanta um that is less sweet than here, and I bring Ü-Eier for Kevin um these are uh Kinder Eier in in Ireland. um They are chocolate filled um uh, no, chocolate covered eggs um the size of of uh extra large chicken eggs and they have like a surprise inside and since age three Kevin is an avid fan of those. Um what else ja⁷ meat I am not allowed to bring I mean once I tried to bring you know um smoked ham and salami. And I mean the sausages in Germany are just so much better than here, but uh you are no longer allowed to um import any meat products even if it is for your own consumption. Um yeah thats thats what I bring.

Kevin: Wh- what about recipes that you are ...

Regine: Yeah, of course, I bring all the the recipes that um my- that that I grew up with and that my mother cooked and um some of which my boys like too. um For instance Hühner Frikasse,

⁵ A German brand of rock candy or rock sugar

⁶ German candy, usually made of chocolate

⁷ German for "yes"

which is uh chicken um with the lemon sauce, carrots, celery, and leek and it is eaten over rice. Um Koenigsberger Klopse, meatballs with capers and also little bit lemon in the sauce and you eat it with potatoes. We eat a lot of sauerkraut um like tonight we had Rostbratwuerste which I got at Aldi and um I bought a small can of sauerkraut for my husband and myself and it said 14 portions so each of us ate 7 portions for dinner um.

Kevin: So, so what are Rostbratwuersten for the people who don't under- ?

Regine: Rostbratwuerste are little sausages that you fry in the pan and you have to turn them so they turn brown. I mean they are they look white when they are uh before they are fried. I mean they the the meat is cooked so there is no contamination but um yeah they taste very good with mustard or applesauce and it's it's it's a staple in German diet.

Kevin: um, so what you miss about Germany, what do you miss most?

Regine: Um what do I miss? I miss certain foods of course. Um uh the sausages um certain fish Matjes, which is which is uh salted herring young herring and with onions, oh it's good. So food I miss. um Then I miss the interaction with neighbors, with people. Um like when I visit my 95-year-old mother in Düsseldorf and I go out um I can I can do grocery shopping on the street and I meet neighbors um I talk to the people in the grocery store; she has a little market um Wednesdays and Saturdays and you chat with the with the farmers and they they consult you about what is good to buy and what you could cook with it. Um you uh yeah you can use public transportation. That means you do not have to drive by car everywhere, you can walk you can uh take public transportation. And yeah, my favorite occupation when I go to Germany on a visit is walk, walk, walk because, different from America, um I walk and I go past shops, I see people, I see mothers with kids, I see older people with walkers, I see uh ch- schoolchildren, I see uh working people. And yeah you see you see people, you you you walk past shops so if I get thirsty on the way for ins- can can buy a cup of coffee or I can buy, you know, a cup of Fanta you know. I can I can have there is a flower stand there, and so I can say I oh my I want to bring my mother some flowers. And so you get ideas as you walk around, whereas here um I find the neighborhoods very sterile. Like when my boys were little, as a good German mother, I tried to walk them in their stroller around the block but there was no soul. There were barking dogs behind the fences. But it turned out that neighbors, who must have lurked behind curtains, um uh they saw me I mean they knew me for some reason. But, I mean you do not see other mothers with kids. You know like in Germany you would go a the playground and and just hunker down there with your stroller and have the put the kids in a sandbox and then you know they would just interact with other kids in the sandbox and the mothers would interact maybe you know. Now things are changing as well because the mothers are hooked on their cell phones and do not interact with others and their kids so much anymore, same as here.

Kevin: So what about things that you like about America?

Regine: Um I like that America is fairly open and um curious and that Americans are very kid friendly. I mean Germany has this proverbial you know uh they have one or two kids utmost, if at all. Um whereas here in America you you have still big families uh with many kids more than two. Um and the whole society is very open to young people. Um and I mean I think I mean

now I'm approaching 60 so so I would say they are also open to to, you know, people of my age; older people.

Kevin: So what do you mean by curious though, may I ask?

Regine: Um they they ask questions, they, I think they encourage the out-of-the-box thinking. I mean, at least, that is my experience with uh the boy's elementary school which is a tag school. And they they really um tried you know to unlock all sorts of intelligences kinetic and and uh aesthetic and social, verbal, logical whatever.

Kevin: Okay, so where else have you visited?

Regine Um what do you mean? In America or or other than America?

Kevin: All around or what other places.

Regine: Oh oh oh so you mean okay so I mean um okay I have um I have traveled to Greece, to Italy, to Turkey, to Austria, to Netherlands, to Czechoslovakia, to Hungary, to Bulgaria, to Yugoslavia, um Scicily, um Sardinia, uh Spain, France, um Iceland, uh Canada (laughs) Mexico yeah so kind of I think thats thats about it.

Kevin: Pretty big list. So uh tell me more about your experience transitioning to US culture.

Regine: um It wasn't easy. um Since I had um learned English at school and uh done English literature uh at university, I mean I was kind of fluent with the language but of course um I was still you know lacking certain words or I I translated you know straight from German into English which came out queer at times. And I will never forget the expression I mean I was working at Hill & Knowlton back then and um so we went uh yeah we had a tour of the Washington Post for the interns and so there was this young woman she was going to law school I mean she she worked at Hill & Knowlton as a secretary during the day and went to law school at night. So um she had a suit and I wanted to um compliment her on how nicely she was dressed and so I told her you know "I like the costume you are wearing". She paled and I mean in in German suit is kostüm, so I straight straightly translated it, but of course costume in Ameri- is is like you know a Halloween costume you look like a clown you know which of course wasn't what I wanted to say. But, um so so these type of things um then uh yeah the adjustment was that uh my commute- um I didn't have a car in the beginning so my commute per way was two hours we lived close to Silver Spring back then and so I had to go downtown DC. And um, so yeah, and then of course um working at Hill & I mean you had to dress up and um so I I I took bus, metro, and transferred in metro, and then had a shuttle bus to Hill & Knowlton. Um so I um was dressed up you know wearing a suit most of the time. And then I saw women they were very elegantly um elaborately dressed but they were having sneakers on their feet and it looked so disgusting to me and I said, no I am not gonna do this. So I mean in my high heels I stalked (laughs) I stocked to the office and um but then later I I mean they they would switch shoes in the office and uh I mean I guess I I only did that for a year so that was okay but I think over the-over time I would have adapted to that custom 'cause it doesn't make sense. Its expensive to have new uh heels (laughs) on your shoes very often. um Yeah I mean you know I had to um get

my green card um I was I was uh pretty shocked that I had to do an AIDs test. um It it it wasn't nice but, um I mean the green card went fine because uh, no I had to the action before we became married. um Yeah no that went fine and then after we were married it um I I was out of a job and so I went house hunting. and um yeah We found a nice house where I raised the boys and we're still living here and um so it was time well spent. um But yeah, my adjustment it was the food that you know I went to the supermarket and I um looked at the breads and some breads looked very delicious and then I put my finger in and they were soft, they were inedible um and um there were no real good alternatives out, so I mean I learned to toast everything (laughs) I eat. um I mean it it it it wasn't and then I mean I was alone a lot. I mean okay so I mean I worked until '90 and then went house hunting no I worked to the end of '89 so started in the beginning of '89 to the end of '89 so in '90 I didn't work anymore so went house hunting and in in '90 we then found the house and then and it had to be renovated and and furnished and stuff and so since I didn't have a job I did all the painting the walls and closets and you name it. And um so yeah and then in uh '91 Keith, my first son, was born. And so then I reverted to being a mother and I remember that uh, of course, I wanted to raise him bilingually but, it was also that you know certain expressions they were not so familiar to me and so I I thought it safer to rather speak correct German to him than than you know Germanized English. So I mean I switched back and forth of course when Brett, Keith's father, my husband, came home we would switch to English but, I mean when I was alone with Keith I talked German to him all the time. And um yeah Keith really um yeah it was the mother tongue and and um Keith felt very comfortable with German all his life. um Like when we went to Germany I mean we would just get out of the plane and he would start talking German. Um I mean over the years he got a little bit out of practice uh but still he lived German, he loved the sound of German, he uh listened with dedication to cassettes uh, Die Drei Fragezeichen, in German he understood everything um and yeah he just liked it.

Kevin: Um what's Die Drei Fragezeichen?

Regine: So this is this is a uh a trio of friends and uh they clear up mysteries. It's a little bit like like Scooby Doo but but uh the kids are older they are teenagers ,basically.

Kevin: Uh okay, so uh how are you perceived differently here than in Germany?

Regine: How am I perceived? Um yeah people mispronounce my name all time (laughs) to start with. Um yeah um I think that Americans um consider me blunt um because I am not really, as a German, into niceties. I mean people in in in Germany they they they freely speak their mind. They um not necessarily to to hurt people, but to say the truth and um if they hurt people and it isn't intended then they they you know um try to to explain and and clear it up. But I mean they they kind of talk what they think. Whereas, in America, people wall and rather say nothing then then you know risk stepping on somebody's toes. Um how am I- yeah yeah people put me uh sorts of countries from Poland to Sweden to Netherlands um some German. Um uh but, I- overall, I think that I mean people respect me um equally here as they do in Germany. Um and I mean those who know me will not will probably be not totally injured by my heard and I mean I kind of, you know, am very willing to say you know I didn't want to injure you you know I didn't want to hurt you but it it it had to be said um.

Kevin: Alright, yeah so uh did you know um anyone living in America before you moved here?

Regine: Um yeah my sister um Medford Lakes. And um then of course I knew my husband and his uh two daughters Tanya and Corrie.

Kevin: Okay, so did you meet any new Germans that- when you- after coming here?

Regine: Um yeah I did I mean I I um not doch⁸ I met some Germans but but more after I had kids. Um like Beate um and her three kids I mean she came from Germany and um. Neighbors you know some people claimed like German origin but they wouldn't speak German so I mean wouldn't say directly German um no no not not in the beginning not really no.

Kevin: So do you still keep in contact with all of your German relatives and friends from Germany?

Regine: Yes, absolutely absolutely I mean um uh my mother is 95 now she can no longer um fly to America, she has a pacemaker as well and so um I am visiting her once a year at least. Um uh and when I visit her I see uh many of my friends or or have more phone calls to them because there is not this time difference. Um I see my brother and his family. Um yeah no I'm- I mean to to family and close friends I still have good contact throughout the years, yeah.

Kevin: So would you consider yourself then a German?

Regine: um, Yeah, I would, I would, yeah. Because that is the country where I grew up and so far I have spent 33 years in Germany and 26 years in America so it is still that that I have deeper and longer experiences with Germany. I did all my education there. I grew up there.

Kevin: So would you also consider yourself to be an American though?

Regine: Yes, yes, I um would too I grew into this society through my sons.

Kevin: Oh, okay so you've recently just got your citizenship. (Regine: yeah) So why did you take 26 years to get a citizenship?

Regine: Yeah, because um I never knew I mean uh whether I wanted to spend the rest of my life in Germany uh in in America I mean. Um I was having in the back of my mind something like when um my husband retires that we would then live in Germany because um I find that it is easier being old in Germany um especially since you do not have to drive. I see it with my mother, she's 95 she uh still lives on her own. She uses public transportation and um despite the fact that she has a walker but, she says there are always people who help her in the trolley car and so she can uh still live a fairly independent life. Whereas uh this is a nightmare for me should there come a time when you cannot drive anymore you're stuck. You're stuck, you cant do grocery shopping, you can't do anything, just stuck. And um yeah uh I do not fathom myself ever living in a retirement home, um not in Germany not in America um so I don't know what happens then when I can't drive anymore. Now, things have changed. My oldest son Keith died.

⁸ German for "yes" or "yet"

His grave is close to our house and he planted a lot of trees in this house he grew up in this house and this house is so full of memories of him and our happy days that I cannot um leave here. And um I applied for the American citizenship before Keith died. um And the consideration there was um, as I saw with my mother, um at a certain age um it is um you cannot do trans-Atlantic flights anymore. And um having two sons um and hopefully grandchildren uh one day, I always missed um having my parents, the boys' grandparents, close. Um my mother would come uh every year or every other year to visit us here and we would visit her in Germany which was always a big excitement and and very happy times. But yeah, I mean having uh had my boys grow up without grandparents; I mean the paternal grandparents they died and they did not like children so that relationship was highly problematic. So um yeah my uh boys basically grew up without grandparents around. Um so I think that is not good. Uh and so I mean that was the reason to say for the future I uh I do not want this big separation. We can go on vacation in Germany, we can uh we can swap houses with with the relatives I have there, um and so there are other ways to keep um uh keep returning to Germany.

Kevin: Hm okay, so how how was it like without citizenship, without American citizenship living in America ?

Regine: Uh yeah, I mean it was fine except that I was called to jury duty several times and I would've really loved to do it but I had to decline because I was non-citizen. Also, I uh would've loved to vote. Uh once the boys turned 18 um everybody was allowed to vote, only I had to stay home. That sucked, um so I'm looking forward to voting in the next elections. So and I mean since I live here this long I think uh it is time to make it official and uh avoid the rising fees of getting a green card, being harassed at uh entering the country. Um but okay so I I have dual citizenship. I uh went through the effort to get permission to keep my German citizenship which would have um automatically been uh forfeited without.

Kevin: Okay, so is there anything else you'd like to tell me before we finish?

Regine: Huh, I don't know (laughs) I talked a lot. Uh yeah I mean um okay yeah I can say um a friend of mine attacked me that for the fact that I have criticisms about America. Now, to put things clear, I have criticisms uh about America. Um the fact that people are under constant surveillance that that this I mean uh that I think uh the news are not always in depth I mean okay there there is a public news and BBC World News and there there are good, you know, um dailies like the Washington Post, New York Times uh that that have a deep uh background uh reporting about uh what is going on. Um but I mean, um the the whole Snowden thing, I did not really like how that was handled. Um I do not like Guantanamo Bay and the torture. Um I I you know um the sentencing system is not for rehabilitation, um it it uh is too harsh I mean the minimum sentencing um requirement I mean which is which is being worked on. Um so these are some of the criticisms but I mean I think America is a great country and and overall has, uh with the Constitution, the foundation and ability to uh be a truly democratic country. Um I also have criticisms about Germany, of course. I mean um uh the we have we have a lot of um ultraconservative uh political forces there and the um yeah Bundesverfassungsschutz⁹ it's like the the CI- not really C- NSA comparable. They they are blind on the right eye but very look to the left and beat on the left wing people. Um yeah I mean um I think that some experiences that

⁹ Roughly translated as "Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution"

I bring from Germany um enable me and and also give me the right to criticize things in America that I feel are not going right. Um, I mean the whole gun issue is is is I mean is is so monstrous for me. I mean I say why not just abolish the Second Amendment. I mean it was written at a time when America had thousand people in their militia and they needed people- for people to have weapons in order to defend the borders of the country. Plus, I mean America now and- America has the best you know, the biggest and best equipped military uh defense in the world. Um plus I mean the Constitution um guarantees democratic ways for people to uh express their criticism to to uh work for changes in the system. Thus guns are not necessary period. Okay yeah that's yeah that's I think all. (laughs)

Kevin: Okay yeah well thank you uh was a good interview, thanks.

Regine: You're very welcome. It was a pleasure.