

Leona Bruhn T-3-77 Growing Up On Michigan City's Westside

Transcription by Therese Zelasko August 23, 2003

Leona: That was the low German, so it was difficult with me if I come home and say a few words to grandpa, why it was different from what I was learning in school anyway. My mother and grandfather Bruhn just got along wonderful. She'd talk German English to him and he'd talk German to her. She could understand it, but she couldn't speak it to him except a few words and Grandpa was the same way to her. And my grandmother Bruhn, she could speak very little English.

Laurie Radke: Did you go on to the regular high school then?

Leona Bruhn: No, no, when I was confirmed in 1920 at St. Paul's, I completed seventh grade there and intended to go, continue to go to public school, and, oh, for about one and a half years prior to getting out of St. Paul's I was subject to nosebleeds and the doctor told my parents I just studied, I just took it to heart too seriously. So I was washing my doll clothes and hanging them out on the sidewalk, on the road I should say, from one tree to another. I had washed my doll clothes and a friend of ours came over and she said "Leona, what are you doing?" I said "Washing my doll clothes." Here I was, 14 years old, washing doll clothes and she said "You meet me at Reliance tomorrow morning" she said, "You're going to work". She said, "If you stay 2 weeks, I'll get a box of chocolates and I'll give you some." Well, that was a big deal, so Leona got up the next morning and she went to Reliance. And I went to work and I was a trimmer. I got \$1.44 a day, that was just the end of WWI and of course we were getting a bonus and my first payday was \$8.64. Well, I was on cloud nine at that time coming home with that big of a check. So I gave it all to my folks. Well, this house wasn't paid for at that time and so I gave the money to my folks. My father said, "Well, Saturday night," he said, "I told you when you went to work, why, you'd get your piano." So they took me down to Korn's Music store down on Franklin Street and got me a secondhand piano and so from that time on I kept paying so much every week on the piano till I got it paid for. And, uh, all that while I never got a nosebleed, so the doctor recommended I should not go back to school. But I went to vocational school which they held here at Garfield. We had to go one morning a week, and we, one week we'd have sewing, the next week we'd have cooking, then we'd have business English and History. And that, you had to go to that then two years till you were 16 years old. So I went to that two years, well then after that, that would be in 1922, well, I kept on working and then I didn't want to go back to school anymore because I was making that money. And being able to do things that we couldn't do before because when my father put up this house I don't know if it cost us, cost him \$900 or whether he sold the one on Kentucky Street for \$900 and this one cost him \$1200. We had no basement, it was all sand and it was practically a shell, just the plasterboard and the woodwork. We had a coal stove in here and a cook stove in the kitchen and that's the way we kept the house warm. That's the reason these two doors are here off of this room, so the heat would go in both bedrooms and that room was closed off for the winter. So we just had this little house here and we were getting it paid for, my father had borrowed the money from his father. So my mother would start the Christmas saving then, so every week she'd pay that dollar a week to the bank so every year we'd get a Christmas saving of \$50. Well, that was given to Grandpa for the down payment

on this house, see. So, then I worked at Reliance and of course the pay got better and I advanced quite a bit there. And I was there until about 1926. I decided I needed more schooling, then I went to business college here on 4th and Franklin. Mr. Swanghart had night classes there. I went on Monday and Thursday, I think it was. And then I took business spelling, typing and bookkeeping. Then I got a job at Reliance, the same place I was working. I got an advancement and I worked there in the office and they happened, it just so happened, they were moving the Chicago office down here to Banner factory at Reliance and I worked there then for, oh, about three years. And I was getting \$80 a month then in the office. All of a sudden they pulled the office back to Chicago without any notice or that. So then we were out of work for a little while. Then I couldn't find work, it was the during the depression. Along in '32, things were real rough so they offered me a job upstairs again trimming, so I went back in there and worked till 1936. Then they were making children's pajamas and shorts and BVD's. They were not making the army shirts that they were when I first started there and the jackets. And I met Mr. Levine over here, my father knew him and my father introduced me to him. And we talked about work and he said my father always said to me "Why don't you come to work for me?" I said, "You got a job?" and he said "Sure." So I went to Reliance the next morning and finished what I had started there, you worked on bundles and finished that bundle and I went over here and worked for Mr. Levine from 1936 to 1942. And then I was offered a job at Wilson City Service. It was a big garage on Michigan Street across from the courthouse. I worked there from January till May 1942, then I got a job with Michigan City Sanitarium, which is now Walters Hospital. And I worked there for 34 years and then retired two years ago. I saw it from Michigan City Sanitarium to the Warren Hospital and then Walters Hospital, of course that's what it is now. Now it's a foundation, at that time it was not, it was just incorporated.

Laurie Radke: When you first went to work at Reliance, was that common to have 14 year old girls in.....

Leona Bruhn: Oh yes. We all had long hair those days, you know. And of course going to work and you had, we worked around power machines, so we all had to braid our hair and put our hair up someway. Because we were not allowed to work if we didn't put our hair up, because it was dangerous, we could get it caught. I could run any machine that was in the factory; 2 needle, 3 needle, or whatever it was. I, different types of machines, making men's shirts, you know.

Laurie Radke: Was it mainly women working there?

Leona Bruhn: Mainly. Of course, there were men in the cutting room, cutting department downstairs on the first floor. But the upstairs when I left there, why, they employed between six and seven hundred people.

Laurie Radke: Did most of them live on the west side?

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh. But a lot of them came from, they came from all over, that was one of the main factories for women. In fact, my father's cousins came clear from Canada where the Harrison School is now. They would walk that distance every morning and home at night from Reliance, regardless of what the weather was.

Laurie Radke: Where there any women younger than 14 in the factory?

Leona Bruhn: No, you had to be 14; I think you had to be 14. You had to get a permit.

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Laurie Radke: This vocational school you went to, you said it was at Garfield?

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh

Laurie Radke: Was it, who ran that that school?

Leona Bruhn: The city. Miss Young and Miss, I can't think of the other teachers' name now. That was my first experience with a lady teacher.

Laurie Radke: Was it?

Leona Bruhn: At St. Paul's' we all had men teachers. That was my first experience with lady teachers.

Laurie Radke: Did you like them better than men teachers?

Leona Bruhn: Oh, I can't say that I did, because I had gone to St. Paul's that many years and I was just interested in that, but it was just that it, we were forced to do this, you know, we were forced, you had to go to school. If you had this permit you had to go to that vocational school.

Laurie Radke: Is that the only one they ran was Flynn?

Leona Bruhn: That's the only one that I know of. It's the only one that I know of.

Laurie Radke: Did most of the German kids from St. Paul's go on to school or did they.....

Leona Bruhn: Oh no, a lot of them, we had some very well educated ones from St. Paul's. For instance there's Dr. Fint; he left St. Paul's and he's a retired Doctor of Divinity now in Capital University. There's Hilda Wendt-Carlson, Dr. Carlson's wife, who went on to high school and became a teacher.

Laurie Radke: Did most of the kids on the west side, did they work or did they go to school?

Leona Bruhn: A lot of them went to work, a lot of them went to work. It seemed as though maybe we were the poor class people I don't know what, there was a lot of them went to high school. Most, I think I would have gone. For instance my cousin Edna, she was seven years older than I was, she went about two years to high school and then that was it.

Laurie Radke: A lot of kids at that time (incomplete, Leona cut in)

Leona Bruhn: No, no, no. They just went a few years and they'd get a job and the age of 16 and then they would go to work. Then it wasn't compulsory, see, that you had to go to this vocational school if you went that far. But that wasn't started when my cousin Edna left school, that's just when I started, that's during the war that they wanted, everyone wanted to get to work and make that money, I think, and it was to put the child back to where they should still go to school.

Laurie Radke: Where the kids from west side or the people from west side of town treated any differently from people that lived downtown?

Leona Bruhn: No, I can't say they were. They were all treated about the same, only the, if there was girls that lived in Canada, then the fellows couldn't take those girls home, They'd give them so many minutes to get over the bridge again to get back in their locality. They didn't want them to come over there in Canada stealing, you know, their girls.

Laurie Radke: Was it like that for west side?

Leona Bruhn: Not that I know of. That's why they call it Canada because you had to go over the bridge to get there, see? That's how it got its name, but they were, oh, my father said many times they'd try and get away from those kids, they'd take some girl home from there and they'd give them so many minutes to get past the bridge. They were really hepped on that. I don't know that the west side had anything like that. I never heard any stories about it

Laurie Radke: Did most of the families that came to the west side, did they stay here? I know some neighborhoods the people come for a little while and then they'd leave.

Leona Bruhn: It's just been the last few years that I would say that it seemed as though that the older ones passed away like my grandparents passed away. Of course we were located here and we just didn't relocate, but they moved out and the children got married and the old folks passed away here, like for instance the Natezu family and the Glasky's and all of those, why, the Lutzes.

Laurie Radke: Were there any organizations for the Germans? I know there were Polish societies.

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh. Oh, there's a society that used to be for the women, I can't recall it now, of course my mother didn't belong to it, but I know a lot of women did, Mrs. Schnick, oh, it wasn't just the west belonged to it, but Herman Sisters, that was the name of the society.

Laurie Radke: Is it German?

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh. And I think they conducted their meetings in German, too. I can recall Mrs. Reiter belonging to them and Mrs. Blesing, just ever so many members from our church belonged to it. Called Herman Sisters. The men, I don't know that they had a society among them, I know our church had a society that was called St. Paul's Aid, and they would, it was a society that helped the other member of the society, for instance, if my father, the way he was sick here, but the society had folded by the time he was ill. And my

mother had worked hard all day and if she needed rest at night they would have these men come and they would watch the sick at night and stay there till maybe 6 o'clock in the morning, and then the wife would take over again and then wherever it was any member of St. Paul's that had that, why, that was one of their practices that they did. And they gave them, they had a sick benefit of four dollars a week that they would pay the family a sick benefit and on death, it was \$400. And I think they paid something like a dollar a month or something like that, they would hold meetings, or oyster suppers, something like that for benefits in addition to the dues.

Laurie Radke: Was German spoken in the homes?

Leona Bruhn: Somewhat.

Laurie Radke: Undecipherable

Leona Bruhn: Of course, it wasn't in my home, but when we would go over to Grandpa Bruhn's, why, we'd learn the German because they spoke German to us.

Laurie Radke: I have a couple other questions. When you were, the kids in the neighborhood, did they have a boundary limit that they played within or did they sort of travel the whole town?

Leona Bruhn: No, I think more or less the children around here played together, we didn't, of course I never recall of going anywhere to play after coming home from St. Paul's School, why, I was used to bring kids home with because I was the only child they'd come here with, and my mother had some homemade bread or cookies or some snack so they were always glad to come home with Leona and we'd play here for a little while and after that they'd go home so they could get home for supper. But they would tell their parents at noon they were coming home with me that evening. I can't recall me ever going to anyone's home like that, but my home was sort of an open door anyway, even when I worked at Reliance. If the weather got bad, why, the girls couldn't get home. "Leona, I'm going home with you tonight", of course that was all right that one winter, we had a quite heavy snowstorm and it was one of the floor ladies up there she said to me "I'm going to stay at your house", well, she didn't ask, she said I'm coming home with you. So she came, it was on a Monday night and she was here for over a week. Of course only had this one, the floor ladies had to wear white uniforms so every night we came home here Bess would just strip and put on my mothers clothes and she'd wash all her clothes out and we'd hang them down in cellar right away and fire up the furnace right and they'd dry and before we'd go to bed at 11 o'clock at night, she'd press them, iron them out and next morning she'd put them on again and we'd go to work. That one day it was so bad we just couldn't come home for noon so my father would bring us a beer can of homemade soup up the factory. He only brought 2 spoons that day but they surely found other spoons in a hurry.

Laurie Radke: What time did you have to go to work?

Leona Bruhn: Seven. We worked from seven until twelve, we had a hour for lunch, and then we'd get off at 4 o'clock, under 16. Of course after you were 16, you worked your nine hours.

Laurie Radke: How many days a week?

Leona Bruhn: We worked five days a week and half a day on Saturday. Green Street, was Green Street paved then or was it being repaved? Anyway, they were putting a sewer down Green Street and I think the pavement was tore up, and one noon, that day we were supposed to work all day Saturday and a friend of mine was, her brother was my foreman, and she wanted to get off that afternoon. She came to work that morning, she had her hair all up in curlers and it was in the summertime and when she said "Otto, I want this afternoon off" and he said "you can't have the afternoon off, we have to get this work out." So we was running across Green Street we only had a half hour on Saturday because we wanted to get out earlier. So she lived way down here on West 7th or 8th Street, I forget which it was, and all at once, Lena was running ahead of me, Lena disappeared but her head. I stopped just like that, and boy the men that was in that work up there in the cutting department, they came and they grabbed her by the arm, pulled her out. Why, she was just so wet, she had this scum it looked like, it was, they filled it up with water and they (undecipherable) the sand would come in and close and be real solid down at the bottom and it looked like a scum on top of the surface. If I had been first it would have been me, and Lena was a faster runner or got a head start, I don't know what it was, and she just went down. Well, they pulled her out, she's happy as a lark. She says "Well, I don't have to go back to work this afternoon." And so she says you tell my brother Otto, so we go back and he come up to me and "Where's Lena?" I said she fell in the sewer. "Don't give me that stuff" he said. I says, "Well you go down and ask Harry Wentzell," I said, "He helped pull her out." Well, he didn't want to believe me, so we went down and Harry, then of course Lena had an excuse. He said my sister, he lived with his sister their parents were dead she says my sister wouldn't even let me in the house she said I just had my dress on it was sort of an apron dress kimono sleeve you know. I just took that off and I just had my bloomers and bra on. She said I even had to take that off and the rest of them had to get out of the way and I ran to my bedroom she says to get some other clothes. I can't recall seems to me that was brick pavement on Green Street at that time.

Laurie Radke: How was it like working at Reliance?

Leona Bruhn: I always liked it, it was a, they kept the factory real clean, that they really did. It was always clean. You went home for, except those that lived far away, they of course didn't, but most of them in this area, Clara Breemer worked there for many years and she lives way down on Lincoln Avenue almost to the lake, just one block this side of the lake hills, and she would walk home every noon and walk back there in an hours time. And she would come for lunch, she wouldn't stay there and eat. Of there was no cafeteria or anything like that After '36 the union came in and forced them to do a lot of things, put in machines and they had more activities one thing or another. But when I worked there they didn't, it was just very little social. They'd give us a Christmas party but they wouldn't give it to us, it's just that the girls would say Well we're going to take this day as our day before Christmas Eve and that's going to be our Christmas party, we'd have dill pickles and crackers and maybe someone would make some sandwiches or potato salad. We'd just all put it together and that was our Christmas party. They didn't give us a party.

Laurie Radke: Did you get holidays off?

Leona Bruhn: Holidays, well Christmas, the main holidays uh huh, six a year I would say, we got those off.

Laurie Radke: Was it a noisy factory?

Leona Bruhn: Well, all the machinery, yes.

Laurie Radke: I'm trying to picture what it was like inside there.

Leona Bruhn: They had long tables and the machines would break down, you know, and the machinists would have to come and fix it for you and it was, I've always enjoyed it. Of course, I didn't work on the machine too much, only I more or less had to fix repairs. I was in the, not the stockroom, but in the on the closeout table to close out all the orders. I enjoyed that very much.

Leona Bruhn: ..... And, oh my goodness, when we lived on Kentucky Street, why, that was a basket lunch and then we would come over here to my grandfather's at 1112 West 10th Street and that whole yard would be full of people because we watched the parade. The parade would, the circus was right here back of Willard Avenue and that day well you didn't get any rest here at night because they would come in early of a morning and then at night they would be open till 11o'clock and they'd break up, you know, and all that. But we always came over to Grandpa Bruhn's because we got to see the parade from here. That was an all day affair.

Laurie Radke: What was in the parade?

Leona Bruhn: Ooh, monkeys and lions and elephants and all the animals. They took them all down 10th Street. I don't know where they went on from there, just down Franklin, I guess and then they had this, they played this steam calliope, you know, and oh, that would draw all the children. 10th Street on both sides was just like Franklin Street is today when we have the Indiana Day, what do you call that day, Summer festival, that's the way 10th Street used to be. My aunt's house was Grand Central Station there for all of her relatives and over to Grandpa's.

Laurie Radke: How long would the parade last?

Leona Bruhn: Oh, couple hours, it was a long parade and these girls on floats, you know, and they really had some wonderful shows, and at night, of course, then we'd go over to the show and eat this cotton candy and all that junk, you know and .....

Laurie Radke: Did you ever run into any gypsies? Do you recall having gypsies coming to your house to want to read your fortune or something like that?

Leona Bruhn: No, but I had never had at any time, our home that I can recall, although I do recall one case where there was a, a circus out here on Franklin Street, I think it was, or close to LaPorte somewhere. And on a Friday night a man became very ill and he came into the Warren Hospital and he was a gypsy. Well, the next day they gave him medication, the next day he was fine and he was discharged, and, but no money to pay his bill. And so it was my job always to get the bill, get the money from the people, so I said to him " Well, leave your watch here." Oh, no, that watch was put on by his mother and he wouldn't dare to take that off from his wrist and so we had to discharge him. We never got paid, he had a bill, well, I think it was \$50 or

more and then the doctor bill, and then he come into Emergency and all that, you know. Well, we never got our money but none of those, I can't recall any gypsies ever coming to our home.

Unknown: Okay, these stories they used to have when they'd come in, do you ever recall medicine men in groups of Indians. These were real Indians, they traveled with the circuses and stuff like that and they'd set up in town.

Leona Bruhn: Well, I don't know of them ever being with the circus but we used to have a medicine man out here, well I'd say at the Pines or a little further than that. But there was a medicine man out there and, oh, I know on Sunday you could hardly find a parking place around his place to because there were so many people there.

Laurie Radke: What did he do?

Leona Bruhn: I don't know what he did, but anyway I know I had my grandmother, my mother's mother was quite ill and she had gone to different doctors here in Michigan City and they wanted her to take Radium. And she refused and so they said well, the last resource was take her out there. Well, we were the only ones that had a car then, this car that my father bought in 1926, none of the other family had a car. So my father took my grandmother out there and he examined her and he said "Grandma, that's the best thing that could have happened to you," he said. "If you hadn't be flowing the way you are, you'd had a stroke and you'd have been six foot and under by now." And he said "You just go home and rest," and he gave her some medication and it had stopped and she never had a reoccurrence of anything like that.

Unknown: I have been told stories about (undecipherable) the medicine man had been mentioned but I thought it was just that it was just in terms that he came into town when this group of Indians or what, I don't know what they were called, how they called them because grandma spoke broken English and it was hard, she had her own words for certain things and we knew what she meant but when you try to explain to somebody, it doesn't come out that way. But I didn't know that he actually stayed out here, I just assumed that, you know, what she was telling us, I just assumed he just came in once a year with the circus or whatever was in. And it was always in terms with a big parade on Franklin Street or whatever the street was then and this is always interesting to me.

Leona Bruhn: I have a friend who's from Romania and he is a gypsy.

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Leona Bruhn: This street was nothing but a road at one time, all this property here belonged to Mr. Singbush. It wasn't paved of course, it would look just more or less like an alley. And then he put the street through here from west 10th to Green Street and that way he could sell lots on both side of the street

.and he named the street after his youngest daughter, Clara Singbush, that's where the street got its name from, Clara Street.

Laurie Radke: This whole area out here, though, already had homes, say from 10th to.....

Leona Bruhn: There was the two houses on 10th Street and then he had two older homes that he moved up on this far end of Green Street. When the South Shore took their switching into 9th Street, he bought some older homes and had them moved up here. As a little girl, when I lived on Kentucky Street, we moved here, I was about ten years old, why, they, those homes were there and we always took shortcuts to come over here to my grandparents, who lived in this second house here on 10th Street. And my mother wanted to buy the lot close to my grandparents and that's the reason we bought this first lot which is on the angle here.

Laurie Radke: You moved here in 1920?

Leona Bruhn: 1916

Laurie Radke:1916 on Clara Street?

Leona Bruhn: Um huh

Laurie Radke: Kentucky Street already was already pretty well developed, they had a lot of homes?

Leona Bruhn: Yes, but Kentucky Street was not paved at that time.

Laurie Radke: No?

Leona Bruhn: Kentucky Street, where our first home was at 1502 Kentucky and that was all sand. And my father worked for Mr. Schonberg, N.M. Schonberg, also C.E. Anderson and he drove a wagon and had a horse, Nell, and Topsy. And they would take my father out every day, he would, one day he would be on the west side of town, another day he would be on the east side of town. He would go to these homes and get orders, the grocery orders, because they had no telephones those days, so he would go out and get the orders from his customers on one day and then on the next day they would get delivered to that area. And then, vice versa, he would, after he would get those delivered, then he'd try to go around this neighborhood to pick up the orders from these people. But he would have to only, he could only go on Ohio Street as far as, it was called the Noveretsky's. They had a butcher shop there and there was a saloon there at that time. And there he would park, he would put the horse, tie the horse and leave it there, because he couldn't take that horse through that soft sand, it was too hard on the dog, on the horse, although I remember one time he brought the horse in our back yard and by the time he gathered his orders and it wasn't that warm of weather, but the horse just collapsed in our back yard and died. And my father called Bill Heller and he said "Oh Herman, good thing, I'm getting low on beef," he said. So he came with a truck and took the horse away.

Laurie Radke: When you moved out here, were there just homes?

Leona Bruhn: On this street? No, there weren't any homes.

Laurie Radke: No, in this whole area?

Leona Bruhn: Well, 10th Street, there were homes, all along 10th and there was homes along Green, but not along this street.

Laurie Radke: What I meant was, was it just homes, they weren't building factories or businesses out here?

Leona Bruhn: That factory that was there, that was there as long as I can recall, I was just a child that I can remember. That's called the, was the, what was the name of that factory now, in late years it was Karpen's but before that it was Ford & Johnson. And my mother worked there, it was, that was called the cane seating, they did cane work. She also worked at the old factory that was here on Chicago Street which was State Street at that time. There was a huge factory there in the wedge between Chicago Street and the other street that's back of it that goes along the prison. There was a huge factory in there, my grandparents lived right across from the boiler room and oh, when that whistle would blow, it would just, you wanted to lift yourself out of the skin, it was, oh, such a shrilly whistle, it was just awful. And my grandfather was a foreman in the sanding department and my mother papered chairs in the years prior to her marriage to my father.

Laurie Radke: Was that common, do you know, for the women to work in the factories?

Leona Bruhn: Oh, yes and my mother's first, she got 32 cents a day when she worked in this factory. And so much an hour and 32 cents a day and then they raised her, I think she said to 40 cents a day and then she went to 52 and after that she went on piece work. And then she said they could make 75 cents a day, up to 80 or 85 cents in papering chairs to ship away.

Laurie Radke: When this area was building up, more and more people, was it German or...

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh, German and some Polish, but the majority of the people were German.

Laurie Radke: Do you know why they moved out here, why the Germans all...

Leona Bruhn: Well, I don't know, I guess there was just a, several of them would come here from Germany. For instance, when my grandparents built their home here, why, then they sent for my grandmother's sister and my great grandfather to come here. Of course, then they settled over here on Green Street. They all kind of congregated around in this area, because I know in 1920 when I would deliver the Bauschapters, which is in German, we called it, it was a Lutheran messenger from the church, why, every house along Clare, Green, Willard Ave. the one block and back 10th Street up and to the railroad track, those were practically all St. Paul's people at one time. Today, we're fortunate if we got five families in that same area.

Laurie Radke: Did the neighborhood have activities together? Was there a neighborhood tavern?

Leona Bruhn: Well, yes there was a tavern here on the corner. I recall one time I come from school and running and the tavern owners' bulldog came out and scratched my arm here, of course I never had a love for dogs. And Willard

Ave., that one or two blocks there, there were a numbers of stores, there was Ritter's grocery in later years, forget the other, of course we didn't go to Willard Ave. too much because our, my father worked for C.E. Anderson on Chicago Street, 409 Chicago Street, and Schnick brothers had the butcher shop next to it. So we did all our trading there, there was no need for us to go down to Willard Ave. But the people farther west of Willard Ave., they would all come up to these stores and buy, because there were Ritter's and there was a butcher shop and a barber shop and a theater. And I guess they used to, I never went to it, but they tell me they could get in on a Sunday afternoon for five cents and one of my friends, Art Rummel, used to play down there, he was a great piano player. I didn't know him until later years, but he used to play down there. And then there was Hirschmanns tavern and there was another tavern on 9th and Franklin which was, or 9th and Willard that was called Geister's. That's all that I can recall

Laurie Radke: Were they German businesses?

Leona Bruhn: Well, Hirschmanns was German and Geister's, yes, and the Ritter brothers and that property on Willard Ave. where Ritter brothers had their store, that was owned, all that property in there, by Krieger. I don't know the man's first name, but those were all business downstairs and apartments up.

Laurie Radke: You said there were, it was mainly German with some Polish?

Leona Bruhn: There were a few Polish people.

Laurie Radke: When you say the west side of town, what do you mean when you say the west side?

Leona Bruhn: This side of the tracks.

Laurie Radke: Which tracks?

Leona Bruhn: The, that was the New York Central at that time, and then the Monon and the car factory did their switching to the south yards. I'm so sorry that I don't know what happened to them, I, must have have torn them out, at the time, must have been in 1915 or 14 when the south shore, south side lumber yard became on fire. Oh, those pictures were just horrible. We sat up, my folks let me sleep on the floor right by the door on a Saturday night on Kentucky Street, and they sat up all night with a hose in their hand. And my grandfather watched me while my folks watched the house for sparks on the outside. That was a terrible fire.

Laurie Radke: Were they evacuating anyone?

Leona Bruhn: No, that they didn't, unless they did farther south down to, Barker's Pond, there at the end of Kentucky Street where it ends now. That used to be a pond in there and we used to take little boats and go in there and get pollywogs out in a bottle. That was great stuff, we thought we were catching something, get those little pollywogs out of there. It just eventually dried up.

Laurie Radke: When there was that fire, did they have any fire protection for the homes?

Leona Bruhn: No, it was just the fire and it was out there and Kentucky Street not being paved at that time, it was really, I think that's one reason it got such a start, you know, for this to burn. And I don't recall what time it started at night but it was still smoldering on Sunday and people came from all over. These pictures showed, I know more the pictures than I can really recall the fire itself. Of course I knew it was bad that night, it was just like the heavens were lighted, it was such a terrible fire. But those pictures showed all the smoke. And people came there and then after, was it after that, well, even before, I believe, as a child, Pullman would, or that was Hass and Barker plant then. They would take cars and like all their ends that would come off the board or the like, they would fill this entire boxcar and send it out there to the south yards. And then they'd give word, anyone could go there and get wood and the people would get their wagons and burlap sacks and bushel baskets and boxes or whatever they had. Weren't too many boxes those days, it was mostly bushel baskets and burlap sacks and we would fill up those, it was nice, it was all clean wood. And we could carry that wood home, as much as we could carry. On Saturdays, then the children would fill them up and the women would tie the sacks and throw them on their shoulder. My mother carried many of them to 1502 Kentucky. Then when we sold the home over there the man that bought it was Urbanski. And when he saw it, he said, when he saw the rooms upstairs, he said "You move tomorrow, I take it." And my mother said, "Oh, I can't move that fast." All our coal was in the basement that we had purchased for that winter. We took that coal and we put it in baskets and we carried it all over here to my grandfather's house. We lived upstairs in three rooms there, until, from October until June, until this house was completed in 1916 and then we moved here.

Laurie Radke: Did you have a contractor build the house?

Leona Bruhn: Mr. Neindorf, they called him Coxie Neindorf. He's uncle to Mabel Leverenz and Norma Cating. He lived here on the west side. Oh, then there was a few stores down on west 10th Street, come to think about. There was Neindorf's saloon, too, down there.

Laurie Radke: How far down did west, when you say west side, you say this side of the railroad tracks, but did it have a western boundary?

Leona Bruhn: Well, usually where Freid Brothers is, that's about the end of it. My grandfather, when, after we moved here then and my grandfather retired, why we would, he would get me up at five o'clock in the morning and we would take our pail and we'd go out and pick our raspberries and go early in the morning before it got hot. When we come home at eight o'clock, people were all taking their pails and going out, we'd come home with our five or six quart of blackberries and then we'd sit under my grandfather's cherry tree the rest of the day and pull briars out of our fingers. All those sticky thorns, oh that was awful, but my mother and my aunt Libby, why, she, they, made blackberry jelly and juice that they didn't can up too much, made too much of the jelly, because the sugar was too much to use at one time, so they would keep, put this juice and put it in quart jars. Then when they needed fresh jelly in the wintertime, why then they'd just have the sugar then and make fresh jelly through the years. And we would also go out here west farther to what we called Oak Hill and picked wild huckleberries, they weren't much bigger than, oh, hardly the tip of your finger. But they were

wild, it took all day to pick a water pail full. Of course, my father and his cousin used to go out and his brother go out an awful lot. And they would get on the South Shore here, it stopped at the railroad track here, they would get on the South Shore and they would take it to Oak Hill. They'd go early in the morning and then they would pick berries all day and then they would come home on the South Shore at night. Well, that was a long ride. But my father said when he was a boy still going to school my grandfather was making 90 cents a day in Pullman and he was making the same amount of money as his father was by going out and getting blueberries or huckleberries. He would get up at two o'clock in the morning and take their pails and a little sack lunch and then they would walk out here and he said they knew a lot of the farmers who had cows. So they'd milk the cows real quick and then they'd pick a few raspberries first and that would be their breakfast after they would get out there. And then they'd pick all day and then walk home and he'd get home about one o'clock in the afternoon and my grandmother would hold these berries in their containers and pour them down so all the leaves would get out because that was the marsh, which was wet. You had to wear boots on to go out there. And that would take the leaves out then and Mr. Zorn on 8th and Washington would take all of his berries, he said "You bring me all the berries you can pick" and he would give him 90 cents for the berries, he usually had the same amount every day.

Laurie Radke: What did Mr. Zorn do then?

Leona Bruhn: He had a grocery store where Jim's market is now. A supermarket, you know that one on 8th and Wabash. There was a big store there; there was pictures in the paper of that store at one time.

Laurie Radke: So there used to be farms out here?

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh. Oh, west here there were farms, like you see Oak Hill, that's all built up. But at one time that was all just marsh. That's where I really learned to drive a car. In 1926, my father bought a Model T Ford and of course I was used to a gearshift car. And then he buys this Ford and that was with that clutch, you know, the floor pieces. So we went out, he took Mr. and Mrs. Roth and my mother and father and I, we went out there and they were going to pick berries. Well, I was allergic to something that, for several years, so I wouldn't dare to go into the marsh. So the four of them went in, I thought, Boy, this big space here, here's where I learned to drive this car. So I just got back of that wheel and I ran all over that field there. That took the fear out me, after that I had confidence in myself that I could drive the car. Before that, I was afraid, almost hit, killed a couple of prison pigs out here, coming down their road one night with my dad in the car, because I was reaching down for the gearshift. I wanted to shift, and there was no shift there and my dad grabbed the wheel or I would have hit a pig sure as two times two is four.

Laurie Radke: A real pig?

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh. A prison pig got out.

Laurie Radke: Oh, I was going to say "Why were they wandering around?"

Leona Bruhn: They had, they used to keep a lot of those things out here. Then there was the part of the prison farm, we had one farm in particular, they

raised onions and celery. An awful lot of that, on Sunday afternoons, that was our recreation, we would walk out there to see how the onions were growing and the celery. And that took a whole Sunday afternoon. Or one Sunday afternoon, perhaps we'd go to the cemetery and back. But walking there and taking care of the graves and then come back, that was our recreation. And when my father worked for Mr. Anderson, he'd have Thursday afternoons that he'd get off a little earlier, well, he would go to, have his hose and all that down to C.E. Anderson's and then my mother and I would have a sack lunch ready or a basket. And we'd meet my father at the pier and we'd go on the old west pier and we would fish then until dark and listen to the band concert there on Thursday nights in the summer.

Laurie Radke: Did you play a lot on the beach, the kids from the west side?

Leona Bruhn: Well they went, I never did, but my father would tell that he would go to the west beach an awful lot in his young days, but he said they would dig a hole, they didn't have bathing suits those days. So they would dig a hole and put their clothes in so they wouldn't, if it would rain that the clothes wouldn't get wet. And then they'd go to the beach and have their fun in there and then they'd come out and he said one time, I guess he was ice skating and he fell in, so there was nothing left for him to do. He know if he come home, why he know he would get a licking on top of it because his clothes is all wet. So they hurried and put the clothes on, they got over here in this big factory at Ford and Johnson and they laid up there on top of the furnace and spread their clothes out so they would dry out, so they wouldn't get cold, take cold from it. And they dried there before they came home because they said they knew if they came home like that, why, they would get really a beating.

Laurie Radke: Was Ford and Johnson inside the prison yards?

Leona Bruhn: No, no the Ford and Johnson is on this side of the prison wall. You know, there's a street along this side, State Street as was at that time. It was changed, I don't know what year it was changed to Chicago Street. Well, when that 12, when 12 was put in to go to Chicago or to Gary and in through there, when that road was put in, then they called it Chicago Street because people would get on there to go to Chicago. And it was just a two lane highway and on 4th of July, if you went blueberry picking on that day, it was bumper to bumper all the way, going and coming, it was that crowded. You could, I don't know how far Oak Hill is from here, now you see it advertised as a little resort. But it would take you a couple hours to get to Oak Hill, it's not too far from here, I don't know, maybe 10 miles, maybe that far, I don't know just exactly, I'm not good at judging miles.

Laurie Radke: Most of the people, do you know where most of the people, the Germans on the west side, did they have one place more than another where they worked, like did they work more at the car factory?

Leona Bruhn: Car factory, yes. Most of them were down there. My grandfather got in to when he came here to this country, why, he went to work for Mr. Priess. And so he started there and this man said to him, "Oh, you're in America now," he said, "Your name isn't Bruhn." He said "Your name is Brown, that means color in English." And, oh, my grandfather couldn't speak much English so I guess that's what he wrote down. So it went on for years and my father worked at this factory as a young boy and his older brother William,

who was not, didn't have a job, my father asked if he could have a job there. The boss told him "Yes, bring him in." So my father told his brother and the next morning he went to work with him and he started to work there. So a couple days after the man said to him "I thought you asked me for a job for your brother, why doesn't he come into work?" My father said he's been working for two days, who's your brother, over there, that's Bill Bruhn. He said that guy didn't give his name as Bill Bruhn, he gave his name as Bill Brown. My father said "He's always doing something like that, he says he wants to be a little ritzy," he says "He came from Germany when I did, and our name is Bruhn." So my uncle kept the name of Brown and my father the name of Bruhn so when they came home at noon, why, my father brought it up at the dinner table and of course my grandfather wasn't home and my grandmother just hushed the boys up. But that didn't end it, at night when they came home for supper, then they started the supper table and my father and my grandfather and my uncle got into it, well, my grandfather didn't think too much of it, he said, "Well that made no difference." My father thought if your name is one thing, you should stick to that name and no other name. So he and my uncle put the gloves on at night to decide what the name was going to be. My grandfather had two barns out here, the one was where they kept their coal, the other one was is where they kept some chickens and then they had an extra room. It was a quite sizeable barn. And that's what they called their clubroom, so that's where they had their mittens on that night, trying to fight out, fight the situation out. So my grandfather found out they were in there, so he came and he stopped it and my father got a licking out of it, because he was making such a fuss out of it, the name. Well, he says to his dad "You're going to be sorry some day." Well, it went on until 1923, my grandfather retired from Pullman. And of course all the other men were getting a pension from Pullman, and Mr. Carl Bruhn didn't get any, and he kept sobbing and sobbing, he didn't get no pension, he didn't get no pension. Well, we didn't have a car, so my father asked Mr. Anderson one day if he could use his horse and wagon and they went down to the office. And they said "Mr. Bruhn, you didn't work here long enough." Well, sure did, he came here to this country on such and such day from Germany. So my father said to the lady or man, whoever was taking care of him, she said, he said, "Well, look back when Mr. Priess was a foreman here at the factory, here's my father's check number and look at that." And he looked at that he said, "Oh, yeah but your name is Carl Brown." And so then my grandfather started getting his pension, he got a dollar a day from that time on until the time that he died. But before that, why just because of that incident of not keeping your right name, why, he was cheated out of, well not really cheated, it was his own fault that he didn't get pension. Of course, it didn't go back retroactive, it just went on from the day then that they discovered what his right name was and then he got \$30 a month was what his was. Of course, grandpa was real happy over it then, you know, that he got \$30, was getting \$30 a month pension.

Laurie Radke: Did most Germans change and Americanize their names when they came?

Leona Bruhn: Well, I don't know if most of them did, I don't know of any others that done that. It was just that in our case, being the name was Bruhn meant a color in the American language and they said it was brown, although I did have my father's cousins, a number of them came from Germany. And there were nine boys in that family and four of them changed their name to Brown and five of them kept it Bruhn, up in Detroit. But ours was just the, my father was the only Bruhn here in Michigan City and that was the only one.

Laurie Radke: Did most of the people belong to St. Paul's?

Leona Bruhn: There was a few belonged to St. John's, but majority of them all were St. Paul's.

Laurie Radke: Was the service at St. Paul's in German?

Leona Bruhn: Uh huh. In 1916 or 17, I think it was, why, they started holding an English service at the courthouse. And that's how St. Luke's Church got started, they wanted my folks to go there because my mother could not understand the German language, they wanted my father to go there with my mother. And he said, "No, because his, he was affiliated with St. Paul's and he wanted to stay there. So they stayed there until, I think it, all that time and when it came time for me to be confirmed I was taught, I went to the St. Paul's parochial school and we had our religious part was all in German and one language. The rest was all English and in 1919 then, I was instructed in the German language in catechetical instructions. In 1920, Rev. Meyer held, that was the first full confirmation class of English, except two girls that were still confirmed in the German language. But in 1920, then we all, we were confirmed in English. We had to learn, it was quite difficult because we had to learn all that we had learned over the year, period of six and seven years catechism, had to learn it all in English.

Laurie Radke: When did they stop doing German services?

Leona Bruhn: Well, we had them up until through, when till Rev. Kennema was here, he came in 1926. We held German service then, during Lent he would hold an English service on Wednesday night and on Friday night, he'd hold a German service, and two services on Sunday, a early hour English and when Rev. Meyer was here also, an English and a German service at a later hour. Until, well I don't know just what year they did discontinue the German, oh, I think then they had it about once a month was German. And then eventually, it was down to four times a year and eventually it was discontinued altogether, because there were so few people left here that learned the, well, for instance my cousins and all of that, they talked English to their parents. And so they started going to the English service and so they didn't go to the German service anymore so it was just discontinued.

Laurie Radke: Did the parents of the children, like your parents, did they want you to learn German?

Leona Bruhn: Well, I think the purpose was because of religion, the religion that was there. My mother's people were English and, and my grandmother didn't like the idea that they were sending me to the German school, as they called it.