

ORAL HISTORY T-0009
INTERVIEW WITH WALTER HOOPS
INTERVIEWED BY DR. MARGARET SULLIVAN
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PART 2

INTRODUCTION: This tape is part of the Immigration series of the History Department of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. I am Margaret Sullivan, and today I am talking to Walter Hoops. This tape is supplemental to an earlier tape made by Irene Cortinovis and Mr. Hoops.

SULLIVAN: Mr. Hoops, in the other tape, you mentioned that you thought the main function of ethnic societies were primarily social. I am very interested in this comment, because I agree with you. What do you think really held the ethnic communities together here? What was the unifying force, or was there a unifying force?

HOOPS: Well, first of all, most of them did not know the language. Most of the immigrants that have come since 1870 were working people, farmers that had no knowledge of any language whatsoever, except their dialect. They didn't even speak high German very well. So, when they came to any foreign country, the people that came from their neighborhoods, from their country, from their states were the ones they felt that they could get advice from...to get help to find a job. Most of them were carpenters, or metal workers, or trained handicraft men, and they knew where jobs were open, and they helped them to get jobs. Now, since most of these people belonged already to some organization of some kind...the Turner or Singer or whatever interest they had...naturally, they joined these groups for the social meeting of their wives. Their wives sometimes were very much interested in these things, because they were more isolated than their men. The men at least had the contacts on the job, but the women were in the homes afraid to go out to shop, because they didn't even know what some of these things were that they had to buy, and if they had children...until they went to school...many of them didn't know a word of English. They were surprised when they went to school what language the others were talking and, of course, it was a terrific handicap. And I think a dangerous handicap for children ...to be exposed all of a sudden to another language. They could develop a tremendous inferiority complex before they even started. I know some of the people that I've talked to who went through this; they got so angry at their parents for doing that to them, they hated their parents for the fact that they did not tell them that in school there was another language to learn. I can very well understand it; you have a hard time as a kid to get adjusted to school anyway, and then all of a sudden the kids would laugh at you, you know...what language you were talking...you didn't talk English. You know how cruel children can be, and they came home crying, you know. And, of course, some of the boys...they would fight; they would get into all kinds of mischief just because

some kid...some girl or boy... would tease them in whatever they call them..."honkies" or "woppies" or whatever German..."Krauts" they called them, you know? And they resented it; they had no idea what it meant, but they knew it was not pleasant, so they fought back. And I believe that these societies were a very, very important element for the people to adjust themselves to America. They needed German newspapers; they needed German friends to talk to; and to a working man, you don't need much language; when you go into a carpenter shop, you see what has been done. Sometimes, if you are a little educated, you know about blueprints; they have no language; you see the lines, you know what you have to do. We have had people in the company I worked for, they came in one day, and the next day, they were working as if they had been there for years. There was no break whatsoever. But years ago when they came in, these fellows...in many cases...they knew some rudimentary English, too, to start with. But even that on the job, it doesn't mean that much, but for a person to have social contacts, maybe even to play cards, or to go out on a hike, or to sit together and talk about the alte heimat, you know, the old country, which was, of course, in those days... was one of the main objects of talking and singing; all the songs that were sung in those days, they were all something about the old heimat, the old country, because it was in those days, it was very, very seldom that anyone would ever go back. You know, today they go every two years. A trip to Germany doesn't cost that much anymore, but years ago, once you were here, it was very rare case that you'd go back and visit the old country again. And so, there was a tremendous homesickness. It was almost an obsession...the heimat...everything was wonderful there. They forgot all the hardships; the good old times that people talk about here in America, too, which were not good; they were old, all right, but they were certainly not good. I mean compared with what we have today. But everybody tries to...does automatically, I believe...have a tendency to make the days when he was young, when he was happy, when he was not tied down to many things, that was the ideal life. And so, when you see some of those songs...I see them...sometimes they even sing them, and I sometimes even protest against it in my singing society...that we should get rid of these old sentimental songs. And some of them are so beautiful with real feeling and sentiment. The fellow who wrote the music felt the same way about it, and so there is a harmony in them that is really beautiful. There is no way of getting away, and I can understand why they still like to sing it, although they make trips to Germany practically every other year. But in the beginning, I feel that these societies kept them mentally alive...mentally healthy. I think many of them in the surroundings where they felt they were exploited, they called them "the green ones"...the "greenhorns"...as they say...actually it meant the green ones; they didn't understand it; they didn't hear it well. They were taken advantage of wherever they could, you know, and they were laughed at because they didn't understand the customs; they did things wrong; they dressed not the way they dressed here. So there were a number of things just crowding in on them, you know; they felt they would just pack up and go home. Many of them would have done it if they could have, but there was this big ocean between, and there was no money, and they had to stick it out. So I think these ethnic societies were a necessity for keeping them going. Their whole festivals that they brought with them, the way they did it when they came, they preserved...that is why some of our festivals today they are unknown in Germany. They died out, but here they were kept up because that was the type of thing that they did when they came over. And since they don't know what happened in between in Germany, they are a hundred years back in history. My sister was here on a visit from Germany a couple of years ago. She wanted me to come over; I said, "No, you come here. See our country because that would be much more interesting," and she certainly liked it. She was flabbergasted to see those German Singing Societies, or those picnics that we went to. She

said, "I haven't seen things like that since I was a child." She's 70 years old; she said, "We don't do things like that any more." So, in a way, sometimes, the people...the Germans in other countries...preserve some things better than in the proper...the other people like Peter Schuster that I mentioned who left Germany, whose folks left Germany 300 years ago to settle in Hungary, in Russia, in Czechoslovakia, they were asked to come by the rulers, because they knew the German people, they knew trades, they knew how to till the soil and how to get the maximum benefit out of it. Like Catherine of Russia. She imported, I think 3-400,000 Volga Germans. They lived there and they kept their culture so tight; they had German schools, and German churches, and until Hitler, they were absolutely happy there. They were respected. I wouldn't say that the people liked them...the other people...because they were in many ways, the cream of society. They owned everything...not that they had taken it, but their natural hard work and diligence...not wasting anything...but until Hitler, they were safe. But when they declared for Hitler, then they got in trouble with the forces that were pushing Hitler out and, of course, those were the Communists and that side. So, when the tide turned, and the Russians fought back, these people had to flee, to run away, and Mr. Schuster was one of them. These people, they are more popish than the Pope. I mean, they are more nationalistic than even the Germans, and to me this is a throwback. You know, I can understand it; I have debated with Peter many times...and Peter is a wonderful fellow, as you will see if you interview him...but he is German, Deutschland Uber Alles, German is better than everything. He wants to preserve all those German customs from 2-300 years ago...the language and everything as if he was still over in Russia or wherever he was, I don't know what country he came from. There it was necessary say, because of the surroundings; they were so below their cultural standings, you know; the Russian farmers or wherever they were, that they had to also like here in America keep together. But here in America, my opinion is if you come over here to America to live here, you should become an American citizen as quickly as possible. You should assimilate and participate in American affairs, you should take part in American culture, in American politics, in American life in general. Because unless you do, you are not really an American citizen. That's why I do not particularly approve of this emphasis of preserving German customs because the children, as soon as the pressure of the parents is gone, will not stick to it. They do it only as long as the parents want them to do it.

SULLIVAN: It's like they over-react and throw the whole thing out.

HOOPS: Right, and they even don't want anything to be remembered any more that their parents were German. They marry American boys or girls, or they go to school with them, and sometimes, the kids...they make re- marks about the accent they have. You know, they say, "Where do you come from?" The idea that they weren't born here, because they think that anyone who has this accent must have been born over there. I know my daughter who studied chemistry went through this, and sometimes she resented it. They thought she was not American-born. She knows some German words; she was in Germany with my wife; they got along all right, but today I don't think she could speak one sentence in German. She married an American man, and they are happy; they have their children. They feel like American; they have no contact with the old country any more at all.

SULLIVAN: I know with these many societies, reading about them in all the old newspapers and things, I get the impression that they may be organized around singing German songs or German cultural ideas, but very quickly didn't they develop a whole program of social

activities? This is kind of what really drew people, don't you think? The parties, the plays, the concerts?

HOOPS: Oh, yes, picnics, concerts and dances. You know, they liked to sing and liked to dance and one society invites the other so they have huge affairs sometimes. Like last Sunday, Sunday a week ago, we had a big one, the Schwabenverein; there were 1,600 people in this park there, in Triangle Park in South St. Louis, and they had the time of their lives. They enjoyed themselves; they had German food and German drink, and they had folk dances; the youth group of this...Mr. Schuster who's the head of the Deutschekulturverein, they call it now. And they have youngsters about 16 to 20 years old; they have colorful costumes on, and they danced German folk dances. They belong to the folk dance society of America and whenever they have their festivals like they have one in Forest Park every year. I don't know if you have ever seen them, all the various nationalities present their dances and they participate in this. I usually go there, because I don't live too very far from there. I just walk over and look at some of the Russian and the Turkish displays there. They have all kinds of food from the various countries. It's very interesting. Once a year they have this at Forest Park.

SULLIVAN: I also get the impression that most of these societies drew many more people than their own members. In a sense, I think they felt comfortable together. They were nostalgic; it was the sociability.

HOOPS: Oh, yes, yes, they, of course, liked their beer; they like to drink and sometimes they get a little high, you know; they feel like if they are among their own people, they wouldn't mind. The German wives are there, and they feel that that's the way the German husband behaves. So, you have to give him, once in a while, an outlet to let off steam, so he would not be so hard at home. You know, so he would soften up a little. And in a way, I think they were smart. In a way, they knew how to handle them. They let them feel as if they were the masters of the house, and that's what the German husband likes to feel. But when it comes to any real decision in the house, it's the woman who usually does it. But if they would put up a fight about it...who was boss... it would create a lot of trouble. I mean, this way, I have a hunch, I know how my mother handled my father. As I said, there was hardly ever any argument. In major decisions, my mother was the one that would decide what to do; she let him say it, but she was the one that put him up to it...made him see it...that that was the best way to do it. I mean, about my schooling, about my sisters and schools and things like that, she had much more sense in that respect than the man. And I think a woman who has her children around the house all the time and shows them to school and helps them with the school work, she knew more about what's going on, I believe. As I say, these affairs...these German affairs... they invite each other from one city to another; you would go to Chicago, or to Springfield, Illinois, and see a little bit of the country they wouldn't see otherwise. If they would go, the society would pay some of their expenses, you know, so they wouldn't have to pay it out of their own pocket. Even today, they do that. When they go any place, these singing societies, they have a special little fund in their society so these people get reimbursed for their expenses...so...that...many people who would not go otherwise, they would meet maybe some friends from their same city or country that live now in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh and so on. It's a tremendous union; I have never seen people as happy as when they meet some of these people. Maybe, as I said, they come from their own country, but they haven't seen them for 10 or 15 years. They enjoy themselves tremendously.

SULLIVAN: I was reading a dissertation the other day of all the Germans in St. Louis...this was written recently. And the author (by Sister Olson) contends...I never got through the whole thing so, maybe, I shouldn't say...is that there never was any unified German community here. What would you say to that?

HOOPS: Well, Germans are not very much for following a leader...those Germans that were here. This business like Hitler and Bismarck before him...which was just a little different edition of it...that never appealed very much to the Germans that were over here. First of all, most of the Germans that come from Germany are southern Germans, due to the inheritance laws. The southern Germans were forced to migrate to keep whatever was there alive. They were never very much for the Prussian leadership of Germany when Germany became an empire. That may be one reason. Another reason I think is true is that they are not very tolerant of one another. I mean of other people in other countries, in other states, see Germany was broken up in so many states that only in 1871 did Germany become a united country while England and France and Spain, not Italy, but those three big countries, they were united by strong emperors and strong rules into one unified country and could speak as the voice of one country. While in Germany we had, I can't remember now the number, but it was up to 300 separate little states, and every little state, of course, developed almost by necessity, a feeling of superiority about the other state next to it, to preserve their own worth. And so, I believe this feeling is in the Germans. For instance, I would say, "I am from Hanover;" I would say that the people in Hanover, let's say are better than the people in Bavaria, or the Bavarians would probably say that they are better than the Swabs, their neighbors. Years ago, I think, in the Middle Ages, this was almost necessary to preserve the identity. The prince would need this, you know, this feeling of superiority to keep them together to fight for him. Why should they fight against the others if they didn't feel that they were better than they were. And I think they all, this probably came together in the people coming over here, but I would not say there was no feeling of a united movement. There were a number of big societies they had, real big societies that united many people, not along certain definite aims. For instance, we had here a Schilleverein in St. Louis devoted to the memory of Friedrich Schiller, one of our greatest poets and writers. Now, there you have people interested in literature and things of that kind. They didn't care whether you were from northern Germany or southern Germany or any place, just as long as you loved Schiller and liked to hear something about Schiller. I remember I gave once a lecture on Schiller as a revolutionary from my socialist point of view. And they didn't mind at all. They were all bourgeois people there; they were sitting there in the audience about 50-60 people at that time. But years ago, they tell me that was one of the real great societies. Then we had another society which is still in existence which is called the Freigemeinde which was a free religious society which was formed originally in 1832 in Hermann, Missouri, and then moved to St. Louis and incorporated in 1850. We will have the charter. I'm a member of this society. I was president and treasurer and all kinds of things, but now I'm just an ordinary member. We have only a few members left now and within a few years, it will disappear. But that organization was the center of all the people that did not want to belong to a church whether it was Catholic or Lutheran. The churches had been in Germany an instrument of the ruling class and they did not want to have anything to do with them no matter which one. And this was a huge organization; they had a hall there...it's still standing on Dodier and 21st Street...that seated over a thousand people in the auditorium. They had a tremendous library. They had lectures given every Sunday morning; they things like that...but they also didn't ask

whether you were a northern German or a southern German...whether Bavarian or Prussian. If you believed in the principles, that was it. So, I would say there were any number of organizations that superseded... that cut across borderlines even whether you are or were bourgeois, an owner or something, or you were a working man. But the main dividing line that existed...maybe that is what this man is referring to...is the fact that Germany was divided into regular classes almost like the Indians. You were a member of the working class or you were a professional or you were an owner and the chances of one switching to the other was very rare, very seldom, very, very difficult. And when these people came over here, they organized according to those divisions. They had their working class groups, like the singing society that I belong to, and they had the bourgeois singing societies like the Liederkrantz. I mean...just as an example there are others. And they did not mix; they did not even go into their concerts, to their affairs, because they were afraid to be snubbed. Our people would say, "No, they're going to look down on us," and the other people would say, "What are these people doing here?" ...they didn't belong.

SULLIVAN: I'm more familiar with the Liederkrantz because that made the society section of the St. Louis papers. I know there were many other German singing societies...did they have the same sort...probably not on as an elaborate scale, but the same sort of...I think the Liederkrantz had Sunday night concerts and dinners...did all the singing societies have the same sort of...follow the same pattern?

HOOPS: They followed the same pattern. They had banquets when they honored the conductors and their presidents. They have concerts; one in the Spring and one in the Fall...maybe one in the Winter. They get picnics in the summer and all these, of course, are meant to raise money to keep the society alive. The Liederkrantz years ago was a very affluent society. During the first world war, since they were to a large extent pro-German and expressed themselves, they were persecuted and they had trouble. They lost their big homes that they had; now, they even have a little place where they rent; now, they don't even have a place of their own. The only German society that has a place of its own and still in St. Louis is the Schwaben Society which is organized along the lines of a country; there is not really a country even, it's a tribe. The Schwaben were one of the early tribes in Germany, like the Saxons, the Schwaben, the Burgundians, and the Bavarians, but it is not geographically a country. The country is called Rothenburg...where the Schwaben are. They prefer to use the name of Schwab because it is the original name of the people that lived there. And they still have a home of their own; a little home in south St. Louis; South Jefferson, 3514 South Jefferson, where many German societies meet and sing; we sing there...my society, the Vorwaerts, they sing there on Tuesday nights. And other societies...they rent it out to them; they have, oh, six, seven different facilities for people to rent, and they have dances there of a smaller scale, and they can even have picnics there. It has a little garden around it. And it has kept the society...the Schwaben Society...that huge picnic that I mentioned two Sundays ago, together. And it is one of the real thriving alive societies cause they have something to offer. Any member can go there. They have a bar in the back there where a friendly old bartender is taking care of them; they all know each other...Jim, Bill, all of them. It's all friendly. They know their wives; they know their children; they know each other. It's a real club.

SULLIVAN: That's again the social...

HOOPS: Exactly. They sit there and play cards and drink beer, and every once in a while,

somebody gets it in his head to sing a song; they all come in, and then they go on with their talk about their jobs and about the families...how the children are doing in school and so on and so on. It's a wonderful way for me...I'm more of a what-you-call-it...my daughter calls me a "brain," if you forgive the expression...an intellectual, let's call it generally speaking. And my life is in books, in literature, in music, in things like that. But when I go there...like tonight; my wife sometimes asks me, "Why? What are you doing there? Why do you have to go there?" I said, "Well, I f-eel like I'm coming back to earth." They don't consider me anybody...just a member. The fact that I've written books and things like that, that doesn't mean a darn thing to them. They put me down, as on the floor, and I have to go along with their rules and regulations and whatever exactly like everybody else, and in a way, this is an antidote. It makes me feel like I am, well, there really is no difference. I mean, there are good carpenters, and they are good people, and I am a good letter-writer and whatever else I can do well. It's good to come on a level where your feet are still on the ground...where you don't move around, and you know, get superiority ideas. To me, this is real enjoyable. I'm not much of a beer drinker; I'm not much of a singer even, but I even got into the singing business almost by accident. I had a friend who had done me a lot of favors, and he retired as a singer; he moved on to a place that we own...the German society owns... in Pacific...a huge camp we have there...over 200 acres.

SULLIVAN: Which society owns that?

HOOPS: The Workers Benefit Society. They have a big place, a beautiful place which is a sickness society originally, but that was earlier. But, oh, they have a beautiful place. He retired there to live there, and then he asks me...he said, "I have done you a lot of favors, and now I want you to do me a favor." I said, "Anything you say, August." And August said, "You know, I belong to the Vorwaerts, and I sing there; they need singers badly; they can't...! really shouldn't leave them. But I want you to go there and sing in my stead." I told him...I promised him that I would. So I stuck to my word, and I was sure they would say, "No, we can't use you." Strange enough for me, they decided to keep me, although I still don't consider myself much of a singer.

SULLIVAN: You have a nice voice; I mean...just talking to you.

HOOPS: Strong...yeah, I can sing loud. That's what counts, you know, is to be on key. I'm getting better, but I have to concentrate, really concentrate, as if I'm reading a book, because if I follow the notes, watch them closely, I can see what's up, you know. And as I said, I'm getting better all the time. But I'm not much of a beer drinker, and I don't play cards. Pinochle, they always play. They always say, "What kind of a German are you?" And I tell them, "It's all right; I'll go along; you do whatever you like; I do my "thing," you know...like they say nowadays." But they're willing to let me go, because they know whenever they have a letter to write to the paper, or they have to have a speech made somewhere or some readings, they always know that Walt will do it. And I usually preside at Christmas parties and other parties of that kind...where a few remarks come in handy, or some members are married 50 years, and they want to give them a little party; so we always have a spokesman. So, they tolerate me in a way. They let me go my way. They're wonderful people in a limited sense; they do not know very much about what's going on in American politics. They don't know very much about American literature, and they don't know very much about the social rights about the problems that we have. Most of them are rather narrow-minded in that

respect; the ethnics are one of the big stumbling blocks I would say of the civil rights movement. While I am active in all these groups; I've always been. I was the second white member of the NAACP in St. Louis and been a member over thirty years.

SULLIVAN: When did you join the NAACP?

HOOPS: Oh, it must have been a least thirty years ago...

SULLIVAN: Really? I may know someone else who may want to talk to you. HOOPS: I am sometimes disappointed that these people don't take more interest in these things. But, personally, as I say, they are fine people; they are honest people, and I...

SULLIVAN: Historians have made...not to change the subject too much... but historians have commented on the things as affecting German-Americans and the German-American Society. One was the First World War. And I know you weren't here for the first World War, but do you think that has made a tremendous impact on German-Americans? Some say it was a tremendous thing for them; others say that they kind of ignored it and went on.

HOOPS: Those people that kept quiet and felt that this was already their country, and they were going to live here...at least if they were going to do anything, they kept quiet; they went through it without any trouble whatsoever, but some that were nationalistic and felt that the German Kaiser had a good case and was right and all this, they got in trouble. They insisted upon speaking German on streetcars, in public places, and, of course, the machine... the propaganda machine...against the Germans was pretty strong, especially after it became known that they were trying to create trouble in Mexico. When that became known, I think Washington...the machine in Washington...got into real high gear, because I think they were really afraid that there would be an invasion from Mexico into southern United States, and that meant that a tremendous amount of troops would have to be sent there, you know, that could have been used for the war. So, then, of course, there was the big explosion in New Jersey somewhere that was blamed on them; I don't know; I never really investigated it, but I think there was something going on, and also they knew that many Germans in their hearts were on the side of the Fatherland. They felt that there really was a danger among them. They probably exaggerated some of the things that they had done as every government will do when they are in war. And so, people that spoke German in public places and made a display about their being German...like Henry Buschmann who was interviewed...he got in trouble; he was refused citizenship for awhile and felt very bad about it. I think the danger was exaggerated on the American side...that America was definitely committed on the English side, on the Allied side. And I might add this little sidelight to it which I have made several times. The Socialists in Germany... the radical element... they knew that we could only get rid of the Kaiser who we did not like at all if we would lose the war. And we were not at all adverse to losing the war. As a matter of fact, as I mentioned some time ago, if I had been a praying man, I would have prayed for the Americans to get into the war, because the Allies alone wouldn't have made it. And I've heard it said many times by old German socialists, "If only the Americans would have sense enough to come in and fight on the side of the English and the French." So while Eugene Debs...who was a leader of the Socialist Party here in America at that time...was arrested for opposing our entry into the war, we Socialists in Germany were hoping that it would come sooner...because the minute the Americans entered the war, we knew that the thing was over.

SULLIVAN: When you came to St. Louis, did you feel that there was a decline in German organizations as a result of the first World War? Some of these started to fall away more rapidly.

HOOPS: I think, they say that happened. I mean, people could only tell you that they lived here before and then after. When I came, there was still quite a number of German societies alive, and many of them did not go under on account of the war.

SULLIVAN: I think there was as many after the war as before. But what sort of condition were they in as far as members?

HOOPS: I think the main thing that they did not get any new members coming in because immigration was tapering off and they just could not keep all these organizations going; interest in Turnvereine...in gymnastics... died out entirely. I understand there were sixteen German Turnvereine in St. Louis at one time; well, there is one left today and that, to a large extent, is American, not German, because it is just physical fitness.

SULLIVAN: Another thing that historians commented on was the fact of prohibition having a bad effect on German societies. Didn't many of them have beer halls and bars?

HOOPS: Well, no, I think...I don't think...they made their own.

SULLIVAN: You mean, the German societies continued to serve beer?

HOOPS: They continued to serve beer wherever I went. I was a traveling salesman, and wherever I was, I visited the German societies, especially the Freigemeinde, because I was a member, and I'm still a member in Sioux City, I think it was, in Iowa. I couldn't understand; they had a high fence around the building, and I had the hardest time to get anybody out; then there was an opening and, "What do you want?" They didn't understand it at all that somebody would come from New York to visit them and wanted to know what they were doing; they were just flabbergasted and they said, "We are making home-brew today." I said, "I'm sorry; I didn't know." "Come in." And there in the basement, they had these big boilers going, you know. It happened to be a day...I don't know when it was, Friday or Monday...I don't know which one it was, but that was the day that they made home-brew and it smelled all over the neighborhood. You could smell it. Everybody knew, but they were the only ones that made decent beer according to what they told me, and people were coming from the whole city to buy beer. Other people made home-brew, but theirs was better than the other's. And so, I have a hunch that while it might have helped to keep them together, because secrecy is a good binder. And I don't think that prohibition had anything to do with it. Even today some of the people make their own wines that they started to make during the prohibition, and they bring a bottle of wine sometimes with them; they know that I like wine better than beer. So every once in a while, they say, "Oh, I made some wine," and bring me a bottle of wine. I don't think that prohibition... it could have...some of their hangouts where they used to drink beer... I mean, restaurants...they probably closed up, but I am sure that other places made up for it.

SULLIVAN: There was a pattern here in St. Louis. Most of them kept serving beer anyway, right?

HOOPS; Well, I guess so. I was here, but I'm not much of a beer drinker, so whether I had or didn't have beer didn't bother me...even today. I drink one glass of beer which I enjoy in the hot weather; the second one doesn't mean that much to me anymore, so usually when I get to a place like that, for instance...in the Vorwaerts, you pay \$1.00, and you get all the beer you want to drink and sandwiches...cost \$1.00. So, I drink one glass of beer; some of the others, they make up for it, too. So I move away and sit at some table and read some magazine or paper that I bring along. I don't like to sit at the bar all the time and not do anything...not drink anything. The bartender doesn't feel good about it, and the others feel they want to buy you a drink. I don't want them to do that, because if you start that, you know the others have to do it, too. I just don't care for that.

SULLIVAN: Today, when you go to the meetings for the singing society, a good part of the time is spent then, you know, just in socializing.

HOOPS: Oh, you have a hard time in getting them away to start singing. Oh, the conductor has to call several times for the fellow to stop their card playing or to stop their drinking at the bar and talk about things, and so that sometimes he is quite provoked. Sometimes I tell him how I appreciate his patience with us. I don't think a modern conductor, an American conductor, would stand for it. But he's a Viennese, a very easy going fellow, wonderful guy, and he says, "Well, I go along; I know you can't do very much anymore, but we'll keep on singing as long as we have some voices." He doesn't get much money for it; he really does it because he loves it; he plays the violin, he accompanies us with the violin, he can play piano, too, but not as well, and it's amazing what he can get out of us.

SULLIVAN: Is he hired by the society?

HOOPS: Yes, we pay him a salary every month. He conducts another society, too. He conducts two in the evening. It's a...for him, while he was working...it's a part-time, you know, a little extra job. Now he's retired, and he enjoys it even more. His wife is singing with us. We have a mixed chorus in our society; we have women.

SULLIVAN: Is that usual?

HOOPS: No, that is not usual. I think the Swiss are still doing the same, but all the others, the men sing alone. And the Liederkranz has now started the last few years, I believe; I don't think that was originally a mixed chorus, but I'm not too sure about their history. I wouldn't say. But now they sing together. I mean, they sing...not always together...but they have mixed chorus and male choruses. Many of the other societies, like the Schwaben and the Harmonic and Eden, six of them are left now, they are strictly male choruses.

SULLIVAN: We should get on, I guess, to the Socialist Party in St. Louis. When did you join the Socialist Party here?

HOOPS: Well, I really joined the Socialist Party in Germany in 1919, and I guess transferred my membership; you see, in the Socialist Party, you can transfer memberships from one country to the other. Although, I think I officially joined here, too, when I came. It was just a matter of course. When I joined the local here...when I moved to St. Louis... and I am still...

SULLIVAN: What year was that, again?

HOOPS: I came to St. Louis in '31 or '32...I can't remember now exactly. I came in 1927 and joined the party in New York. I worked for Norman Thomas. I had a good friend who was a banker on Wall Street who was his economic advisor. Norman Thomas didn't know anything about economics, and he used to meet once a month...and I sometimes took down what I can do...German shorthand...and Herbert Leinemann was this fellow's name. He would then dictate then to me in German what they had been talking about and then that would be sent to Norman Thomas later; in case he would make a speech, or a statement that he could talk sense. And everybody was always surprised how much Norman Thomas knew about international finance politics which came from this friend of mine whose father was a big banker in Frankfurt, and he had been sent here to learn the banking methods of America. He was with the Hanover Trust Company and, strange enough, I didn't realize at that time, he was the only Jew on Wall Street.

SULLIVAN: Oh, really, what was his name?

HOOPS: His name was Herbert Leinemann. His father it was...he was, of course, from the bank of the Hanover Trust Company in Frankfurt, and his father just happened to be Jew, and he couldn't help it, you see; they had to take him as an exchange...! don't know what bankers call it...but he told me at that time, banks on Wall Street would not hire Jews. And he did not look Jewish, and so I'm sure most of his people didn't know that he was, but he mentioned it sometime in passing, I mean, just joking. But as I said, I was active in some of the campaigns of Norman Thomas and of Morris Hilquidt, and Louis Waltmann, and oh, some other people. I also was active in the Socialist Cooperative movement; we sold union-made merchandise by mail all over the country. It was quite an establishment.

SULLIVAN: This was based in St. Louis?

HOOPS: No, that was in New York...all in New York. And then my company that had sent me originally over from Germany that had opened a branch in New York, they opened a branch in St. Louis for shipping purposes to save shipping. And I came here then; that's how I came to St. Louis. Well, there was a local here in existence in St. Louis consisting of mostly Hungarians, Austrians, and Germans...very few Americans. And I joined them, although I was a traveling salesman for many years, so I was not very active in the day-to-day activities. But there was also Mr. Cohen of the Jewish Daily Forward, which is the Socialist organ of their party, and he helped us a lot. He was quite an organizer. He lived right in my neighborhood on Bartmer. And so we worked together; we worked out things together quite often whenever I was here. When I was traveling, of course, I wasn't. So many of the things that probably people could tell you, there are some people of the Socialist Party that are not members any more. I don't think. But they have more knowledge about the society and they would be happy to tell you about it. I can give you some of their names and they could tell you much, much more about it, because they were much more active; as a matter of fact, they would consider my participation rather minor, especially during the difficult years of the depression and the organizing of the unemployed and the March on Washington; many of those things which they have done. Of course, all these things are now history. I saw just the other day in Harry Laidler's book. The History of Socialism, it sounds so strange, when you remember it...when you were part of it...already it's history. But those

things, of course, are a matter of record. But the personal things, there are some people in St. Louis that could tell you.

SULLIVAN: You mentioned Mr. Cohen was the Jewish Socialist a separate party? Or organization?

HOOPS: They had their own organization where they spoke Yiddish, which is a kind of German, but it has a lot of other elements, too. But he spoke fluent English; he was the contact man of the Jewish Daily Forward, which was a huge paper in those days, maybe still is. And we had at that time, the Socialist Party had at that time formed a federation with them. I think it was more a financial proposition because they are the ones that have the money, while the Socialist Party in America never amounted to anything after 1912 when Debs, I think, pulled something like 800,000 votes, but after that when the war came, and he was arrested and they were pro-German, as they call it; they were not really pro-German, but they were anti-war. But after that, the Socialist Party never recovered. They have never amounted to anything in any place. They had, for a while. In Milwaukee a mayor and they did very well there, but they were what the Communists called "Sewer-Socialists," that meant they were more interested in good sewers than they were in international politics. You couldn't get very much out of the Milwaukee Socialists as far as Russia or whatever was concerned, but they were very much concerned...and I think they did a wonderful job of cleaning up the administration...and the mayor (Hohan) who I knew and visited several times was a great man, in my opinion and gave a great example of how a city could be run for the benefit of the people without too much taxes. Because he taxed the people that had it, and did not get them away; I remember the first guy who hired a helicopter to take pictures of Milwaukee from the top, so you could see whether all the people, the real estate was accounted for on the tax rolls, and he found hundreds of buildings that had never been listed that was hidden from the street, and the man never mentioned it that he had a garage or another building where people lived. He mentioned it to me at that time, and I was quite surprised, you know, that these things happened, but he showed me the photographs of, you know, how they could show the building, that you could not see from the street.

SULLIVAN: What was the mayor's name?

HOOPS: Hohan. H-o-h-a-n. Hohan. He was American, too. He was not German, as far as I know, but I don't remember that now. I didn't detect an accent. I don't think I ever asked him. I saw him only once or twice, not much of an official capacity. They had once a little stronghold, a Socialist administration, for a little while in Granite City.

SULLIVAN: Did you? I didn't know that.

HOOPS: We had a Socialist mayor there by the name of Fitzpatrick for a long...

SULLIVAN: That wasn't German.

HOOPS: No, but he had a lot of German support from the steel workers.

SULLIVAN: About what year was this?

HOOPS: It must have been between the wars, in the thirties. I have a hunch it had something

to do with the tremendous unemployment there, so that they turned to a workingman to run the government for them. It was Gilpatrick, or Fitzpatrick, one of the two. Then we had a Socialist administration in Bedford, Massachusetts, I think it is. But, otherwise, it has never had much of a political...oh, we had two members of...state representatives in Congress from Milwaukee by the names of Berger, Victor Berger, I think he was the only one that voted against our entry into the war, as far as I remember. And people like that.

SULLIVAN: How much strength did the Socialists have in St. Louis during the thirties?

HOOPS: Well, I would say we had probably 2-3000 members. How active they were and how many dues they paid, I really don't know. But we had meetings, we had meetings for instance when Norman Thomas was here and in an election campaign, we could fill the old Odeon Hall. You remember where that was? You know, on Grand? SULLIVAN: How many did that seat...the Odeon? HOOPS: Well, I would say, roughly speaking, at least a thousand. If you figure the balcony and so on, maybe more than a thousand. And we had a lecture series for the League of Industrial Democracy; I was the secretary for it for a while which organized lectures.

SULLIVAN: Isn't that a branch of the Socialist Party?

HOOPS: Yes, well, the leaders were Socialists but they made not a condition that you were a Socialist to participate it was more...I think, an attempt to interest the intellectual community...the universities...by providing lectures on real academic subjects. I mean, you could feel that the man who was saying...knew what he was saying...it was not propaganda, it was real facts. And we had a series of lectures here; they were held for \$1.00 or \$1.50, and they were held at the Electrical Workers Hall which seated about six or seven hundred. We filled that several times when we had good speakers. In those days before television and radio, people would still come out for these things.

SULLIVAN: Did you bring most of the lecturers in, or were they local people?

HOOPS: Well, they were from all over the country. They traveled; they had a circuit; these people, they would come to us; they organized lectures all over the country, so they went to one city to another and made a living that way. They kept themselves alive; I mean...Norman Thomas, I'm sure kept himself alive by doing that type of thing, you know. In later years, I think that was practically the only income he had. Fortunately, his wife was pretty well to do. Still, I think, he did his share that way. He was a wonderful man. I didn't agree with his policies...his peace policies...even when Hitler...I disagreed with him very much, but he was a wonderful speaker. He had a voice, you know, his voice was like a trumpet; you could, it would come out just like a sound; it was wonderful. The only one that even did a better job than Norman Thomas was a guy who was the head of the Pullman- Porters union. Gosh, I can't remember his name now; oh, he's still alive, too. He's now the head of the League for Industrial Democracy. He's still standing...he's still running...! was quite surprised. Any- way, he was a wonderful speaker. He was just a pleasure to listen to almost in a way, no matter what he said.

SULLIVAN: What other activities did the Socialists...

HOOPS: Well, we helped to organize the C.I.O. at that time...that was where I was involved. And most of our members, the union members, they promoted the union. Years ago, the union was not as taken for granted as today. There were a lot of fights, a lot of strikes, and a lot of things going on, and so we collected lots of money for the miners, and the progressive miners union started, and they broke away from John L. Lewis, and started their own union. We sent supplies there; food, money, speakers and whatever was that they had...they had a quarters in Gillespie. The only time in my life, I ever went down to a mine, and I was scared stiff.

SULLIVAN: Gillespie, Illinois?

HOOPS: Yes, Gillespie, Illinois. That was the headquarters of the Progressive Miners Union in southern Illinois. And so, they could come in to St. Louis very easily. We would go out there and bring them things and keep their spirits up, because for a while, it was nip and tuck before the mine owners acknowledged them as the agent for the miners. Finally, I guess, they all got together again, but for a while, we had quite a job on our hands. Of course, we were against Hitler. We supported all the movements among the Germans since we were practically the same people. We had a League Against...what did we call it...League Against...Anti-Nazi League, we called it...and I can't remember the German name now.

SULLIVAN: You were saying that the Jewish Socialist group kind of stuck together out of their own desires and...

HOOPS: They had a background of Russian history; most of them were Russian or Polish, and they spoke Yiddish among each other which we couldn't understand, but those that came after that actually became active in the Socialist Party, and those were the people around the Daily Forward (Jewish). They, of course, attended our meetings regularly, and we had good contacts with them all the time, but after the war and especially when Hitler came, the Socialist Party just evaporated gradually and today, I have the dubious distinction, I believe, to be the only member of good standing of the Socialist Party in St. Louis. I saw the other day a list of people in Missouri that I was supposed to contact for some contribution for some May Day or something. There was not one other name mentioned. There was some in the out-country in Joplin, Springfield, I believe, but not a single one in St. Louis.

SULLIVAN: What do you account for the fact that Socialism didn't catch on in the United States? You said most of your strength came from Europeans.

HOOPS: That's right. Well, Socialism was from the very beginning, I think, a foreign importation. It was nothing native to America. In America everybody still felt that he had a chance to make it and become independent and not need an organization to help him. Well, what we have here really of the Socialist Party was originally begun by immigrants. They interested other people that were also aware of the drawbacks and difficulties, but the ethnic, the foreign element was the main carrier of the movement. Now these people became first of all frightened in the first World War; they withdrew in themselves, and after Hitler came, by that time most of the people that had come over here were fairly well to do. They had their own home; they had their own car; they did not feel the need of movement to...maybe...even start a revolution, or in the beginning, of course, they had, something to lose; nobody starts a revolution that has something to lose. And if you have your own, and if

I see a man taking care of his lawn, painting his house, I know there's a man who is not going to go for any radical ideas. He wants to hold on to what he has; he probably had a hard time getting it. He wants to give his children a better opportunity. So, there was really no inducement. The Socialist Party, in my opinion, today means a laboratory of new ideas. New social ideas. Many of the things that we take for granted today, like social security, old age pension; they were pioneered by the Socialist Party. And they have been taken over by the other parties and have become common good in America, which is fine. And the idea of, for instance, a guaranteed income, comes also from our people, the Socialist Party. Whether this is a good idea, I don't want to say here. It is, at least an idea of doing something about the situation today. So, when I pay my dues, I do not expect any benefit for me out of it, but I feel like paying a group of people that can then use their time to discuss ways and means to help and to develop new ideas of social betterment. And that is the only reason why I belong, and why I pay my dues each year. I subscribe to their paper which is called New America which is edited by a former St. Louisan, Michael Harrington, I think his name is. And otherwise, the movement is dormant; I wouldn't say dead. You said in an expression the other day about the IWW, and I was quite surprised that they were not dead, that they are also just dormant. They still have a paper going in Chicago and still have, apparently, quite a number of local groups in existence; not in this part of the country so much, but in the western part between Chicago and the West Coast. I was very much surprised, because I haven't heard anything about them any more, so I took it for granted that they were gone. Their paper is not bad at all. It still is having the old phrases in there that have no meaning too much any more in contemporary St. Louis, in America, but they're still there. And so in that way, many of the radical movements, just like the Communist Party is still there, they have still got their paper. They still communicate, but they have no background...foothold...anywhere in America. Even with all the faults, with all the difficulties, still give a man a possibility to live a life of dignity and of satisfaction, of knowing that he can express himself without danger. Since Russia and China have nothing to offer that even comes remotely close, they have nothing to point to...that's the way we want to do it. Any American will say, "That is not the way we all like to live," so I have no hope of anyone of the radical groups in America, as long as we are able to maintain a certain amount of prosperity in this country. Even with social security and with a small pension that I have, I have nothing to worry about as a retired man. I can live a life of things that I like to do. I own my house; my child is taken care of. We, I could not think of anything that I would want in a way of material things I would want to fight for. I could use more money here and there; oh, I would probably make more trips or something like, that, but I can still go every other year to New York in the East and, being interested in art and music, participate practically in everything that is offered and still lead a good life. I couldn't think of anything that I missed...I should be entitled to, if I want to put it that way. So, to support any radical movement, to start a revolution wouldn't make any sense to me at all. And I'm sure that all the social security people, the elderly people that have a life and were able to provide for themselves, I wouldn't say that goes for all of them. But they would feel the same way.

SULLIVAN: During the thirties, during the Depression, was there a revival of Socialism in St. Louis? Did you pick up much added strength?

HOOPS: We had quite an unemployment movement here. And they needed leadership and they organized that March to Washington, you know, where MacArthur and Eisenhower first

came into prominence. And they, of course, were instrumental in getting the first unemployment insurance business going due to this pressure. But, as I said, there are still some people in St. Louis that are still here that probably could tell you much more about that particular time because they were part of it. They were unemployed themselves. To some extent. I was in New York for a while after I first settled here, and then I went back to New York, although my wife stayed here because she had a job at the John Burroughs School, paid her very well, and she didn't want to risk a job like that. But I had a good job in New York...at least I thought it was a good job...to be separated for a while wasn't too good, but it worked. I mean, you had to do a number of things in those days. But there are some people that could tell you more about the details. I was not that active in that particular phase of it.

SULLIVAN: About the organization of the C.I.O., was there much opposition, much trouble in St. Louis?

HOOPS: Well, I was particularly connected with the organizing with what they called "little steel." The steel workers union before they tackled the big outfits, they had to gain strength and money, so they made a special campaign they called "little steel," which means people like Niedringhaus in Granite City and the other Niedringhaus here on Natural Bridge right near Goodfellow, you know; I don't know what they make; I think they make steel. And all little companies like that, St. Louis Car Company, and I picketed for them for quite a while, and I was even offered a job in the steel workers organizing committee at that time, but I had to get away from home at that time; as a matter of fact, I was holding sometimes two or three jobs at the same time, so I couldn't afford to let that go. But that was one of the achievements I would say we did here in St. Louis. Then, of course, there came those splits in the Party...among the radicals and the more moderate ones; they were the Trotskyites at that time who were very active and alert, and they had tremendous leadership, very bright and good people. Of course, Trotsky was the most intelligent revolutionary you ever seen in your history; a tremendously gifted man; a man who could speak a language in his books. You can read his literature, not his political things. It's just amazing what a gifted man that was, and many of us became, fell in with him. I was very much taken by him; when I was in Mexico two years ago, I made a pilgrimage to the house where he was killed. It's still standing there. You can still see the holes in the wall from the machine gun they used to kill him. It felt almost like a pilgrimage, really did. He was really a great man. Not that I agreed with all his policies; of course, this is very difficult to agree a 100 per cent with anybody... But we split there...between the radicals and the other ones, and I was with the radical group. And, of course, it didn't go over so well with the others. But we got together again afterwards and worked together. Some of these people from the Trotskyite group and from the others are still here. They are very, very good people, and also able to express themselves. Those are the people that could give you much more information. One of them has even written a book on the day of the general strike here in St. Louis. I remember we went together to the library...he's an American boy...and he works for the library at Washington University now. His name is David Burbank, and he's a tremendously literate person. He wrote a book. I think he called it. The McGuires.

SULLIVAN: The Molly McGuires?

HOOPS: It was some sort of anarchist group.

SULLIVAN: Yes, they're Irish in the 1860's.

HOOPS: Well, something like that. You have to ask him about that in detail. I haven't seen Dave for a long time. Dave comes from a very good old family. His mother was one of the very early Veiled Prophet queens, I believe, and things like that. His father, or his grandfather was a supreme court judge here in Missouri. He now lives by himself; he lives in the Mansion House. He would be a man to talk to. As I said, he works now at the Washington University Library. I can't remember exactly what he does, but he's a good man for this purpose. He's an American; he would not be an immigrant, you know. He can tell you something about the Socialist and Trotskyite movements. He was one of their benefactors, more or less, because he was not a poor boy at that time. He still isn't, I believe. At that time, his mother was still alive, and he could get things from her quite easily. He supported everything he heard of that was good. I remember he-even helped me once to have a book bound that was written by some German professor that I worked with in Germany, and he never asked for the money back; he was just like a prince about that. But there are some German people, too, that I can give to you.

SULLIVAN: What about the "single taxers"? Did they join in with the Socialists?

HOOPS: Not very much. Every year when we had our lecture series, we always asked Noah...Noah was his first name...Noah Alpert to come for a lecture on the single tax. He was always a very interesting speaker, always full of anecdotes, good stories...we always liked him. For a long time, he conducted the George School for Economics right down in the Arcade Building in downtown. It must have been a growing concern. I haven't heard lately from him, but I think he's still alive. He would be a man that could tell you all about these things. I always liked him, because he was always full of all kinds of interesting stories. There are always so many jokes told about the single tax people, and he knew every one of them. I wonder if he ever thought of publishing a book on all the jokes about single taxes. It would be interesting. We always felt that the single taxers were so many crackpots. There are so many causes that need to be remedied in order to come to a just society, that anyone that came to us and said, "You just have to do this, and you just have to change the money system;" there were always people like that. There will always be single tax saviors. We did not take them too seriously. We didn't mind listening to them, but we didn't think so much of them. There was a Socialist Labor Party once, also one of those dormant organizations... probably still going, too, with a man called Daniel DeLeon who was their leader, a very brave man. He had the idea that any kind of improvement through unions, any kind of gradual change of the conditions of the working people would take away their revolutionary spirit. We should not participate in it. How can you talk to that man, let's say, who's a carpenter or machinist or electrician...he just laughs in your face. He says, "This is nonsense. Why shouldn't I try to make a living? I have to make a living for my family." Those people never got anywhere. And the single taxers were the same, but through a number of people who got wealthy on account of single tax people...you can make money by being a single taxer... some of them, when they buy...one of them, I think his name was a German in New York...he died left them his fortune which amounted to... I don't know, many hundred thousands of dollars, and they set up the Foundation. They published this Henry George book, Property or Wealth and Property...something like that. They could sell it for practically nothing. So, in these courses that they had...and they conducted them for years and years here in St. Louis...you had to pay so much to get in to it. They sent you an application blank; it

was really like a college almost.

SULLIVAN: That would be this George School of Economics?

HOOPS: Yeah, that's it.

SULLIVAN: Was this active in the thirties?

HOOPS: It was active until a few years ago. As far as I know, four or five years ago, I used to get these announcements. As a matter of fact, it might be in existence right now. Noah Alpert was the director of that thing, and as I say, a grand old man. I hope he's still alive. I always liked him. Other people did not think very much of him, but I could see beyond the thing that people stand for. I could always see the human element in it. Alpert was certainly a cultivated man. I think he even knew some languages, and he was a good man to have around. I liked him.

SULLIVAN: Do you think that most of these Socialists who come to this country as immigrants, that their attachment to Socialism more ideological than a revolt against any conditions?

HOOPS: It certainly was. And many of them, as soon as they found out that America was a different country than Germany, where they were not persecuted, where they could have their union, where they could gradually maybe own their property...you know, in Germany to own property or a house was practically impossible for many working men. My father worked in the post office for over thirty years; he never managed to own a house for himself; so when I came the first time and I visited them in Germany after the war was over in '48 or '49, and I had, of course, sent them a lot of things after the war and so on, but when I told him that I owned a house, my father was astounded...unbelievable. I had to make him a sketch of every piece of the house; I didn't even know how big it was; how many feet...I don't even know today. If somebody asks me, I have to measure it. For him that was the greatest achievement. And, so, when those people could do this, and you know how easy it is...years ago it was even easier than now. All these people that I know in all these singing societies, there's not a single one who doesn't own his own house and maybe owns a whole lot of others. This little fellow...what's his name? Henry Buschmann owns ten flats and all by himself. He had no help from anybody. He was a frugal man; he made investments; he bought real estate; he fixes up. Irene told me that when she visited him, he was working on a concrete floor or something like that. He's 84 years old. There's a man you would not get to mouth any revolutionary phrases. He would feel silly; he would say, "What are you talking about?" That wouldn't even interest him.

SULLIVAN; "I'm too busy taking care of my property."

HOOPS: Yes, on the other hand, there's also the danger...and I wanted to ask Irene (Cortinovis) sometime if she would do this...these are also the people who voted against any increase in the school tax. I asked him. They get so imbued with this spirit of property that I always say to them, "You don't own property, the property owns you. You will do anything to keep the property going." I was always quite interested in politics. I'm now working mostly for some Democratic candidates if they come up and I liked them, like Mr. Bruce

Sommer in the last campaign who lost by seven votes in the eighth ward. Oh, that was a tragedy. I worked for him very, very hard. I would tell people who come to South St. Louis when they canvass, "Never walk on anybody's lawn." We made a joke of it. I said, "He may not mind you taking liberties with his wife, but you never walk over his lawn." This is, of course, the other part of the coin. If you never owned anything and all of a sudden you do, you become conservative.

SULLIVAN: Did many people fall away from the Socialist Party after they came here?

HOOPS: Oh, yes. Some of them never even joined again. They didn't want to have anything to do with them. When I came over on the boat once... with one of my trips, I have been over several times and don't know which one it was... there was a young fellow on there, and he had a sign on his lapel that indicated that he was a member of the Worker's Gymnastic Society. He had a special little red insignia which I knew. So, when I saw it, I told him. I asked him, "Where are you from?" And he told me. And I said, "I see you're a member of the Arbeiterturnverein," or whatever it was. He was not happy about that at all that I had discovered that. And I could hear that there was no enthusiasm that I had brought this up. And the next day when I came, he had taken it off. It wasn't there any more. You see, he had worn the same suit that he had worn in Germany... that it was on all the time, so he didn't even know it was there any more. Many of them did not want to have any connection with that any more. Sometimes it had something to do with their relatives here, because they had warned them not to have anything to do with the radical, because they would not become citizens because they had trouble. Many of them would have probably come to us and stayed with us. They were told by their relatives not to go. "They are radicals; they are Communists." Of course, everybody in those days was Communist. A number of years ago you were a "Wobbly." They called them, Wobblies," before the Communists were invented. Now, later on, the "bugaboo" became a Communist. Even today, the Vorwaert where I am, which is the only singing group still in existence in St. Louis, for the Liederkrantz people we are Communists. And they even mention it sometimes. The other day, there was almost a fight, because I had written an article in my paper about Bismarck, and not in very complimentary terms, acknowledging his tremendous talent as a politician, but nobody liked him. From a political point of view, he was on the other side of the fence from me. That caused quite some consternation among some of the conservative members of the Liederkrantz. We have a group here called the Steuben Society...you know. General Steuben from the Army, very conservative to put it mildly, nationalistic. We had quite an argument there the other day; in one meeting, he called us, "Communists." Some of our members are good Catholics and Communism is absolutely abhorrent to them, even Socialism. They tolerate me because as I said, I can do a lot of things for them. Any argument, when it comes to that, they don't want me to push it too hard. I said, "Have I ever tried to make a Socialist out of you?" They let it go. I said, "I know who you are." They were quite upset about this, and one fellow said, "If he keeps on saying that, I'm going to go to court." That's how they feel about this. It doesn't make any sense anymore today. Even the separation of our society from the others doesn't make much sense. Eventually they have to get together. We have to join, because our society is getting smaller and smaller and older and older. Some of the other societies are in the same fix. So we have to get together. Who cares today whether you work in a factory or whether you own a store? Or if you are a professional man? In America that doesn't mean anything. If it wasn't for the social part, as you mentioned before, because they know each other and they like to play cards together. The women like to talk about

gossiping and they know their children...all that kind of stuff. I think we would have joined already with some other group, and I am pushing it very slowly. I don't make any open effort, but I already joined the Schwabenverein, the bigger one, because that's the one where we should go. And they would like to have us to sing with them to increase their chorus. So far, I have had no luck because of the social activities. They feel they are strangers. They would have to make new friends with them. These people, they all know...just like an old shoe.

SULLIVAN: Was there social significance in the Turnverein like in the singing societies?

HOOPS: The Turnverein is a development all by itself. I think I mentioned it in the other tape, so I don't want to go into that. But when they came over here, they were very liberal people. They were the backbone of people like Schurz and Pastorias and people like that.

SULLIVAN: As time went on, did they develop a different social...

HOOPS: Yes. Also, they changed in their political set-up. When Bismarck united Germany and Germany became strong, they felt that Bismarck had done what they had tried to do in '48...unite Germany. They became gradually more and more pro-German, not any more liberal or progressive. They became Republicans here in St. Louis. All the Germans in South St. Louis; that was one of the big places of the Republican Party. Two or three Germans, of German descent, Mr. Berthold, was our representative for many years and he was a German Republican, a rather conservative one.

SULLIVAN: He was very, very bitter about Prohibition and the first World War, though.

HOOPS: Oh, yes, yes. Those were his clients, and he had to make some speeches against Prohibition once in a while to be re-elected. That was part of his game, too, and I'm sure he liked his beer, too. I never met the man, so I don't really know. I have seen pictures of him. But the Turners just died out, because people are not that devoted any more to strenuous physical exercise.

SULLIVAN: But, I mean, some Turnvereins were more upper class and some were more...

HOOPS: Yes, but I don't think we ever had a real working class Turnverein here in American, in St. Louis. I don't remember that at all. They were middle class people...! mean, lower middle class people, generally speaking.

SULLIVAN: There was no Liederkranz?

HOOPS: No. There was the Concordia...that's still surviving. That was about the elite. I don't know why that was. I think it had something to do with Busch. I think they used to support them. When they were on 13th and Cherokee; that's where they had their big headquarters where now that highway is...and they moved over here to Gravois now. But the Turnverein is something I never had anything to do with. I don't know very much about them. I only know that there were any number of them when I came, but there is only one of them left. I was there not so long ago. They rent out their hall to other people to use for dances and so on. Although I don't like it, it's weird; it's not good. It's the only safe one. The German House is in a neighborhood where people don't want to go any more.

SULLIVAN: Who owns the German House?

HOOPS: Well, it's owned by two people now. It was owned originally by German societies as a joint enterprise. They went broke; they got only a few cents on their investment, whatever they had; many of them didn't even bother to get it. It's owned now by two brothers. There are some union offices in there, and they just keep it above water. They have a beautiful hall; the biggest hall we have and a wonderful stage. It's really only the good nice place to meet, but it's so unsafe, and people and cars get broken into and stolen and stuff like that.

SULLIVAN: You mentioned the Catholics and the Vorwaerts. I know the Centralverein was very anti-socialist; did you run into any conflict with them?

HOOPS: Well, not conflict, but they tried to avoid people from joining the Socialists, because that's why they founded the Centralverein. And, also, that's why the Harmonic Singing Society was founded. That was founded by Catholics and by a German Catholic priest here, because he did not want them to join the Vorwaerts which was, at that time, a strong growing organization. Most of the immigrants are from southern Germany which is dominantly Catholic while the northern part is dominantly Lutheran. I would say the proportion is about one to ten...one northern German to ten southern Germans all over the country. Very few people, comparatively speaking, immigrated from northern Germany. We don't have any Saxonklub or Mecklenburgklub, because there aren't enough to have a club going. There is a Platterburgerklub here where they'll take anybody in that at one time came from a country where they spoke low German like where I come from. But they're not going anywhere...never amounted to anything. While the southern German clubs, the Austrian clubs, always had a tremendous membership. Since they come from there and most of them were Catholics, even though nominally, they joined the Catholic church here and kept up their Catholicism to a large extent. Some of them may have joined other faiths, like the Freigemeinde; I wouldn't think to any large extent.

SULLIVAN: I know. I've read their newspaper, the Centralverein, their comments on Socialism.

HOOPS: Yes, they are opposed to it. Just a few years ago, in Germany, they have admitted that a Catholic can vote the Socialist ticket.

SULLIVAN: But the Catholics stay more in their own groups. They have their own groups in society.

HOOPS: Around their churches, mostly. Course, they also joined some of these other societies, the Schwaben, the Liederkrantz and some other Verein. We don't ask them where they belong, whether Catholics or Protestants, we just take them as members. We are a pluralist society here. Nobody questions them or makes any difficulties for them. They have a tendency which was encouraged by their priests to stay away from us, because they were afraid they would be proselyte; they would go away from them. Apparently, they never had very much confidence in their members that they feel like the minute they get somewhere else, they're going to run away. But, they have tried to keep them together, and they have their parishes, associations, women's clubs. I have never had any contact with them. I only remember once that one of these groups came to the anti-Hitler organization. When they

found out or reported back that the movement people were Socialist, they never came back. I can't remember now what that one was called. I know, too, if I think about it. It was a union...kind of a cooperative movement which was started in southern Germany. It was very strong; still very strong in Bavaria and Frankenland, a cooperative movement of buying and selling things in common. They had warehouses and they bought fertilizers together and saved their people a tremendous lot of money...just like our cooperative leagues here in Kansas and in Nebraska, and so on. All the big fertilizer and silos and grain elevators are all owned by cooperatives. They even own oil wells in Oklahoma. The farmers down there just swear by them. It's a tremendous economic help to them, because they can buy things together that every single farmer just couldn't do. This was a very similar organization. It was started, in will come to me in a minute...they had a group here at that time, but they never came back.

SULLIVAN: What about the Lutherans? Did they tend to keep their members not as segregated?

HOOPS: Well, I think we don't have very many organized Lutherans here. Because the Lutheran synod is so conservative. The most conservative of all the Lutheran bodies with that trouble they had in Milwaukee just now. They never mixed very much with these other people. For a while, they didn't even dance or all these things that young people are supposed to like to do. The only good thing that came out of Concordia is Paul Simon, the lieutenant-governor (Illinois). I was his campaign manager for the first campaign. His brother who studied there, too. We drove out there, and we made him a state representative at that time. He is running now for lieutenant-governor. He dedicated one of his books to me. Paul and I are good friends. I probably will go out again when he's running for governor and see what I can do for him. I am on a committee to see that the proper publicity goes to the German newspapers that are still in existence in Illinois. There are a lot of ethnic groups in Illinois and if we can swing them for Paul, I think we can get him elected. He's a good man. He's a wonderful guy.

SULLIVAN: In other words, your political interests take you to Illinois, too?

HOOPS: When I see a good man, I work for him.

SULLIVAN: You mentioned that the Germans in St. Louis are Republican, at least tended to be Republican. When did they switch to being Democratic?

HOOPS: 1932.

SULLIVAN: My mother would always say that the Germans never forgave the Republicans for Prohibition.

HOOPS: That had something to do with it, but it was mainly the influence of Franklin Roosevelt and the question of getting work and so on. But, of course, the Republican sentiment had something to do with Lincoln and the slaves. They were definitely anti-slave. Their history, in that respect, is known; how they helped Lincoln to keep Missouri to the northern side. I don't have to go into that. That is history. Years ago, I made a pilgrimage to 11th Street just across the street from the Federal Building. I don't remember the number.

There was a TurnHallen still in existence at that time which we called, even in history books, the "cradle of liberty." That was the Turnverein from which the Turners marched to Jefferson Barracks which was that time when Grant was there and prevented the troops from marching to the south. That little Turner Hall was still in existence at that time. It was just a little narrow building, and since has been torn down for a parking lot.

SULLIVAN: Do you have anything else you would like to add?

HOOPS: I would like to say if some of these other people are coming...! am more a loner, not much on joining organizations. I joined them all right, and I think they are worth while, but I'm not a great mixer. The social things don't mean that much to me. I like to dance and whenever they have their affairs, that is one of the main reasons why I am going. Also, I go for that reason to some of the other picnics. I have never made a career of being members of societies. We call them Vereinsmeier, a man who joins all the societies. Many of these people don't know me. Some of these other people are known; everybody knows them. I have never made much of an attempt; when I write something, I only sign with my initials. Even people in my own groups don't know that this is something that I wrote. I'm not advertising it. Some of these people that you interview have much more contact, because they have gone much more to those affairs. They feel part of it. Like our friend. Henry; I think everybody knows him by name at least. They don't know much about him, but they know that he is...or they know Mr. Walter Luettecke, the man who runs the Luettecke Travel Service. I always call him, "The Mayor of South St. Louis." Now, there's a man you should interview. I guess you know him. He's a very knowledgeable man. He knows everything there is to know about German, although he doesn't know anything about the labor movement because he never...I suspect that he had friendly relations to the Nazi movement at that time. But nobody was a Nazi, not even in Germany. You know how that goes. Also to say just one word about the present situation, why, I have some difficulties with some of my German friends. I am a hawk when it comes to Viet Nam. I think we are fighting Communism there; we are not supposed to give it up. If we give it up, we give the whole continent to the Communists. I feel that we have a good reason to be there, and we should fight it out. This is a very unpopular view today; everybody wants to end the war. I never offer my opinion, because I know how controversial it is. But when there is a reason for saying it, I say what I think about it. They can take it or leave it. Many of my friends, especially my Socialist friends think this is awful. I defend myself as good as I can, pointing out some historical parallels of people who were kicked in the shins, too, for being right at the wrong time. I don't mind being against the stream; this doesn't bother me a bit. That's what I believe, and I fight for it. I debate everybody who wanted to debate with me. I stood my grounds and I still stand my grounds. Some of these people are very neutral as far as this is concerned. They say, "Well, he doesn't know what he's talking about," or something like that. You know how that can separate people. Good friends of mine...that I considered good friends... think it rather odd that I should feel this way. Since they cannot convince me, and I cannot convince them, I say, "I am willing to listen." All the arguments they give me do not hold water in my opinion, so there is a kind of coolness among some of the people. I just mention this only because if you interview some of the people and they bring this up, they might mention it and say, "He is an odd-ball." I would probably think other people are odd balls, but it doesn't make any difference.

SULLIVAN: One last thing we might talk about a little bit, which you started to talk about at

the turn of the tape, is your membership in the NAACP. You said that you're the second white member.

HOOPS: I believe so. I am not so sure about that. One day we had a Dr. Lippman here in town, a very liberal doctor, who came from Hungary, I believe. He was the first children's specialist; I don't know whether you know it or not. He was recommended to me when I came to St. Louis by the League for Industrial Democracy to contact. I went to see him. He had his office in the Beaumont Building. A wonderful old man. We became pretty friendly, and I visited him whenever I was in the neighborhood. He had a daughter who married a man, I can't think of it now; she started a library in the Pruitt-Igoe area.

SULLIVAN: Is it L-i-t-t, or L-i-p-p?

HOOPS: L-i-p-p, Lippman. He said, "You know, I am going down to join the NAACP. Want to come along?" I said, "Sure, I want to go along. I want to join, too."

SULLIVAN: What year was this?

HOOPS: I would say '35, '36...somewhere around there. He was at the Beaumont Building, and he was not a young man any more. We walked all the way from Grand down to Jefferson. At that corner of Jefferson and Grand, there was a building that's torn down now. There was a dentist who was the president of the NAACP.

SULLIVAN: Do you recall his name?

HOOPS: I think his name was Wilson. We walked up the narrow steps, and you know, how professional people were in those days? Lippman's office was up-to-date, modern. This was rather shopworn affair...just an old chair there, but he was the president of NAACP. So we went up there. It must have been quite a shock for him to see two white men coming up there. Lippman said, "I want to join the NAACP, and this is my young friend who wants to join, too." For a while, he thought we were pulling a joke. He didn't understand. He took our membership...! think it was one dollar...we paid the dollar. I think even Lippman paid my dollar, come to think of it, because I don't think I even had a dollar. We be- came members. I kept it up for a while, but after a while, I couldn't afford that any more. Of course, I had been to New York and then back again. But I joined back again. I am now a member.

SULLIVAN: Did you ever go to any of the meetings?

HOOPS: Yes, I've been to their meetings at Wohl recreation center, or Sherman Center, I think they called it. When we had an election, we voted there. I have been to one of their parties. They call them "teas" or something like that. I did not enjoy it. I did not meet anybody that I know and, of course, they were so immersed in their own affairs...in their own things...that I didn't particularly enjoy it and I haven't gone back. But I pay my dues. I am active in the ADA, Americans for Democratic Action. I have been their local treasurer for ten years, and support all their campaigns, the people that they vote for. I am a great canvasser. I like to canvass. I don't mind it at all, bothering people for other people. I wouldn't do it for myself. But, for others, I don't mind it at all. If I had only one more day, we would have gotten those seven votes that that Mr. Bruce lost by. I belong to the Bruce group now, and we have a big shindig coming up in September on one of those boats to raise money to pay his

lawyer for all the legal expenses he went to. I went to the court a number of times, a number of times, to testify for him. There was no chance. The establishment didn't want to lose a single thing.

SULLIVAN: The NAACP in the thirties? It was very unusual for whites to Join?

HOOPS: As I said, I didn't attend many meetings. I only remember Lippman telling me at that time, "We are the only white people." That would make me the second one. He was number one.

SULLIVAN: He paid the dollar, so he was first.

HOOPS: I think that's what he did.

SULLIVAN: What sort of things was the NAACP pushing at that time? What sort of program did they have? Do you recall?

HOOPS: I really couldn't tell you. I don't really know. I felt just my moral support in case they would have needed somebody they would think, he's white, you know? Many times I had a chance in the Socialist Party; I got several people to join there. I would always tell them that I was a member of that organization and it needed support. Mr. White, strange name, that was their president at that time; Walter White, I think that was his bane. He came to St. Louis...I was the contact man between him and the newspapers, because they felt that I had connections with the newspapers that I would be helpful. So, we went together to the Post-Dispatch editor who was at that time a very, very liberal man...he is now connected with Princeton University. They had their national convention here that year...I don't know what year that was. When Walter White died a couple years later, they have another man, a good man, I believe. We went to the Post-Dispatch at that time to see that we got all the publicity and to the Globe. They had a very liberal editor at that time. Names get away from me...I can't remember names too well any more. That's all I did for them.

SULLIVAN: When did you join the ADA here?

HOOPS: The ADA I joined as soon as the Socialist Party went defunct. There was nothing any more to do. I am a political animal; I have to participate in politics. I like to do my share. If I feel that there's a good candidate, like Paul Simon, I felt that I had to do my share, and with Bruce, I did more than my share. I think I did a tremendous job if I say so myself. But, still, I think that if I had known...of course, nobody could have known...that there were seven votes, we could have spent a little more.

SULLIVAN: I want to thank you, Mr. Hoops, if you don't have anything more. I want to get these names from you.

HOOPS: Well, I said whatever I think I can say. You know what I said on the other tape. I am very much interested in little things.

SULLIVAN: That's apparent. I certainly enjoyed talking with you and want to thank you.

HOOPS: These other Germans who you will talk to are more on the neutral side. They are

nothing; they don't express themselves at all. You can't get them interested in anything outside their narrow sphere of interests. I think this is a pity.

SULLIVAN: I know. A lot of historians commented that the immigrant groups in general tended to be conservative in politics. I take it you would agree.

HOOPS: That is natural. If you have nothing, and you come to a country where all of a sudden you can acquire a little bit of property, they hold on to that with everything.

SULLIVAN: Then, too, you mentioned that the relatives said that that was not respectable, and I think there is a great desire for respectability.

HOOPS: Then, the children go to school and they bring the influence with them from the school. It's almost the exception of an immigrant to be more on the radical side. I would say the proportion of immigrants lost from the radical movement they belonged to in Germany is at least 75%. Only 25% stay with the movement. They feel there is no need for it...not that they feel that they are traitors, but they say, "We don't need that in America." In a way, you can understand it; that's all right. This is any number of people that I can think of...that I know. I saw the other day that the French people complain of the same thing in the newspaper. The French Society in St. Louis...I used to belong to it many years ago...

SULLIVAN: How did you come to join the French Society?

HOOPS: French is my language. I like French much, much better than German. I read French every day. I write about French people. The French movement of the 17th and 18th centuries interests me very much. That's my main interest at the present time...a man like Figaro. What did he say? "I believe there are 30,000 lost Frenchmen in St. Louis." In other words, they came from France...descended from French people. They are assimilated and in one-two generations are lost to the French particularists that want to keep the French societies going. The Germans, who are racially more close to the American people than the French...who are a Latin people... it was almost natural that they would assimilate quick...that they would try to become good Americans as fast as they could. In my opinion, that is the natural development and to cry about it...

SULLIVAN: When I talk to Mr. Schuster...

HOOPS: He'll be a wonderful guy for you. He is also a great man. I like him.

SULLIVAN: Well, thank you, again.