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Aldeschulte, Jutta Interview

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

Sally Miller

Aldeschulte, Juta (Austrialian)

No Date

Interviewed by Monkia Aldeschulte

Transcribed by Samantha Martinez

**[TAPE 1, Side A]
[Begin Tape.]**

MONIKA ALDESCHULTE: Okay Mom I'm doing a story from East Germany, West Germany, Australia and here []. Now, you were born where?

JUTA ALDESCHULTE: [Rastatt, Baden-Wurttemberg]?

MONIKA: How long did you live there?

JUTA: Oh, I don't know how long I lived there.

MONIKA: Well, you lived in [Rastatt] and then you moved to West Germany.

JUTA: Well, I was born in [Rastatt] and then we lived somewhere else and then we came to Germany in 1945 I think. When I was born in [Rastatt] the English were bombing and so they had to put all the new babies down in the basement or in a cellar and the women they had to stay up in their rooms.

MONIKA: Was there a lot of other bombings in [Rastatt] when you there for four years?

JUTA: I can't remember. The only thing I remember is that a lot of time during the bombings we were standing in the river.

MONIKA: Really? You said you lived four years, now you moved to West Germany. Where did you move?

JUTA: [] in Germany and we lived in a camp and it was a camp of Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians.

MONIKA: What kind of camp was this?

JUTA: It was a camp for all the refugees.

MONIKA: Oh, okay for all who came from -

JUTA: All the Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia.

MONIKA: Okay.

JUTA: It used to be a hospital before and then it became a camp. We lived the first year with eight families in a room. It was big rooms. And then after the next year we got our own room.

MONIKA: Okay, did you have to go to one place to another or did you have to stay?

JUTA: No, we could go all over the place and then we got clothing from Red Cross from America, I think.

MONIKA: So, what about food? How was the food?

JUTA: Well, everybody had to get their own food. At the camp we had stamps and we had to stand in line and get like a cup of sugar or a piece of butter a day.

MONIKA: Did you get a lot of food from the stamps?

JUTA: No, not a lot. Just a little bit, you know just enough to survive on and then we had to stand in line if we wanted [].

MONIKA: Did your mother ever work while she was in the camp?

JUTA: Yes, she did some sewing and knitting for all – I think the kids from the orphanages – all the kids without parents.

MONIKA: At this time, you said – this was after the war – but did you find your father?

JUTA: No, we didn't hear nothing from him till 1964. But, my mother was looking for him everywhere.

MONIKA: How did she look?

JUTA: She went through the Red Cross and the Red Cross usually finds all the missing soldiers. By the way my mother – we used to go out at night. She used to go alone for the night and pick cherries, suitcases of cherries and bring them back to sell them to get extra money.

MONIKA: Where did she sell those?

JUTA: To the people on the camp, I think.

MONIKA: Was it like a black market.

JUTA: Yeah, it was something like the black market. But, that's the only thing I remember and then she – that's all I can remember.

MONIKA: How did she get the cherries?

JUTA: They used to go somewhere at night, I don't know where they'd go, but they would go and pick cherries from farms or something.

MONIKA: Did you go to school when you were in this camp?

JUTA: Yeah, I went to school, I went to first grade there. They had one big room.

MONIKA: So you started when you were about 6 years old?

JUTA: Six years old. It was German.

MONIKA: How were the schools there?

JUTA: Well, they were very strict because if you didn't listen or something you had to kneel for a whole hour in the corner if you didn't do your homework or anything like that.

MONIKA: How many – did you have different classes?

JUTA: I can't remember, but there were a lot of kids in one classroom.

MONIKA: You had one teacher?

JUTA: One teacher.

MONIKA: Did you meet any discrimination when you went out of the camp with the other people?

JUTA: No. They were very good to us because we go down to a little store there and they would always give us sandwiches if we bought something extra – sandwich and everything.

MONIKA: How many years did you live in that camp?

JUTA: Till 1949, so about five years.

MONIKA: Where did you move from there?

JUTA: We moved to Australia. When we got out of immigration, we were one of the first families to go to Australia.

MONIKA: This is from the camp, now? You got your immigration papers. Now, how did you get that?

JUTA: I don't know, but my mother must have gone to an immigration place or something. I have no idea, but we went by train to Italy. From Italy we caught a boat which was called [Musser].

MONIKA: Why did you move to Australia? Why did your mom decide to move there?

JUTA: Well, she thought there would be better opportunities and she was very scared of war.

MONIKA: Is that because East and West Germany were having their fights.

JUTA: Yes.

MONIKA: How long did it take on the boat?

JUTA: About six weeks and we were on a boat. They didn't have cabins, so it was like one open boat and everybody slept all over the place – they had beds for everybody.

MONIKA: So, how many people were moving with you?

JUTA: I don't know. There was quite a lot about 300 maybe.

MONIKA: How was the food?

JUTA: It was real good.

MONIKA: Real good? That's different. What kind of boat was this?

JUTA: It must have been a Navy boat. Uh -

MONIKA: Was it like a big cruiser or was everyone really packed in?

JUTA: It was packed in.

MONIKA: Tell me the month?

JUTA: [] It was May 1949.

MONIKA: Where did you – did you stay there?

JUTA: Not, we got on a bus to [Perth?] and

MONIKA: How long did that take?

JUTA: I can't remember. It was a long ride.

MONIKA: Where the immigrants moving with you to Perth, or did everyone just go where they want?

JUTA: No, they all went to Perth. They had barracks there and we all lived in barracks and we all got a room with beds and fresh linens and they supplied us with clothing. And then we went to school there to

learn English, and they had cafeterias where we all went to eat there. We really liked it, it was nice and warm and the fresh air.

MONIKA: How did the other people feel?

JUTA: Well a lot of people were very depressed and as kids there was one who tried to hang himself—and when we went to the bathroom—there were ropes hanging down and a few girls tried to commit suicide.

MONIKA: Was this because of the changes?

JUTA: The changes and after the war they couldn't cope with it and the new country.

MONIKA: Did you go to classes over there?

JUTA: Yea, we went to classes and we learned English, how to talk and everything.

MONIKA: Was it just the English you learned, or did you learn other things like in a regular school?

JUTA: No, just the language and how to get by.

MONIKA: How long did you live there?

JUTA: About six months I think

MONIKA: Did your mother work there?

JUTA: No, not in Perth she didn't. Not that I can remember. My mother met this man his name was Mathis and he came to Australia before we did. He was cutting sugar cane so he wants my mother to come out to Queensland and that he had a house for us and that it was really nice out there. He had food and money and everything. So we got on a train to go to Queensland and it was a long ride and on the way over there we were going through Western Australia, the train stopped there and there were a lot of (?) on the train. We weren't allowed to open the windows or anything. But they were trading off their art craft—like boomerangs and old Aboriginal stuff for food and they didn't trust the Aboriginals so they told us to keep on the train. Till we came to Queensland my mother had almost a heart attack because when we got off the train here comes my stepfather to be. He was all black, everything, because he was cutting sugar cane. It was in a little town in the middle of nowhere.

MONIKA: How many people were in this town?

JUTA: About 50 people all together, the town was very small. It has stations and one little store. Where we lived it was three miles away from the station. It was a little house. And there was like a loing house there for all the sugar cane cutter there for about nine men plus us and we lived in the house and my step father kept sugar cane and my mother cooked for all the men there and there was a school house which was about two miles away in which we walked. There was one classroom which contained about ten kids all together.

MONIKA: What were the grades?

JUTA: From kindergarten to graduating. One teacher on classroom

MONIKA: What do you mean by graduating? Eighth grade?

JUTA: Yea, Eighth grade. We brought our lunches and always walked home.

MONIKA: Where you given chores at home?

JUTA: Yea, we had to help with the cooking and washing. But the bathrooms were outside, no facilities inside like these days.

MONIKA: How did the people feel about you?

JUTA: They were so nice, so very nice and friendly. Once a week they used to come with the car and take us to the nearest town which was twenty miles away and we used to go to the movies once a week. We would sit in the car and all the men would hang out around outside the car because we didn't have seats. The men would also go to the bar while we went to the movies with my mother and sister. After a few years my mother couldn't cope with it anymore, all of the snakes and the spiders—she was terrified of them. So she wanted to move somewhere more civilized so we moved to (Nuremburg? Melburg?12:00) We had to move way out of the suburbs because they didn't rent out rooms with kids. It was very hard to rent out rooms.

MONIKA: Were they discriminating or something?

JUTA: No, they were not discriminating. But they didn't like kids and a mother.

MONIKA: They wanted her to have a husband?

JUTA: Yea, to support and pay the rent. So we moved way out to the country and my mother worked there at first in the chair factory at night, night shift. So we had to do the cooking and cleaning.

MONIKA: You and your sister right?

JUTA: Yea.

MONIKA: What about Matais?

JUTA: He came out a year later he stayed in Queensland for a year because he made more money there cutting sugar cane. Then we moved to another house and my mother had to travel two hours to work. So traveling four hours every day so we did all of the housework from cooking to cleaning to washing. My mother was very strict

MONIKA: Did you still go to school there?

JUTA: Yea, we went to a Catholic school, both of us. The bus went around collecting the kids around the neighborhood. Our school was strict, it was a Catholic school. The school was in the church, so every

time they had a funeral or wedding they would send us home early. I was always the one caught giggling so I had ruler marks, black and blue, all over and when I went home my mother would give me another for getting in trouble. I got beaten up by a few kids on the way home before; because they would call us the “bloody Germans” and they were really bad. The parents weren’t that bad but the kids they give us a real hard time. One time I was going home from school and this girl who had a wooden suitcase and she swung and she beat me up and then my nose was bleeding and I was all bloody when I came home. The next day my mother went to the principle, we were going to a state school then, to complain but she couldn’t talk very good English and he did nothing about it.

MONIKA: What about religion?

JUTA: I was very religious and parents made us go to church.

MONIKA: What about your mom?

JUTA: She used to go every Sunday, well she tried to go, and she just has so much work on the weekends. She worked everyday through the week. After school we used to stay up until twelve o’clock, she used to bring home dresses. She worked at a dress shop. We would help put all the buttons on and hem and that was around when I was twelve or thirteen years old. Every night she would bring home suitcases of dresses like twenty dresses a night. She didn’t get very much money, but whatever we got we were very happy because we got like fresh food or candy or I had one doll from Germany that I used to dress up.

MONIKA: Was your family pretty poor?

JUTA: Well, we weren’t that poor, when looking at the Australians that didn’t have much anyway but whatever we had we were happy.

MONIKA: What about decorations?

JUTA: The Australians, the way we decorated a tree we put balloons on an empty box at that time for a tree. We didn’t do that though we went the German way, so ornaments and tried to keep up with them.

MONIKA: What about cooking?

JUTA: My mother cooked the Lithuanian way. When we went to school we had to get up and make our own lunches and we had to have money to ride the bus so we had to walk almost two miles to school and when it rained we were soaking wet at school. We had to sit in wet clothes all day and the school were not heated or anything. Once a week we got an allowance which we could go to the movie on Saturday afternoon and it was a big treat for us. My father was very strict we weren’t allowed to buy new records or magazines he told us they were a waste of money.

MONIKA: You say your father, how old were you?

JUTA: I was twelve; my mother married him at fifty-nine, because she had to wait ten years for the Catholic Church to make sure that she was a widow because they didn’t know whether my father was

alive or dead. The Catholic Church made her wait ten years to get married to my stepfather. He always gave us a hard time because he drank a lot and put my mother in debt and everything so she wanted to leave him but he always was trying to commit suicide and then so my mother ended up staying with him even though she didn't love him anymore, it was for the kid's sake. The first time I ever bought a record, we had a real nice record player, and I went down and got a rock and roll record. My father broke it into little pieces; he wouldn't let us listen to it. The only thing we were to listen was to radio after we did the dishes and at the time we were letting our Aunt and Uncle. My Aunt always had a cigarette, and she has her dishes on the kitchen sink, after she did her dishes then she would let me do my dishes. We were allowed to go into the living room after to listen to the records or the radio.

The only time that we went to the beach was with the school. At 14 ½ I quit school and I went to a college for three months and I learned my trade on a counting machine, but they called it bookkeeping. I worked until I was nineteen, until I got married.

MONIKA: What was the pay there?

JUTA: At the time, when I started there, I was making seven pounds. My father was making only seven pounds in the lumber yard, he was really surprised. I had to bring my paycheck home and he would open it and he used to give me one pound of it. This was for traveling and lunch. The rest went with my parents.

MONIKA: How did the people feel of women working?

JUTA: Well, my mother worked all the time so it was okay. She was the only who could save money, my father couldn't save any money, couldn't keep any money, he used to drink it all up. The women were not allowed to go to the bars there, we had a bar Trojan horses hotel on the corner there and my father was always in there drinking. The bar hours were open from nine o'clock in the morning until six o'clock. So the men used to go and get drunk until six, closing time, because Saturday after six o'clock everything was closed and it was really dry there and you could not get booze on Sundays.

MONIKA: What about dating? Did you date anyone?

JUTA: I wasn't very keen on dating too much; I was happy to be at home and went to work. When I came home I would do my washing, we washed everything by hand. We didn't have a washing machine so we had to boil our clothes. It took us a whole evening sometimes until twelve o'clock at night, and then had to hang all the clothes outside on the clothesline. I went with Fitz on a blind date when I was fifteen. Then I went on and off with him, I wasn't too crazy about dating but then I got engaged to him when I was seventeen and we got into a real big car accident. I got married in 1960, when I was nineteen.

MONIKA: Did you work still when you were married?

JUTA: No, I quit working.

MONIKA: Why?

JUTA: Because Fitz didn't want me working, he wanted me to be at home. And I was making real good wages; I was making fifteen pounds per week. And they were going to put me on the computers and they were going to pay me double wages and send me to schooling because I was doing payroll already at nineteen and I was doing all the banking and everything. It was a real big company, at a head office.

MONIKA: What about housing after you got married?

JUTA: Well, it was cheaper to buy a house, once you had the deposit a little house would go for \$3,300 on almost a half an acre so it was cheaper to pay a monthly payment on a house which was five pounds than rent somewhere which was seven pounds. Fitz and I had enough money saved so when we got engaged we put a down payment on a house and so we had our own house.

My mother went to America when I was only seventeen, then she came back, sold her house and she wanted to go back to America again. She liked it there. And so we wanted to go there but I couldn't go there because I didn't have my birth certificate. So they tried to get it from East Germany but they wouldn't give any information out and that I would have to go there. So I became of German citizenship and got my Visa so we came to America for one and a half years on a working vacation. We liked it a lot here and went back to Australia and sold the house. We came back to America and the living conditions here were much better, we could afford more things like food, clothing, household things and cars which we never had over there we just had the main things like a refrigerator, no telephones, nothing like that.

MONIKA: In Australia you didn't have a telephone?

JUTA: No, no

MONIKA: So that was a real shock for you wasn't it?

JUTA: Yea, here because you had telephones

MONIKA: Like bathrooms too, wasn't yours in the back?

JUTA: Ours was outside in the backyard, we used to use newspaper instead of toilet paper.

MONIKA: What kinds of things did you expect to find in the U.S.?

JUTA: Everything that I would see in the movies, like the movie starts were really happy, and the way the houses were decorated. In Australia they were very plain and simple you just had the main furniture: your bed, your closet, and a sofa, along with a stove to cook on and a washing machine. And we were lucky because we had a cow and a lot of people did not have a cow.

MONIKA: Did you live with family or relatives first when you came?

JUTA: We came on vacation here and rented an apartment in a Polish neighborhood and we paid like eight dollars a month.

MONIKA: Didn't you live in a Lithuanian neighborhood?

JUTA: Yes, and a Lithuanian neighborhood.

MONIKA: Did you encounter any problems when you got here?

JUTA: The only thing, one time, we went to a laundry mat and I was washing my clothes and took them out to put them in the dryer and this lady said you bloody DP why don't you get your dirty clothes out of there, or something. So that's the only time I got upset because we paid our way to come into America. We weren't immigrated in a way.

MONIKA: What languages have you spoken at home?

JUTA: Well when I was little we used to speak Lithuania and then German and then started to English. But when I got married Fritz used to speak only German, I spoke English, and I understood German perfectly. But my mother spoke Lithuanian and with my kids I spoke English. Tried to keep the English in.

MONIKA: You lived in an apartment when you first came here, right?

JUTA: Yes

MONIKA: How many rooms did it have?

JUTA: It had two little bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen. It wasn't a very good neighborhood but the people were nice. It was the south of Chicago.

MONIKA: It was different though than from Australia wasn't it?

JUTA: Oh, yea. At first when I came here I did not like it here because of the cold weather. Australia was so beautiful and the air was so clean and I liked the people in Australia. I liked them because I grew up over there.

MONIKA: Did you keep you customs and practices still when you came here?

JUTA: Yea, the way I was raised, the cooking and everything I keep those customs now.

MONIKA: Going back to dating, did you parents set any rules about dating?

JUTA: Yes, um, on Sundays I had to be home at nine o'clock. If I carried home at nine-thirty I would be in a lot of trouble. On Saturdays I could be out until twelve. My mother was very strict. One time I came home late for dinner and she has this cord and she beat me up black and blue because I was home late for dinner.

MONIKA: Has you attitude changed since you been here and were you ever home sick?

JUTA: Yea, the first year I was very homesick and very depressed because I was really lonely. We lived in an area with all new homes in it and I didn't have a car and no way of getting out. So I was stuck like nine months during the year in the house, especially during the winter when it snowed. The neighbors were real friendly but I still did not like the climate. I was used to the outdoor life.

MONIKA: When did you change your attitude about America and when did you stop being homesick?

JUTA: When we moved to California

MONIKA: So you are happy now?

JUTA: Yes. I go now yard duty every day for an hour and the only thing that upsets me here is how wasteful kids are. The kids here are so spoiled rotten and they throw their lunches away, their apples and oranges. The parents do not care about it. America is very wasteful with food and paper. We had to really watch our food for our lives. Even now we never waste any food. I was thinking back from when we left Queensland the whole town got to the station. When we were waiting for the one am train and the women there were all singing "Waltzing Matilda" and all those song back to the mother land and they were crying. They used to have a contest there at the town hall and there was dance and my father and mother would always win the prize. And the people use to bring their babies at two in the evening and stick them under the benches, they didn't have babysitters. In 1964 I got a letter and found out that my father was alive. He was in Siberia for seventeen years and he had his own wife and two boys. One was hers before he met her and one was his. He came out of Siberia as a prisoner for seventeen years and we thought that he was dead at the time. When my mother found out he was alive she divorced my step father because she has always been in love with my father and she wanted him back. So she went to Germany to see him but because he had his own kids there and she couldn't accept that. So he ended up staying with his wife and my mother is still living in Chicago.

[TAPE END]