

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Edith Baumhardt

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Community Stories - Rochester* Oral History project

Interview # CR-A-L-2018-039

Edith Baumhardt, a survivor of Hitler's Germany and immigrant to Springfield in 1958 was also a longtime resident of Rochester. She served in many positions as a language teacher and translator of German, English, Polish and French. She was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Community Stories - Rochester* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 3, 2018    Location: Edith Baumhardt's home in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Carole Strick, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_    Total Time: 1:18 / 1.3 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 10,  
2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield,  
Illinois.

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## Abstract

Edith Baumhardt, *Community Stories - Rochester*, CR-A-L-2018-039

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** Edith (Baumhardt) Motzkus was born on June 20, 1925 in Recklinghausen, Germany (Ruhr Valley). She was one of three children born to Karl and Gustl (Witulski) Motzkus. Her identical twin sister Gisela died in a truck accident when she was about four. Her father was a police officer and an administrator. He was later forced to join the Nazi party. Her family lived in Koln, (later Cologne), Germany when WWII started. Throughout the war, however, they were bombed out of their homes three times and the family was frequently separated. Edith talks about her experiences at boarding schools during the war. As a child, she was forced to join the Hitler Youth. One of her harrowing experiences was going into the wrong train car toward the end of the war, and being told by a guard, “Young lady, you do not belong in here. Get out!” But not before she saw the haggard looking people in striped uniforms who she says were Jewish prisoners. She recounts how her father told his family to go west when it was clear that the war was ending; he urged them to be in territory controlled by the United States rather than Russia. They were able to do this. She immigrated to the United States (Springfield) in 1958 through New York City. She had relatives in the United States.

*Unfortunately, Edith died December 20, 2018, before her complete story could be told. From interviewer notes, we know that she married Walter Baumhardt on March 11, 1967 and instantly became the step-mother of five young children. She held many positions including translating and teaching German, but also French, Polish and English. She was a writer and worked for many years submitting articles to the Rochester newspaper. She and her husband, Walter, were longtime residents of Rochester.*

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Germany, WWII, Koln (Cologne) Hitler Youth, Nazi Party, Recklinghausen, Springfield, Rochester

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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