Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Nancy Randall

SUMMARY

Nancy Randall reflects on her family's migration history, including her father's experiences as a German immigrant and World War II prisoner of war, and explains how these stories shaped her family's identity. She discusses the importance of preserving photographs, letters, and oral traditions, emphasizing that firsthand family stories provide a unique perspective that cannot be replaced by books or digital sources. Randall concludes by sharing a personal lesson about resilience, faith, and the value of passing meaningful life experiences on to future generations.

Sha'Niya Black: My name is Sha'Niya Black with the Washington State Jewish Historical Society. The date is May 27th, 2026. Can you please state your first and last name?

Nancy Randall: Nancy Randall.

Sha'Niya Black: And do I have your consent to record this interview?

Nancy Randall: Yes, you do.

Sha'Niya Black: I'd like to start by asking, what is your connection to the Spokane community?

Nancy Randall: 11 years ago, my two daughters lived up here. I retired. So did my husband, and we moved up here to be closer to them and the grandkids.

Sha'Niya Black: And how has movement or migration shaped your family's identity?

Nancy Randall: I would say since my father was first born German in Minnesota and ended up in California during the war, is that we would go every year, drive to Minnesota with mosquitoes compared to Southern California, which is God's country.

Sha'Niya Black: Um, what physical traces of your family history have been preserved? For example, photographs, films, letters, or any other material?

Nancy Randall: We have it all. Very lucky that my grandmother, being an Irish Catholic, told all the stories about her family and leaving the Ireland from the potato famine. And then my father, he was a prisoner of war during World War II. So we have the mails, we have POW items and as a matter of fact, he spoke to high school students about his experience. So we have letters, photos, magazine articles, everything about that.

Sha'Niya Black: Is there a specific memory, or a specific photograph, letter or even anything that sticks out that you'd like to talk about?

Nancy Randall: I think the biggest one was that he, his mother, kept all of the correspondence from the Vatican, because we always were wondering how she found out that he was a prisoner of war in 1943. It was the Vatican that did it. And the funniest part on it was that three months later they received from the army verification that he was a prisoner. And he goes, because we

cannot depend on the Vatican. I mean, that was in the [Laughs] so.

Sha'Niya Black: That is interesting. Um, can I ask why do you think it is really important to preserve family stories like this?

Nancy Randall: Oh, it is so important because right now the students or the children only know what's on their phone and they believe everything that is on the phone, and they need to sit down and listen to oral history, because it's not the same as what's in the books.

Sha'Niya Black: Absolutely. Um, is there any other memories or anything else you would like to talk about?

Nancy Randall: Memories. Um, uh, it's so hard because there are so many and there's good ones because of grandmothers. I think the big difference is that my child, our youngest, actually was helped raised by her great grandmother. So that was a continuum of great grandma, grandma and papa. And now with them having babies so late in life, she only has her [children], our grandchildren are two and four. There won't be that continuum and I'm hoping to live to watch their graduation. So that's what's really changed, I think.

Sha'Niya Black: Thank you for sharing that. Um, I'd like to ask if you could preserve one memory or story from your life for future generations, what would it be?

Nancy Randall: I just read a book on leprosy, and what he said was, because we usually always hear, God will only give you what you can handle. And he said, no, that's not true. And it was like, blew me away. God will give you even though you can't handle it. But then you pray to God. And I think that's really what is needed in today. And it doesn't matter what religion or what God you pray to.

Sha'Niya Black: Thank you so much.