**Kate:** Today is November 3rd 1995. I’m here at the Trapp family lodge in Stowe, Vermont. Agathe Von Trapp has come here from Baltimore where she lives. She is going to be the first of the siblings that I interview from this family.

I just want to say I’m delighted to have the chance to talk with you and I look forward to whatever you can remember. Why don’t we start, you came, the first time, to the United States in what year?

**Agathe:** In 1938.

**Kate:** At that time you were 24 is it?

**Agathe:** Don’t ask me how old I was.

**Kate:** You have a lot of memories of Austria before …

**Agathe:** I went to school. I remember everything through the First World War, I was born 1913 and the war broke out in 1914. My mother had to leave the house that we had at the Adriatic Sea to live with her mother in Austria [inaudible 00:01:31].

Her mother had owned a house by a lake and that she built that for her family. My mother went to live with her for those four years. The whole coastline was evacuated of every person who was not part of the military or part of the navy.

**Kate:** Your father was in the Navy?

**Agathe:** My father was commander of a submarine in the Navy.

**Kate:** This was when your father was away from World War 1 and your mother went.

**Agathe:** We owned a house at the Adriatic Sea but we could not stay there because it was evacuated because of the war. She went to live with her mother in Austria in Zell am See, it’s in the mountains at the mountain lake, she owned a home there.

**Kate:** Do you remember that period of time when you came [inaudible 00:02:40]?

**Agathe:** Very well.

**Kate:** What do you remember about your grandmother in particular when you think about her, what kind of a person?

**Agathe:** She was a wonderful person. She was hospital, she was a grand lady. She had a big household and she kept in good order. She was very kind and she was also strict.

**Kate:** Do you remember any kinds of attitudes or ways that she thought you as a child should behave or be?

**Agathe:** Yeah, she was telling us, “Only look with your eyes and don’t touch anything.” Because we lived in her house and she had beautiful furniture there and she had nice antiques. She wanted us to understand that we should not touch everything, what children like to do.

**Kate:** Did you know your other grandmother, your father’s mother?

**Agathe:** No, she died in 1911 and I was born in 1913. Why do you ask us about the grandmothers?

**Kate:** We always ask about childhood, your childhood memories.

**Agathe:** Even about Ellis Island?

**Kate:** Yeah. We’re usually start it …

**Agathe:** How does that connect with Ellis Island?

**Kate:** We usually ask about life in the old country and that includes family, the community that you were living in. We can move faster towards the Ellis Island part. How many children were there at that time when you were in your grandmother’s?

**Agathe:** In 1914, when my mother moved, were two, that was my older brother and myself. Our grandmother opened her house to her daughter and her grandchildren. Then during these four years the other children came along. Four children were born in my grandmother’s house, during this First World War.

**Kate:** Do you remember when the war was over?

**Agathe:** Yes, that was in 1918 on November 11th. My father came home and we were told, “Be very good because your father is very sad.” He came home from the war, and we didn’t understand much about -We knew about the war and so we were told that we should be very good. We were anyway very good, that’s what I remember.

When my father came home, we moved out of my grandmother’s house into another house that was not far away. It was also on the lake. In that same summer there was a big meltdown from the glaciers and the water rose. Our house was flooded, the basement was flooded and even the kitchen was flooded.

My father knew we had to find another house. In those days, after the war, everything was in bad shape, neglected houses and so on. They couldn’t find anything that was [inaudible 00:06:45].

Finally after they had searched for a while, the youngest brother of my mother offered a house that he owned in the vicinity of Vienna Klosterneuburg. That was big enough to hold the whole family plus the staff.

It was a house that was so big, it had also adjacent barn and a house for somebody who takes care of the cattle. We had a few cows there and we could have chickens. It was a little unit in itself.

**Kate:** Did you live there for a long time? How long did you stay …?

**Agathe:** We lived there from 1921 until 1925. In 1925 my father moved to Salzburg. He bought a house and then we lived in the vicinity outside of Salzburg.

**Kate:** How about your mother, when you think back at that time can you think of the kinds of things that she was trying to instill in you as a child?

**Agathe:** She was such a wonderful kind person. She didn’t try to instill anything because she was what she was and we just loved her. You know how children imitate their parents they don’t have to do anything.

**Kate:** It was her example you were following.

**Agathe:** Yeah. That’s her outstanding quality was kindness. She was very smart. She was musical, she played the piano, she played the violin, so did my grandmother my grandmother played the piano very well.

**Kate:** Was the family very involved with music right from the beginning?

**Agathe:** Yes. That was part of our life. It was nothing consciously, everybody, in those days, who had children would send them for some music education. Either they learned the piano or they played the violin or they played some instrument. Singing in the family was part of our entertainment. People did that because it was nice and they enjoyed doing it.

**Kate:** Did you have a particular instrument that you played?

**Agathe:** I wanted to play the piano but the teacher didn’t understand what I could do and what I couldn’t do and so that was a disaster.

**Kate:** You sung?

**Agathe:** We sung, whatever we heard we learned and we sung. We learned little songs, folk songs and anybody that sung we learned those songs.

**Kate:** You learned it by ear?

**Agathe:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You were living outside of Salzburg when?

**Agathe:** Yeah that was our last move, because my father did not want to stay in the house where my mother died. There was an epidemic of scarlet fever and we all got the scarlet fever. When my mother took care of the baby who also had it, she got it and she was sick for nine months then she died.

My father did not want to stay in Klosterneuburg and so he looked for something where he had friends from the Navy. In Salzburg there were two officers who were his friends. He wanted to move there and he found a villa that he re, how is that?

**Kate:** Restored?

**Agathe:** Redid for family and we moved there.

**Kate:** You must have already been in school?

**Agathe:** Yes, during the war when we grew up there was no school in the place where we lived. It was on the other side of the lake and we couldn’t go to school over the lake and so we had live in teachers, from the first year of high school then we went to school.

**Kate:** You had already been in high school before you moved outside of Salzburg?

**Agathe:** Yes. I would go into the third grade, the third high school grade.

**Kate:** I don’t usually talk with people who had teachers or tutors at home. What was that like for you?

**Agathe:** That was great. We had a very nice person. She was very smart she was a good teacher, we learned a lot from her. We made the test into the school, the difficulty for us was coming from one-to-one teaching into a big class.

Where you didn’t know the routine, where you didn’t know what’s going on and nobody told you. They call you up and say, “Trapp tell me this and that,” and you totally [inaudible 00:12:37] out, I couldn’t speak in a -That was because the change was so abrupt and we were not used to so many people around us.

**Kate:** Did you get used to it after a while?

**Agathe:** To a certain extent, but it was hard all through for school for me.

**Kate:** Was it true with the younger children, did they also have teachers at home at first and then?

**Agathe:** The younger children could go to school because they were younger.

**Kate:** Because you were in a different place?

**Agathe:** Yes.

**Kate:** When Maria came from the convent, she was coming as a teacher though, wasn’t she a nun?

**Agathe:** She was coming to help my sister to catch up with her schoolwork, because my sister had been sick and couldn’t go to school. That’s because we lived so far outside of Salzburg, she had to live in. Because there was no way that she could go back and forth all the time.

**Kate:** When Maria came to teach your sister, the other children were going to school at that time?

**Agathe:** Yeah we were all going to school, my sister couldn’t go because she was sick.

**Kate:** Do you recall that period? Was it a big change for you and for the children and for your father?

**Agathe:** No, we liked her. Because she noticed that we could sing, and that we sung, that we played instruments. She came from a group of young high school people, students and they had formed a choir.

They were in the summer time during the vacations, they went from village to village and sung for the villagers and tried to find new songs or the real old songs that have not been written down. They wrote them down for their choir and they set them to music for their choir. It was boys and girls together and it was really a beautiful choir.

When my step mother and she saw that we are singing, because it was like a second chance of and she started singing with us. Then she acquainted us with this choir and we learned a lot of songs from them.

**Kate:** Was your father involved in the singing?

**Agathe:** No, he didn’t sing, he had hearing loss during the war. He sung for us things that he knew but he did not learn new songs.

**Kate:** He didn’t sing with you?

**Agathe:** Not with us, no.

**Kate:** Do you remember the buildup of the Nazis? What particular memories do you hold of that time?

**Agathe:** We lived outside of the city. We had a butler, he revealed himself as a Nazi party member. He was loyal and he told us, he warned us, he said, “Be careful what you talk at the table because I have to report everything that I hear you say.” He told us that he was a party member. Then when it was time to leave, he warned us, he said, “You better leave now.” Then we left.

**Kate:** Was it on your birthday that …

**Agathe:** Yes it was on the evening before my birthday. We were sitting in the library of my father and we listened to the radio, just the music.

All of a sudden, the chancellor started to talk and said, “The Germans are at the borders and I ordered not to give any resistance because it would only be a big bloodbath and we don’t have a military to resist them.” He said, “I had to open the borders to let them come in.”

**Kate:** Do you remember yours and the family’s reaction at that time when [inaudible 00:17:40]?

**Agathe:** I don’t remember, nobody cried or anything, it was just like we were stunned perhaps.

**Kate:** Apparently there was some of …

**Agathe:** In the night they came into the country and we were near the border and they went into Salzburg. The next morning we went into Salzburg in our bicycles and we looked at everything and the Nazi flags were hanging and the tanks were going over the bridge. The people were standing in rows next to the street on both side of the street. It was an occupation.

They didn’t shoot anything, there was no shooting. Soon afterwards, people started disappearing out of their houses. People were saying that in the night the SS, the secret police, they came and they took this person and this person and they disappeared and never came back. Things like that happened in [inaudible 00:18:46].

**Kate:** Did things change in school during that time?

**Agathe:** They told the children that they have to tell on the parents.

**Kate:** The …

**Agathe:** They wanted to know who comes into the house and who goes out, what the parents are reading. What the parents say probably about the invasion and all these things.

**Kate:** The children were expected to come in and tell that?

**Agathe:** I guess they were interrogated, at that time I wasn’t in school anymore only the younger ones they were in school. They had to say, “Hail Hitler”

**Kate:** Then apparently there were three offers that this family [inaudible 00:19:35].

**Agathe:** Yeah there was that, talking about the music. This is correct, they offered my father to be the commander of a submarine again and he refused. Then my brother was offered a position in the hospital as a head doctor and he hadn’t even his internship yet. He wasn’t going to serve under Hitler anyway, so he refused.

Then they asked us to sing for Hitler’s birthday in the music radio and we refused that. Then of course we knew the list.

**Kate:** It was a unanimous family decision that you would leave?

**Agathe:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Once that decision was made …

**Agathe:** Everything went fast. All we could do is pack a bag that we could carry and a [inaudible 00:20:33] sack with items that we needed on the trip.

We knew we had a contract for America, to sing in the United States for 14 concerts. The only way that we could get there is to get out of the country and stay somewhere. We went to Italy, northern Italy that used to be a German speaking area because before the First World War it belonged to Austria and then it was given to Italy.

**Kate:** You were able to speak?

**Agathe:** There was no problem there. Then Nazis couldn’t touch us anymore, we were in other territory.

**Kate:** Just to backtrack a little, do you remember anything you packed to take with you when you knew you were leaving?

**Agathe:** Just our clothes and maybe something to write letters with. We could hardly take anything along.

**Kate:** Do you remember the journey from leaving your house outside of Salzburg?

**Agathe:** Yeah we went to the train station was across from our house, there was a train station. We got into the train and went to Italy. We just sat in the compartments and waited till we got there.

**Kate:** How long were you there, in Italy?

**Agathe:** Only the summer, during the summer. I’m not sure when we left but we must have left in the beginning of the summer like in June or so. Then we stayed there until it was time to come to the United States to give the concerts. Usually the concert season starts the beginning of October.

Charlie Wagner was our manager who engaged us. He had prepared that we could stay in the Wellington hotel in New York when we arrived.

**Kate:** He was travelling with you?

**Agathe:** No. He only came to Salzburg when we sung a concert in the Academy of Music in [inaudible 00:23:07]. He came to our house and he engaged us for 14 concerts in the United States and that was the year before.

**Kate:** You didn’t really encounter difficulties getting out of the country?

**Agathe:** No, but at the same time it was the last minute that we could get out because then they closed the borders. Many people left in that time before they closed the borders especially the Jewish people, the doctors, lawyers, teachers or professors over there. Anybody who was Jewish and was able to find a place somewhere else left.

**Kate:** I understand that at that time the Nazis were encouraging people to leave?

**Agathe:** I don’t know.

**Kate:** This was 1938 and you came for the fall season …

**Agathe:** Fall of 1938 yes.

**Kate:** To sing in the United States?

**Agathe:** Yeah.

**Kate:** After those 14 concerts then what did the family do?

**Agathe:** Then we had to go back. We stayed over Christmas time. Johannes, our youngest boy, was born in January. We rented a house in German town, Pennsylvania over the Christmas holidays when there weren’t any concerts to sing. Then we had to go back, we sung our 14 concerts before Christmas and then we had to go back.

**Kate:** How did everyone feel about that, going back?

**Agathe:** We didn’t like it but we had to do it, there was no other.

**Kate:** There wasn’t the idea that you might just simply stay in the United States?

**Agathe:** No we couldn’t stay. Our visa was gone, our working permit expired so we had to go back. We went back and we split up in three different places. All the girls and one of my brothers, we went back into Austria and stayed with relatives. My oldest brother and our conductor Franz Wasner, they went to France. There’s a border country between France and Germany that was always once in Germany once to -They stayed there, it was French at that time.

My father, my step mother and Johannes, the little baby, they went back to the [inaudible 00:26:10] my father couldn’t go in anymore and nor did my stepmother dare to go back. They went back to this little [inaudible 00:26:17] village and stayed there.

Then we decided we’re all going to meet again in October or late September something, in Amsterdam. Then we knew we could get another contract, we had another contract for the United States, but we had to be all in the same place. We met in Amsterdam.

**Kate:** The first time when you went through, did you go through Ellis Island that first time?

**Agathe:** No.

**Kate:** Because you just had a visa to do the singing?

**Agathe:** Yeah. The first time the war wasn’t in progress, although Hitler took Austria but he hadn’t done anything else. The second time when we came, there was already the invasion of Poland, of Czechoslovakia. There were many refugees who wanted to come into the United States and stay there.

When we arrived in New York, [inaudible 00:27:35] asked my stepmother and she said, “Yes, surely we’d love to stay.” One of the customs officers heard it and he was suspicious. He thought that we were going to sneak into the United States and remain there without permission, illegally. He whisked us off to Ellis Island. That was the reason why we went there.

**Kate:** What happened? What was the experience there?

**Agathe:** We had to go there. They had a small vessel of some kind, we had to go from our boat to the …

**Kate:** It was like a ferry probably that took you to Ellis Island.

**Agathe:** I don’t know what it was, it was a boat, it was not very big and they took us to Ellis Island.

**Kate:** Do you remember?

**Agathe:** Yeah, of course I remember everything.

**Kate:** Tell me everything you can remember about Ellis Island.

**Agathe:** We got there and then we had to sign our names, you know how you do even like in a hotel but we signed our names. Then they gave us rooms.

It must have been towards the evening because they gave us a room to sleep in. The ladies were sleeping in one room with the baby and then the men had to sleep with as many men as they were there in another place.

They were giving us permission to turn out the light because we had the baby. In the men’s room, in the men’s dormitory they were never allowed to turn off the light because they were afraid people would go in the night to try to leave.

Although it was almost impossible to leave this island, it was surrounded by a big fence and it was in the middle of nowhere and the water all around, how could you escape really? They did it anyway. Then the next day we got food, we got breakfast and …

**Kate:** How was your treatment? How were people …

**Agathe:** They were very matter of fact and they, like in a prison, they counted every person, every time we moved from one place to the other they said, “One, two, three and so on.” They counted us, to make sure that everybody is there. My father didn’t like that especially that treatment.

**Kate:** The women and the baby, you had a room all to yourselves?

**Agathe:** Yeah, we filled the dormitory because we were so many.

**Kate:** Do you remember anything about the food?

**Agathe:** I remember it was bad, I think it was adequate, let’s say. There was a whole group of Chinese boys, teenagers, and they had been there already for three years. They could not go back to China and they could not get into the United States so they were held in Ellis Island.

There was a dining room and we were on one table we saw them on the other table. They had got rice, they put pepper and salt on the rice and somebody told us they had been there for three years.

Some people get sent back, but they cannot go back into their own country. Then they come back to this country, they can’t go to United States, they go back and forth on the ocean maybe two, three, 10 times.

**Kate:** Were there many people there, roughly? How many people were there when you were there?

**Agathe:** There were several groups and they had an enormous hall, a big hall, like the hall in a train station. It’s all up to the top and that’s where that window is still made the sketch of.

**Kate:** The sketch you made in your file.

**Agathe:** There were little groups there and they were all sitting together here and there. They were just sitting there and we saw some Eastern group and they were doing each other’s hair, perfectly quiet, no noise or anything.

I remember saying to my stepmother, “Why don’t we sing? Why don’t we do our rehearsals here?” She was humiliated and she thought our whole career is down the drain now because we were sitting in a jail.

**Kate:** It wasn’t like in the early days of immigration at Ellis Island where there was thousands of people and it wasn’t at that time?

**Agathe:** At that time, I can only tell you the hall, it was a very big hall and there were several groups like us, we were a group, we were a lot of people.

They were all stuck together as a group in a little bunch and they waited for the next meal. [Inaudible 00:33:02] how they are being processed out over there. We started singing. Immediately the whole atmosphere lifted up and people got a little bit happier.

Somehow my parents got in touch with the manager that was sitting in Ellis Island. Then he sent photographers for the publicity and he told us that, “Never mind, this is very good publicity, don’t worry about it.” We stopped worrying.

My oldest brother was allowed to go on land and Maria and I we were talking, I don’t remember why he was allowed to go. He was Austrian citizen and we were all Italian citizens. That was because of the arrangement after the First World War.

He went to Philadelphia and got in touch with the archbishop of Philadelphia who heard us sing the year before. He told him that we needed somebody to vouch for us so that we can come on land. He did. Then after four days we were allowed to go, to leave there.

**Kate:** You were held for four days until it was the archbishop who vouched for you?

**Agathe:** Yeah. They don’t believe anything that you say, because they automatically think you’re lying just to get out. Even if you tell the truth, how can they know? These custom officers they have the power to keep you there or to let you go. They didn’t treat us badly at all, but we just had to stay there.

**Kate:** Yeah, it was imprisonment.

**Agathe:** Yeah.

**Kate:** When you were released then where did you go?

**Agathe:** We went to the hotel Wellington where our rooms were arranged for us. Then we went on tour. The manager hired a bus for us and then we started the concert tour. 40 concerts were arranged for us and we sung those.

During that time, even during the time when we were still in Europe, Hitler invaded Poland and Czechoslovakia as I told you. Because of this condition, because it was war, the people who came even if they did not have a visitor visa or anything. Who were in the United States, they did not have to go back to their own country, they were allowed to stay.

**Kate:** Did you stay longer because …?

**Agathe:** After these 40 concerts, a very nice lawyer who was musical and who had heard us in Philadelphia, in a concert, he offered us a home that belonged to him that he didn’t use. We could stay there in the off season when we didn’t have any concerts.

For three years in the summer we lived in Merion, Pennsylvania in this little house that he gave us to stay in. From then on, after the second year with Charlie Wagner, then we changed management and the Columbia management took us on. They arranged concerts from then on, more than 100 concerts every year. That’s until 1956.

**Kate:** You did go back after those … ?

**Agathe:** Yes, after the first year, in 1939.

**Kate:** Where did you stay?

**Agathe:** I just told you, we went into different places. The girls went to relatives. Father Wasner and my oldest brother went to, I think it was [inaudible 00:37:44] Lorraine, anyway into French area. My father went back to Italy with my stepmother and the baby.

**Kate:** When you came over that next time, to the United States, did you have any brush with Ellis Island?

**Agathe:** The second time was when we went to Ellis Island, not the first time.

**Kate:** It wasn’t the first time, it was the second.

**Agathe:** Yeah I think I told you that.

**Kate:** Its 1939 then?

**Agathe:** In 1939 yes.

**Kate:** You were really doing touring around the United States [inaudible 00:38:27]?

**Agathe:** Until 1956.

**Kate:** What was your feeling about how your life was different in the United States than it had been up till that time? I guess you were …

**Agathe:** It was a whole different life because we were traveling all the time, everything was new and different, was interesting. People were very kind to us, they liked our concerts and they invited us to their homes, they gave us parties. We could see that the Americans were very hospitable.

**Kate:** Why was it that you stopped in 1956?

**Agathe:** Because we were worn out.

**Kate:** When did the family settle in Stowe?

**Agathe:** We bought a place in 1942. There was a house there that we could not live in, but we liked the situation up in the mountain. We liked the whole area and we wanted to be in the Vermont. We bought it and we thought, you can always build a house but you cannot make a view or anything about that. We started to build the house.

The house fell down in a blizzard and we had to clean away all the debris from the house. Then a friend, who was an architect, designed a new house for us.

Then we started building, it was in the middle of the war and you had to have permission for every brick and every piece of wood that you used. You could only build on something, fortunately a little bit of the house remained standing, so we could build on that.

**Kate:** Did the whole family live here at that time?

**Agathe:** Yeah. Then my older brothers they were inducted into the army and they went over to the ski troops. They served in the army until the war was over.

**Kate:** How do you consider yourself when you think of yourself as American and Austrian, do you feel more of one or the other?

**Agathe:** I live here, I like it here. I don’t think in national terms anymore. I left Austria that was all right. It’s a new country, I like it here a lot, I learned to live here. I don’t think I would want to go back to Austria.

**Kate:** Because you’ve been here so long?

**Agathe:** Yeah. I’m glad to be here, that’s all I can say.

**Kate:** You created a little bit of Austria here too?

**Agathe:** That was my stepmother’s doing mostly. I think she was more homesick than I ever was. I’m only one of so many, I don’t know how the others felt really.

**Kate:** Would you say that you were closest to any particular family member? One of the children or the parents?

**Agathe:** Not at that time, no, we were just all together. We were so busy, traveling and giving concerts is hard work, even if you only sit in the bus. We had to travel during the day and then in the evening we have the concerts and in the morning we had to leave and go from there.

Towards the end of the tour we wished when can we stop singing? Because it was getting very, I wouldn’t say boring, but it’s always the same. We were in our best years in those days and we couldn’t do anything but sit in the bus during the seasons. Because we had this place here, then we came and we liked to do the work here and build up our new home. That was a relief.

**Kate:** Did all of your family members continue on with the singing tours or did some of them stop?

**Agathe:** One of my sisters got married and then my brother got married, but he kept on going with us.

**Kate:** What would you say …?

**Agathe:** My oldest brother started medicine, he wanted to finish his studies so he stepped out. Then we had to take other people to supplement the voices. Then it got a little bit difficult because we had to pay them and we didn’t make a lot of money with our concerts anyway. It became almost impossible to keep on.

**Kate:** You must have chosen not to make a lot of money with your concerts?

**Agathe:** We could not choose anything because the management arranged this. They had set fees for choirs and they have set fees for solos and we had to take what we got.

**Kate:** Do you have any sense of how it affected you as far as coming to this country as a young woman in [inaudible 00:44:52]?

**Agathe:** In the beginning, we compared everything here, what we saw, and we wondered about a lot of things.

**Kate:** Can you think of any of the things that … ?

**Agathe:** Especially what we saw on the highways, there was trees that were dead they were lying around. They were apple trees where the apples fell down under the trees and nobody picked them up. We couldn’t understand that.

In Europe this doesn’t exist, every apple is big value and every piece of wood is being used for firewood or something, here long stretches. We didn’t realize how big that country was and that you just can’t keep it clean like Europe where it is densely populated and everything is already well organized.

**Kate:** Of course you got to see how big this country really is.

**Agathe:** Yeah, of course because we drove through it. It was interesting because we saw many things that we didn’t have in Europe. Especially in the south, there’s cypresses in the swamps, the moss that came down from the trees. That was all very intriguing. It was very interesting.

**Kate:** What effect do you think it had on you personally, the fact that you immigrated as a young woman?

**Agathe:** I didn’t have time to think about anything expect what we had to do really. It was just the fact that we took it as a fact, this is our life. It didn’t make me sad or it didn’t make me happy, all we could do is do what we had to do and do it as well as we could.

**Kate:** What would you say has given you satisfaction or that you feel proud of having done?

**Agathe:** We didn’t think in those terms. We felt that we were serving God because we noticed that people would tell us, this was our best Christmas, our Christmas performance was our Christmas. We sang many sacred songs, we sang musicals, we sang folks songs.

At Christmas, we had a whole Christmas program with Christmas tree and everything. People were very touched with that. We only found out, little by little, that this is what God has given us a gift. We were conscious about that and we did the best we could.

**Kate:** What part did religion play in your life and in your family?

**Agathe:** It was part of our life, we didn’t even think about it we just grew up that way. We knew God and we knew the Lord Jesus, we were believers in every way. We were Catholic, but that was one thing where we were glad to leave. Because we saw that Hitler was an antichrist and we knew that our religion was in danger.

**Kate:** It was religion and I suspect also your country …

**Agathe:** It was a necessity. We felt that we were led by God to leave our country and we were given this gift and all of that was possible. A family where every member is musical, every member is willing to sing, every member has a different type of voice so that we all blended together.

That is something very unusual. I think a lot of people recognized that. We were very conscious of being guided by God and we sort His guidance because we didn’t know how we [inaudible 00:49:15], everything was falling apart.

**Kate:** Is there anything else you can think of that pertains to this whole growing up in Austria and coming here and being part of the Von Trapp Family and living your life here?

**Agathe:** I don’t know. It was just like in every other family, one day you have to say, “I got to do something on my own.” After we finished singing, I joined this nice lady that you just met.

She’s a teacher, she’s an absolutely wonderful teacher. We decided we’re going to make a kindergarten, we started a kindergarten. She was able to do the teaching and I said I will do everything else, I will keep house and I will do the meals and whatever is necessary to keep our school running.

**Kate:** You do that in Baltimore?

**Agathe:** First we had a kindergarten up here in a little house across the valley. After two years, then we saw that we couldn’t make a living here and there weren’t enough children. They [inaudible 00:50:39] kindergarten into the public school. There was no possibility for us to keep on going here.

[Inaudible 00:50:46], a sister in the vicinity of Baltimore we went to visit her. Then through a friend, we got in touch with a priest who just started a new elementary school. We went to see him and he immediately said, “Yes, I will [inaudible 00:51:11]”

We got in touch with him and we kept in touch with him. He built us a house, he remodeled a house that was on the parish grounds. He added a kindergarten to it with donations and voluntary helpers so that we can start there.

That was on the 4th of September 1958, we started our kindergarten there in 58. We had it for 37 years. Now we are retired.

**Kate:** That’s wonderful. How do you like this phase of your life?

**Agathe:** I like it a lot. I feel now I’m a bird free.

**Kate:** That’s good. That’s quite something. You had a kindergarten for 37 years?

**Agathe:** Yeah, two years here and then 35 years in Clinton, Maryland.

**Kate:** I think maybe this is a good place to stop. I want to thank you so much.

**Agathe:** Yeah, I think it is a good place to stop. Are you going to put this whole thing into the …

**Kate:** We usually just take the tape as it is and we make it into a standard cassette tape. We send a copy to you of the tape and a copy goes into the Oral History Library at Ellis Island.

**Agathe:** You interview everybody like that?

**Kate:** Everyone we can find who came through Ellis Island.

**Agathe:** Yeah, because it tells a story?

**Kate:** Yes it does. It tells it from the people who lived it.

**Agathe:** It’s very nice. I think I like that.

**Kate:** I’m very happy that you’re a part of this whole thing.

**Agathe:** Thank you.

**Kate:** Thank you.