

Interview with Elisabeth Wilk

Hello Mrs Wilk. First of all I want to thank you for your agreement to give us an interview. Please tell us, at first, something about yourself!

Wilk: Hello. My name is Elisabeth Wilk. I'm German but originally I come from Poland, near Warsaw. I was born there on 15th September 1956.

When did you come to Germany?

Wilk: At the beginning of 1960 we left Poland and moved to Hamburg.

And why did you leave your native country? Were there any special reasons for leaving?

Wilk: Of course. To cut a long story short: we left because my father got a better place of employment. In addition to that, we had relatives in Germany. So it wasn't very hard for my parents to leave our country, especially for my father as a native German it wasn't a problem.

Your father was German? So why did you live in Poland before?

Wilk: As far as I know he left at that time because of employment, but don't ask me about the details. I don't know them precisely. That's what he has been telling me all the years. There he got to know my mother and in 1949 they married. After the marriage they stayed in Poland first, where we, both of my brothers and sisters and I, were born. We also grew up in Poland till my father received a job proposition in Germany and that was the reason for going back to Germany.

Do you remember your first impressions when you came to Germany?

Wilk: I don't remember a lot, because I was only three years old. But what I can bring back to mind is that I was really missing my friends. There were some kids from the neighborhood that I played with. My mother told me that at the beginning I was really petulant because I wanted to see my friends. So therefore I think my first impressions weren't very good. But from my point of view now and from my situation today I definitely would say that it was a good decision to move to Germany.

Why do you think that your decision was good?

Wilk: I simply think that my brothers and sisters and I had better chances for our futures. And of course our financial situation was better than before because of my father's job. Moreover we have got family in Germany and in Poland. So all in all I think that the decision to move to Germany was good.

Did you experience any problems as an immigrant?

Wilk: No, as far as I know I didn't. Because of the fact that my father was German it wasn't a problem for us to get a German passport. We also had no problem to move into our new

apartment after members of our family that live in Germany had already prepared everything for us. And as far as I know from tales there were no complications with our immigration.

Did you miss Poland after you left, apart from the fact that you missed your friends?

Wilk: We children only missed Poland because of our friends. My father was very glad to be back in Germany. Of course there were some friends from Poland he would have been happy to hold the contact to. I think my mother was the one who was hurt the most. She had never been anywhere else than in Poland. But she never blamed anybody although she had to leave her family and had to start from the beginning. Later she found an employment as a shop assistant. From that point I think she neither didn't want to go back.

Was it hard for you to find new friends and to integrate?

Wilk: No. For us children it was very simple. Especially for my little sister who was born here in 1961 it was no problem because she was already born in the "German culture". My other brothers and sisters and I were also already speaking German because of the fact that we were educated bilingually. And that was another point where my mother was in the worst situation. She didn't speak German very well, but after a short time she learned to speak German and also got familiar with the new "culture".

Did you have problems with prejudices?

Wilk: I have never experienced anything like that. Maybe because some people don't even know that I come from Poland because I speak better German than Polish. But I remember an incident with my sister. In the beginning she spoke a lot of Polish with my brother, so they were insulted by another girl. But that was not anything grave.

Do you live here more than a German or more than a Polish person?

Wilk: German! I see myself as a German. We even lived like Germans in Poland. I would never go back to Poland. Apart from some relatives, I have no connection to that country. My sisters see it in the same way and even my mother doesn't want to go back.

Thanks for the interview.

Interview by Jasmina Tews

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