

THE TIES THAT BIND

55 min., 1984

In making *The Ties That Bind*, I didn't intend to portray all Germans, or all German women, nor did I propose to explain the origins of Nazism or the war. The film began as a personal investigation of my own mother's life before, during and after the war, primarily from the ages 10 to 28. Since the war has engendered such a wide range of material, which often takes a broad, "objective" view of the events, I was interested in taking a more subjective, "limited" approach by working within the confines of a single life. I would never presume objectivity when working with material about my own mother, although I tried hard to maintain a healthy scepticism throughout the project.

From the outset, I studied a lot of material about Nazi and pre-Nazi Germany. Despite being 75% German-American (my paternal grandfather was also German) and learning

quite generally about the war in school and in the mass media, I was surprised at how little I knew of the details. I also understand now that my own shame at the legacy of the Germans kept me from finding out more about the war when I was younger. The more I learn, the more questions arise; making this film is just the beginning of a long process of uncovering German history for myself.

Memory is a tricky beast, and moreso when one is forced by a persistent daughter to recall an experience as traumatic as a war (and one as fraught with guilt and silence as this war). I learned a new patience in talking with my mother, when I realized that the truth sometimes comes out very slowly, in small batches, and that doesn't make it less of a truth. I also did a lot of fact-checking with my father, who had heard about the same events soon after they occurred. It made me



The Ties that Bind, 1984.
(Credit: Pete Friedrich)

Su Friedrich and her mother Lore

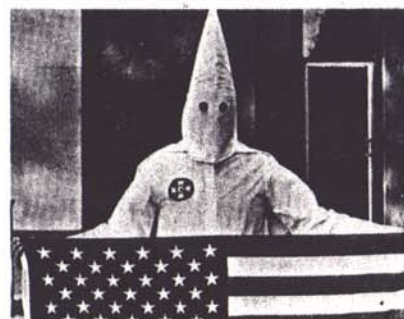


Paul and Lore Friedrich, January 1950

extremely uncomfortable to behave as if my mother was lying, but then his accounts proved to me that she was making every effort to present the material honestly, as best she remembered it. However, when it was necessary for me to contradict her version of (public, not private) history, I did; the film is meant as a dialogue.

I restricted my found footage of Germany to that of Ulm, which I got at the Ulm City Archive in 1982. Even though nothing in the images distinguishes them as shots of Ulm, it was crucial that they be of her hometown rather than just "images of war". For example, the shot of the Nazi banner strung across a road forced me to admit the Nazi presence in her life more than had any of the usual propaganda footage that one sees in standard documentaries. I shot all the footage of contemporary Germany (of Dachau, the Berlin Wall, etc) because I didn't want to depend on anyone else's vision of those sites.

I don't care for documentary films which are full of "talking heads", so I recorded the



From Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland
catalogue of "Alles und Noch Viel Mehr", 1985