

DP-13/STEENBEKE

DP-13  
HENRY STEENBEKE  
BIRTHDATE: 1894  
INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 8, 1989  
RUNNING TIME: 45:00  
INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT  
RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA  
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1989  
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 4/1995  
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

BELGIUM, 1904  
AGE 10  
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mr. Steenbeke's daughter, Frances Palmer was also present during the interview and occasionally interjects with information.  
PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., Director of Oral History, 3/18/1995.

DALLETT: Okay, I think we're ready to begin, then. This is the beginning of interview number [DP-13].

STEENBEKE: Ooh!

DALLETT: And, uh, my name is Nancy Dallett. And I'm here with..

STEENBEKE: What was it?

DALLETT: Dallett.

STEENBEKE: Dallett?

DALLETT: Dallett.

STEENBEKE: Uh, what kind of name is that? French?

DALLETT: It's Russian.

STEENBEKE: Oh, Russian.

DALLETT: My grandfather, he shortened it from I'm not sure what. As I say, I'm Nancy Dallett, and I'm talking with Mr. Henry...

STEENBEKE: Steenbeke.

DALLETT: Steenbeke. And I'm at Mr. Steenbeke's home in Los Altos, California. Today is, let's see, it's Saturday, April 8, 1989, and we are about to begin this interview number [DP-13] for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Let's start back at the beginning of your story, and could you tell me where and when yo were born.

STEENBEKE: Oh, I can't remember when I was born. January, oh, I

can't remember that. Frances knows. You can ask.

DALLETT: Okay. But the year you know.

STEENBEKE: Yeah. Frances knows the year. I know, what am I now, uh, a hundred? Yeah. A hundred. That's right.

DALLETT: And we're in 1989. So you were born in...

STEENBEKE: Brussels.

DALLETT: In Brussels.

STEENBEKE: In New York.

DALLETT: You were born in Brussels.

STEENBEKE: Brussels, New York.

DALLETT: In 1888, 1889.

STEENBEKE: What was that? 1987, I think. Say now...

DALLETT: We'll check. We'll check with your daughter.

STEENBEKE: Oh, she'll know. My chauffeur's license would tell

that. I've got them with me.

DALLETT: Oh, it's okay. Tell me some of your first memories of where you came from.

STEENBEKE: I come from Belgium. Brussels, Belgium. And my mother and father had first a small cafe, you know, a small eating place. then they had a bake place, eating salon, you know. They made it that you can eat your food, you know, eat and take. My father was a baker and my mother never worked anyplace. We always visited my father, naturally, and baked. We had a baker upstairs and the dining room, you know, after a long time, we made a dining room out of it, out of the baker.

DALLETT: So people would come in...

STEENBEKE: And buy their goods and have something to eat while it was baked. (a telephone rings) Oh, we had two or three waitresses. I mean, yeah, waitresses. Oh, my father and mother, boy, they were all business, gee. Always in the business. From a baker, to a big lunch where, you know, big, in Brussels, Belgium.

DALLETT: Do you remember some of the baked goods? Do you

remember some of the things that they made and sold in that bakery?

STEENBEKE: Oh, it was a pastry baker. Oh, he sold, oh, this was, the people came from the next town to buy the goods in our bakery.

DALLETT: Was it bread and sweet, sweet pastries?

STEENBEKE: Oh, sweet cake, oh, pies, oh. Out of this world, I've never seen anything like it, here either. But my father was some baker. Pastry and bread and butter. We never wanted for anything, believe me.

DALLETT: Can you remember, or can you describe maybe just one of the pastries that you remember, that your father made?

STEENBEKE: Pate froid. Hotcake. Pate froid. In French, you know. Pate froid.

DALLETT: And what was, what was the pate froid like?

STEENBEKE: My father made a specialty of it and we had, he helped a big baker, uh, he was in the bakery

business, the lunchroom, boy, you really (?). Boy, they made some business.

PALMER: There's an amusing story about his Uncle Henry who used to, down in the cellar they had these big ovens, and he would put the white flour on his face and scare the kids. And he's told us about that. Also he spent a lot of time at his grandparents farm because he was, two younger boys, he and his brother. And his other brother had to go back from Ellis Island because he had gingivitis, and he didn't come back till he was nineteen years old.

DALLETT: Okay. So pate froid was one of his specialties.

STEENBEKE: Pate froid.

DALLETT: You've never had that here.

STEENBEKE: That's hotcake, froid is hot, pate is, you know, pastry.

DALLETT: And what was the shape of it? How was it shaped?

STEENBEKE: It was round, and all, this, with kind of, stuff on

it, everything. My father was some baker. Boy, oh, boy. We had a big place, then we made a lunchroom out of it. Bigger still. We all ordered, each time, in Brussels, Belgium.

DALLETT: And did you begin to work in the bakery as a young boy?

STEENBEKE: Naturally, with my father.

DALLETT: Did you work there?

STEENBEKE: I was there. I worked with him.

DALLETT: You worked with him.

STEENBEKE: You know, what help it does. My father put it in and I'd take them, everything. I was his helper with another, with another man. You know, two of them. We had a big place in Brussels, Belgium. What a lunchroom.

DALLETT: And where did you live? Did you live near the bakery?

STEENBEKE: In Belgium. Yeah, yeah. Lived right, the baker

downstairs and we lived upstairs. We never had to go to the bakery. We were at the bakery. He wa some businessman, my father, you know, and my mother. My mother was such a career header. She was smart, a smart cookie.

DALLETT: So she helped your father, together they ran this business.

STEENBEKE: Oh, yeah. They never were away from one another. My father said to my mother, all right. My mother said to my father it's also all right. They, I never seen them argue about anything, you know, except business, you know. "I don't want that now, I want the other stuff." You know, like that. But I mean, arguing, no. They were the happiest couple.

DALLETT: How many children were there in the family?

STEENBEKE: There was five.

DALLETT: And where did you fit in in terms of age? Were you the oldest boy?

STEENBEKE: No, no. I was the next to the oldest. We had two girls, I think. Gabrielle, and Valentine. Valentine

was the oldest, Valentine, Gabrielle, oh, and Theresa, Theresa. Three girls and a boy. And a boy...

DALLETT: Your brother was the other boy? What was his name?

STEENBEKE: Henry, mine was, and his was Jack. We had a big business. Oh, my mother and father. Phew. Then they had a big lunchroom. Boy was that big.

DALLETT: And do you remember the period in time when your parents began to make plans to come to this country?

STEENBEKE: No, I, I was about ten years old. It wasn't much that I'd remember. They were doing all the business. They didn't ask me anything.

DALLETT: Did they tell you why they were coming to this country?

STEENBEKE: For business. He opened a store right away, as soon as he got here. My father was a good baker, you know, a prime baker. He could make anything. But, of course, he had two or three men working for him, you know.

DALLETT: Had any of his brothers or sisters come to this country, or was he the first in his family to come here?

STEENBEKE: Uh, Gabrielle came here, my sister. She made out good, too. They both, they were never poor anyway.

DALLETT: And do you remember when you left and came to this country? Do you remember making the trip or leaving home?

STEENBEKE: Oh, you can't forget that. You can't forget that. Oh, getting ready, oh, gee we were going to (?) and we were going to America. America! Ooh, we were going to America. Telling all our friends, you know. (he laughs) That was something else.

DALLETT: Were you sorry to leave your friends, though?

STEENBEKE: No, went, you know, and we, my mother's very good at making friends. She was in the bakery from when she was born. We had a big place in Brussels, a big place. The bakery, they made a big lunchroom and, you know, a big building, you know for a lunchroom. Did that thing go! Bakery lunch.

DALLETT: Was there a name for the bakery?

STEENBEKE: Steenbeke Bakery. They put a name out, and they advertised. Oh, they, my parents were all business.

DALLETT: So they wanted to come to this country and open a business here.

STEENBEKE: Yeah, that's what my mother, my mother was the main thing, you know. She was the one who'd run everything, and she'd run everything. My father would just get up, he was a baker, you know, a baker. He'd just say, well, you want to do that, that's all up to you, and he got everything up to my mother. My mother was the boss.

DALLETT: So your mother ran the business and your father did the baking.

STEENBEKE: That's it. All he was into was his bakery. That, that bread is good, and the bread was out. He didn't worry a thing about the business. Of course, a lot of things that he had together that we would never know, you know, in business. But she was the business.

DALLETT: So she said, okay, we're going to have our bakery in America now. And he...

STEENBEKE: Yeah, yeah. She's the one that said, "Let's go."

DALLETT: Do you remember when you left?

STEENBEKE: Oh, I was only a kid. I was about ten, eleven, around there.

DALLETT: She, she had you pack up your things?

STEENBEKE: They had done all that. They didn't have, I never done anything, you know, like that. I, everything was fixed. My mother was on them. She...

DALLETT: You were in, you were in school as a young boy, then?

STEENBEKE: Yeah, yeah. And she's still the same now. She runs everything now, too. Now (?). She runs everything.

DALLETT: Frances, your daughter?

STEENBEKE: She's the boss. (Mrs. Palmer speaks off mike) What did she say? Flemish. French, wasn't it.

PALMER: Yeah, remember?

STEENBEKE: French and Flemant, Flemish. (?) in French.

PALMER: That little song about Tabac, "J'ai de la tabac." Is that in, is that French or is that Flemish?

STEENBEKE: That's in French. (he sings in French) I got good, uh, (?), you know...

PALMER: Do it for us.

STEENBEKE: (he sings in French) You can't have any.

PALMER: (she translates his song) I have good tobacco in my little tobacco pouch, but you're not going to get any.

STEENBEKE: In French, not in Flemish.

PALMER: And you spent a lot of time with your grandmother on the farm. And you told me yesterday that you had two horses and two tractors, and they were vegetable farmers. And that, where was the house and where was

the farm?

STEENBEKE: Turnhout.

PALMER: Yeah, Turnhout, but the village was...

STEENBEKE: In Brussels.

PALMER: No, not, that's where the bakery was. The village where your grandparents, you said, all the people lived together in a little village, and then when they went out to...

STEENBEKE: Oostende?

PALMER: They went out to do their farming, they went a little distance to go to the farm.

STEENBEKE: One was Oostende, and the other was...

PALMER: Oostende, and Turnhout.

STEENBEKE: Oostende, Turnhout, that's where my grandmother lived.

PALMER: And I asked if there was a little church there.

STEENBEKE: Yeah. There was a church.

PALMER: And what did you do at the church?

STEENBEKE: An altar boy. I was in, in both places an altar boy.

PALMER: Uh-huh. In New York and also in....Did you, how did you feel about having to leave your grandmother and your brother?

STEENBEKE: Everything went the way my mother fixed things. She said this, we'd go, they don't ask me, they just went and we never said a word.

PALMER: When you, but you may have felt bad about not having your brother stay with you. What do you think?

STEENBEKE: Yeah, but he couldn't.

PALMER: He couldn't, yeah. So he had to go back on the boat? Did someone go back with him?

STEENBEKE: He still went to the betting place, that's where the races were. Boy, he was some gambler.

DALLETT: So he was a baker and a horse race lover.

STEENBEKE: Yeah, he was a horse race lover. He could pick a horse to race, to win the race, boy. And my mother took it, of his work, all of his work at the bakery, boom, the racetrack.

DALLETT: Did he take you with him sometime?

STEENBEKE: No. I wouldn't go. I was a kid. I never went to the races with him. I went with my mother and father. (he shows a photograph) That's my ma and pa. She's some heavy woman. She was a strong woman. We had everything, a big bakery we had.

PALMER: In 1949 it was still operating in Brussels.

STEENBEKE: Is that, is it still open?

PALMER: No, not now, but...

STEENBEKE: She was the boss.

DALLETT: Your mother was the boss and she said, "We're going

to America."

STEENBEKE: To America, and we went to America. My father was the worker, right on time. but the only trouble with him, he went to the racetracks, as soon as he was done in the bakery, racetrack. Boy, he had a bad habit, but we never got broke.

DALLETT: So did you all come over together?

STEENBEKE: Yeah.

DALLETT: You came together. Do you remember the trip at all?

STEENBEKE: No, it's too long. I don't remember. My mother and five kids.

DALLETT: Your mother, your father, and five kids?

STEENBEKE: Me, Kevin, Frances...

DALLETT: Theresa.

STEENBEKE: Tessie. We called her Tessie. That's Theresa.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. Do you have any memory at all of that trip,  
or...

STEENBEKE: It's too long.

PALMER: Getting to the boat, or being on the boat?

STEENBEKE: Oh, it was all excitement, right. Oh, we're going to  
America, we're going to America! Oh, gee wiz. I was  
only a kid.

DALLETT: How old were you?

STEENBEKE: About ten.

DALLETT: Ten. Do you remember when you, when you arrived in  
New York?

STEENBEKE: No, I can't.

DALLETT: Or when you came through Ellis Island?

STEENBEKE: That all goes in one day. Ellis Island, when you're  
going, when you go past that, when you go out of New  
York. We had a New York City a big bakery and

lunchroom. Boy, what a big place we made. First they had a small baker, then they made a big, big lunchroom. Boy, what a big lunchroom they had.

DALLETT: This was in New York?

STEENBEKE: New York City.

DALLETT: In the city. Do you remember where?

STEENBEKE: Wooster Street. That's where we lived. Wooster Street.

DALLETT: Wooster Street. And he made the same kind of bread and pastry that he had in Brussels.

STEENBEKE: Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: And he made a business of it.

STEENBEKE: My mother and father were always in business. First the small bakery, then the big bakery, then the lunchroom. They had made a lunchroom to it, you know. Boy, did that lunchroom make money. And the name was there, Steenbeke Bakeries. But they lived a nice life, boy. And never, never had to do anything

funny or fake. My father was a good worker.

DALLETT: Do you remember, when you came through Ellis Island, did your family all stay together?

STEENBEKE: Of course.

DALLETT: The five of you and your parents.

STEENBEKE: We always travelled together.

DALLETT: Were you detained at all on Ellis Island, do you know?

STEENBEKE: Just to go through, you know, through the things, just like, uh, what do yo call it, to a subway, in the subway, you know, you pay it there. But we went through everything.

DALLETT: Was there, was there a problem with your brother, Jack?

STEENBEKE: He didn't come with us first, you know. Then we sent for him.

DALLETT: Oh, I see.

STEENBEKE: I don't know why, the reason. I think there was something wrong with him. You know, not, just a cold or something. I know we had to leave him behind.

DALLETT: You left your one brother behind.

STEENBEKE: Yeah. But he came, you know, later on, and whatever he had, it was all right. He couldn't pass the, you know, the immigration people. He had some kind of cold or something. They wouldn't believe it was a cold, but then they didn't want to believe it.

DALLETT: Now, was this the immigration people in Brussels, or in America?

STEENBEKE: In Brussels.

DALLETT: Okay. So he was left there. And then how many years, how much later did he come?

STEENBEKE: Oh, not much later, about a year, that's all. No, less than a year.

DALLETT: And then he came through Ellis Island?

STEENBEKE: Through ellis Island. He had something the matter with his heart, or something the matter with him in his stomach that they wouldn't let him, they wouldn't pass him as perfect. You had to be perfect.

DALLETT: Now you all, you all spoke, your family...

STEENBEKE: French.

DALLETT: French.

STEENBEKE: Flemish.

DALLETT: And when you came to this country?

STEENBEKE: English.

DALLETT: How did you, how did you learn your English?

STEENBEKE: How did we learn? In the bakery business. I learned fast.

DALLETT: Did you go to school when you came here?

STEENBEKE: Yep.

DALLETT: Where? Do you remember?

STEENBEKE: No, I don't remember.

DALLETT: But you lived on Wooster Street.

STEENBEKE: Wooster Street. That's not here.

DALLETT: In New York. In New York City. And again did you live above the bakery?

STEENBEKE: The bakery. We always lived in the bakery, you know, the bakery is there, and, and the store was there.

DALLETT: It must have been very different from where you were in Brussels to all of a sudden be in New York City.

STEENBEKE: Oh, of course. (he laughs) My mother was everything. She was the planning. Not my father. He was just the baker and he done what he want in the bakery and then he would attend his baker, with nothing outside the bakery. He left everything to my mother. She was something. She still is something. We went right to New York. Oh, we were going to New

York.

DALLETT: And what did you think of New York when you got here?

STEENBEKE: Oh, it was all a wonder, you know. Boy, oh, boy. I was only a kid when I come here.

DALLETT: What did you, what did you like about it?

STEENBEKE: It was different.

DALLETT: Tell me how. Tell me how it was different.

STEENBEKE: Different language, different people. You know, when you're French and Flemish, it's very hard when you can't speak English. But I got along. I went to school here.

DALLETT: Were there other people on your street that spoke French and Flemish?

STEENBEKE: No. We just went into the best place we could get. But they were all over, people from here. But my mother got acquainted with French people living there. They find the French people, you know, you go

to church, or she goes to the market. She would hear people speaking French, you know, or Flemish. And right away, aah, "Parlez-vous francais?" (he laughs)

DALLETT: Which church was it that you went to?

STEENBEKE: Any church that it was. The Catholic Church, of course. We went to the Catholic Church.

DALLETT: Did you go to the Catholic schools, too?

STEENBEKE: Catholic.

DALLETT: Catholic schools?

STEENBEKE: Yeah. Oh, not really my mother and father, (?) that way.

DALLETT: Okay. I'm going to just pause here so we can turn the tape over. That's the end of side one of interview number [DP-13] with Henry Steenbeke.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of interview number [DP-13].

STEENBEKE: Je parle le francais tres bien. What did I say?

DALLETT: Uh, "I speak French very well."

STEENBEKE: Oh. (Flemish) I speak...

DALLETT: Come again?

STEENBEKE: (Flemish) I speak (Flemish)...

DALLETT: Flemish.

STEENBEKE: (French)

DALLETT: Well. Good.

STEENBEKE: (French) Like the "goat," a goat. (French) That's plain, isn't it?

DALLETT: Yes. I speak Flemish, I speak French, and I speak English as well.

STEENBEKE: C'est tres bien, ca. That's very good.

DALLETT: Merci.

STEENBEKE: Merci.

DALLETT: That's about as much as I know. I can, I can understand.

STEENBEKE: I speak good Flemish yet. (Flemish) I never forgot it.

DALLETT: Never forgot it.

STEENBEKE: And French, too. Je parle francais tres bien. See how fast I can go? That was my regular French. I went to French school and Flemish school, and that's where I learned it all. (Flemish and French) And I speak English.

DALLETT: Was it two different schools that you went to, or one school?

STEENBEKE: No, no. One school, they have an hour, you know, and then they...

DALLETT: In the morning.

STEENBEKE: And then the next day, the French, and then the Belgian, then the French. They, see..

DALLETT: Back and forth.

STEENBEKE: I went to both of them. That's why I know. Je parle tres bien le francais. What did I say?

DALLETT: "I speak French."

STEENBEKE: No, I said, Je parle tres bien le francais.

DALLETT: I speak very well in French.

STEENBEKE: (Flemish) What did I say?

DALLETT: I speak good Flemish. (they laugh)

STEENBEKE: You can't forget that.

DALLETT: But when you came to this country...

STEENBEKE: I know nothing.

DALLETT: Did you get a chance to use your French? You kept that up in the family? Did you continue to speak it?

STEENBEKE: I went to school. No, in the family you spoke, uh, Flemish. We spoke Flemish. We didn't speak French at home, not unless people come, you know. But the language home was Flemish. (Flemish and French) Both were the same, you know, because that's what I was born into.

DALLETT: Did the kids bother you, other kinds who spoke English? Did they tease you about your French?

STEENBEKE: Nobody every teased me because I spoke a little English.

DALLETT: Do you remember some of the first words you spoke in English.

STEENBEKE: Oh, no. Yes and no. Yah, nay. (Flemish) Oui. Je parle le francais aussi. Did you understand that?

DALLETT: Yes.

STEENBEKE: Tres bien.

DALLETT: Very well. Very good.

STEENBEKE: C'est tres bien. Parle le francais avec toi. That comes easy. Although I didn't speak it for about eight years, but that stays there. I understand anything in French. When anybody speaks French to me, oui, je parle le francais. (he laughs) Oh, in Belgium. (Flemish) (French) Yeah, I speak French very good. (he laughs) Big difference, see?

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

STEENBEKE: Flemish is not spoken here at all. But here, in America here, French is spoken a lot, so that, but I don't forget the Flemish, though. (he sings in Flemish)

PALMER: He has a big, he has a beautiful voice.

DALLETT: Yeah, come on, find your voice.

STEENBEKE: Find it? I'm looking for it. (he sings in French) (he laughs) (he sings in French) Gee, a couple of singers, huh? (he laughs) J'ai du bon tabac. I got

good tobacco. Dans ma tabatiere. In my little pot.  
J'ai du bon tabac. Tu ne l'auras pas. You ain't  
gonna get any. (he laughs) Did you understand me?

DALLETT: Yeah.

STEENBEKE: Answer me. Je comprend?

DALLETT: Oui, je comprend.

STEENBEKE: Qu'est-ce que j'ai dit?

STEENBEKE: That which I said. (they laugh)

PALMER: But I also wanted to know if you didn't have some  
little Flemish songs that you sang on the farm. What  
did you sing when you were out in the field? You  
picked the vegetables.

STEENBEKE: Oh, yeah, yeah.

PALMER: You must have, you cut the hay, you picked up the hay  
when they cut it, for the horses. What kind of  
Flemish songs?

STEENBEKE: That's Flemish.

DALLETT: He's into his French this afternoon, so...

STEENBEKE: (Flemish) I don't want to give it to you. (Flemish)  
I forgot it. (Flemish) I will learn it later.

PALMER: I will learn it later.

STEENBEKE: Yeah. Later is (Flemish)

PALMER: I speak good Flemish.

STEENBEKE: (Flemish) What did I say.

PALMER: I can never forget my Flemish.

STEENBEKE: (Flemish) What did I say?

PALMER: I can never forget my Flemish.

STEENBEKE: (Flemish) What did I say.

PALMER: In French I can speak well.

STEENBEKE: (he sings in French) I'll never forget that song.

PALMER: You probably know other French songs, too.

STEENBEKE: Oh, yeah. But I, years and years now that I didn't,  
I don't need it.

PALMER: He learned all the Irish songs, all the Irish songs.

STEENBEKE: (he sings in English) "My wild Irish rose, the  
sweetest flower that grows. You may search  
everywhere, but no one can compare with my wild Irish  
rose. My wild Irish rose, the sweetest flower that  
grows. Someday, for my sake, she may let me take,  
the bloom from my wild Irish rose." That's Flemish.  
(they laugh)

DALLETT: That's lovely.

PALMER: You just sang an Irish song. What are you talking  
about, Flemish?

STEENBEKE: That's that way a Flemish guy would sing it.

DALLETT: Oh, I see. (they laugh) A Flemish version of an  
Irish song. How did you come to be able to sing...

STEENBEKE: I was a good singer, an Irish singer. Where were we?

We were in Belgium, next to the Irish. I come from Belgium, so Ireland is next to it.

PALMER: (she laughs) How about, you learned all the Irish songs from my mother's mother with her accordion.

STEENBEKE: Oh, yeah, yeah.

PALMER: She sang with your friend, Uncle John.

STEENBEKE: John.

PALMER: We have pictures of Grandpa on his motorcycle in 1910. They had, my father's, uh, my mother's brother was in World War One and he came back with his motorcycle, and these two were pals. And that's how he met my mother. He came along the stoop. You know, in New York, the stoop?

STEENBEKE: Oh, I think, (he sings in English) "Oh, I'd like to get the best of Maggie Riley but the son of a gun she got the best of me. Then we fell in with the parson, and he tied his tightest line, and I wish, oh, Lord, I fell overboard on the old Fall River Line."

PALMER: We hear that at least once a week. (they laugh)  
But, you know, he had a lot of girls that he loved  
because he always puts a different name in. I wish  
he would put my mother's name in more often, but he  
has a whole, he must have had a whole lot of  
girlfriends, and one was Maggie.

STEENBEKE: I tried to get the best of Maggie Riley, that's the  
best one.

PALMER: Harrigan. (she sings)

STEENBEKE: H, A, double-R... (voice garbled) What did you say?

PALMER: Harrigan.

STEENBEKE: (he sings in English) H, A, double-R, I, G, A, N  
spells Harrigan. Devil a man can take...

PALMER: You need a drink. (she laughs) You need a drink to  
sing the old Irish songs.

STEENBEKE: I know the song. It won't come to me. (he sings)  
(they all sing) "It's the dame, it's a shame, it's a  
regular (?) to take me home, Harrigan, that's me."  
(they laugh) Gee, I used to be able to...

DALLETT: Let's clear up the age thing because Henry said he was a hundred years old. (voices off-mike)

PALMER: He's not a hundred years old. When we got the citizenship papers, and we discovered that he was a year older than his license said. But he was born in, according to his citizenship papers, which we consider to be quite an authority, which he got when he was about twenty-one, he would be, uh, have been born in 1894, that would make him 95 now. (voice off-mike)

DALLETT: 1894.

PALMER: 1894, excuse me. 1894 is when he was born. Now, on the back of one of those old pictures, it just said the year that they were on the boat, uh, in 1904, which makes it right. It would make him just about ten years old.

DALLETT: I see. What was the name of the boat?

STEENBEKE: Fatherland. Fatherland.

PALMER: That was the name of the boat. The Fatherland.

STEENBEKE: Yeah, Fatherland.

DALLETT: And the year was 1904.

PALMER: And your father did not come with you here. Your father was here already, and you came with your mother and your sisters...

STEENBEKE: Yeah, with my mothers, yeah, yeah.

PALMER: Your father had come over a year, a little bit before, and he had things set up for you.

STEENBEKE: Yeah.

PALMER: But years ago we asked you about it and you always made me feel that it was a hard and difficult time. Maybe some people were seasick, were they? Was it very unpleasant on the boat, or, then, more recently you gave me a little different picture. Do you remember people being seasick on the boat?

STEENBEKE: On the boat?

PALMER: Yeah.

STEENBEKE: Yeah, they were sick. There were a lot of people sick.

PALMER: For a lot of years you didn't like to go on boats, until James got his little yacht. And you never learned to swim.

STEENBEKE: I never learned to swim.

PALMER: No. Even though my mother was a great swimmer. But, uh, Dad?

STEENBEKE: What?

PALMER: The, uh, you didn't get seasick, and you said you went down to the engine room?

STEENBEKE: Yeah. I was in the engine room with the engineers, looking at the big boilers and everything, you know. I was down there.

PALMER: Coal, did they shovel in? What did they shovel in for those big boilers?

STEENBEKE: Yeah. Big shovels of coal. Boy, were they big. I was down there a lot, I liked to be down there just to see that, big fires.

PALMER: It was exciting, huh?

STEENBEKE: Yeah. I was only a kid.

PALMER: And did you brother go down there with you, too?

STEENBEKE: No, just me.

PALMER: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: And that concludes the interview with Mr. Henry Steenbeke, interview number [DP-13].