

EI-232

WALTER R. GREINER

BIRTH DATE: JUNE 29, 1905
INTERVIEW DATE: 11/24/1992
RUNNING TIME: 1:02:18
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: DINGMAN'S FERRY, PENNSYLVANIA
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1994
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 10/1994

GERMANY (BORN ITALY), 1910
AGE 4

SHIP: NOORDAM
PORT: ROTTERDAM
RESIDENCE:

- **GERMANY: STÜTZERBACH, THÜRINGEN (THURINGIA)**
- **USA: BROOKLYN, NY**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today in Dingman's Ferry, Pennsylvania with Mr. Walter Greiner, who came through Ellis Island from Germany in 1910 when he was four years old. So thank you for being with me today. I'm very happy to be here and to hear your story. And we'll begin at the beginning by you telling me where you were born.

GREINER: I'll start off. I am one of twelve children. I was born in Milano, Italy on June 29, 1905. My parents had gone to Italy to better themselves. Our father was in the laboratory glassware industry. He was an engraver and our family history in that business dates back to 1611. Now, our father was born in Stützerbach. That's S-T-Ü with the two dots over the Ü-T-Z-E-R-B-

A-C-H. And our mother was born in Frauenwald. The literal translation is women forest.

LEVINE: Huh. What were their names, your mother and father?

GREINER: Huh?

LEVINE: Your mother and father's names?

GREINER: Huh? I got the family tree here. Let's see. I thought I might have to refer to this. Let's see. Ah. My father was christened, christened Leopold Christian Berthold, that's B-E-R-T-H-O-L-D, Greiner. He was born in Stützerbach on January 8, 1866. My mother was christened Ida Bertha, B-E-R-T-H-A, Kühne. That's K-Ü, with the little dots over the U, H-N-E. She was born September 17th, 1867. They were married on April the 11th 1887.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember, do you remember, when did you go from Milano to, uh, to Germany?

GREINER: Ah, well, originally we went to Milano back in 1903. And then I was born in 1905. We stayed in Milano until 1907 when we returned to Stützerbach.

LEVINE: I see. So any memories you would have before coming to the United States would have been in Stützerbach.

GREINER: All I can remember is we had a one-family home, a wooden structure.

LEVINE: Can you describe it, anything you remember about it?

GREINER: Well, it's, it's similar to a Cape Cod cottage. It was two-level, and an attic.

And the only incident that I can really recall is the year, the winter before we left for the States we had a terrific snowstorm which blocked our entrance and an older brother, four years older, and I, we wanted to get out. So we took our little hand sled and we got out of the second-story window and went sleigh riding. And it's beautiful country. It's hilly, and it's similar to the area here in Carbondale, Pennsylvania. And it was a real rural town. We had quite a piece of property. We, our mother, in addition to raising twelve children, also did the garden work and we raised a lot of our own vegetables, mostly potatoes, which was a big staple in Germany. And we had a cow and two pigs every year. And also some chickens and, of course, we used to have a few, let me think, geese, for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. And that supplied the meat and the eggs our family of twelve. Our younger sister was born in, uh, let's see. Here, (returning to his papers) way down here. Was born January 18th in 1909. So that was just approximately one year before we came to this great country of ours.

LEVINE: Well, now, how was it that you came here? What were the circumstances that your family decided to come?

GREINER: There was a threat of war in the wind. My two oldest brothers were both officers in the German Army. They grew up from the ranks. The oldest brother was employed by Carl Zeiss, Inc. At that time I believe it was the largest optical concern in the world.

LEVINE: Can you spell it, Zeiss?

GREINER: Z-E-I-S-S. And being that they were officers they were informed of the imminence of World War I. So they suggested to our father that maybe it would be better if he wanted to leave, now is the time. So our father came

to this country to get a home for us and establish us and I don't know the day we left our home in Germany, but the two oldest sons and our oldest sisters stayed in Germany. The third oldest son had become a member of the North German Lloyd Steamship Company as a seaman, and he had worked his way up to a first mate. And he came to, on one of his trips he came to New York. He had a difference with the captain, who reported him over wireless. And when the ship landed in New York Harbor on the North River, or the Hudson River, as some people know it, he was called to account by the port captain. My brother felt he was not deserving of, so after he was dismissed he went to the captain and resigned and he stayed with the family where the daughter was to become his wife.

LEVINE: In New York.

GREINER: In Brooklyn. So when my father was here looking for a home for us, he stayed with that family. And we, when we arrived here on May the 10th...

LEVINE: Well, now, when your father came, did he know that family from Germany?

GREINER: Oh, yes. They were from our town.

LEVINE: I see. So then how long was your father here before the rest of the family came?

GREINER: Well, just, within a year. He had been here on previous trips for the company that he worked for.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

GREINER: And he was gainfully employed in New York.

LEVINE: Did he work for the same company from Germany, or he was employed by a New York company?

GREINER: He was employed by a New York company which represented the parent company where our father was started working in Germany.

LEVINE: I see. So he was still working with the glass...

GREINER: Oh, our family's been in it since 1611.

LEVINE: I see. Okay. So then he came and, when he wrote back to you, or to your mother, do you remember anything that you had in your mind as a four-year-old about coming to America before you actually came?

GREINER: No, I couldn't say that. The only thing is that our mother must have been a saint, first because she raised twelve children, secondly because she had the courage to bring eight children, eight, from a little over one to about twenty. We came over on the Hamburg-American Line vessel, the Rotterdam.

LEVINE: And where did that leave from?

GREINER: We left from the port of Rotterdam. And that's the only other real remembrance I have. Our mother, I don't know how we got to Rotterdam any more, but when we arrived at the port of Rotterdam, I was so amazed and, at what I saw. Here is a big, open space and they had what I would call stalls that sold all kinds of merchandise, mainly foodstuffs. And we, when we left, all of us children had received a few pennies. And it was just

something that, they were burning a hole in our pockets. So my brother that was four years old than I, we disobeyed our mother by disappearing, but we spent some of our money in these stalls buying goodies. And our mother was very agitated, but she was a very kind person. She had a way about scolding you that it hurt more than if you had a spanking.

LEVINE: How would she do it?

GREINER: Just, her voice was so soft, and her way of scolding you hurt more than a physical punishment. But anyway, she gathered us all together again and we got aboard ship. We had very bad weather crossing The Big Pond, as I got to call it in later years. And it took twenty-one days. And I was the first one to get seasick, because we were cooped up.

LEVINE: Were you in steerage?

GREINER: Uh...

LEVINE: Were you down in the hold of the ship?

GREINER: We were down in the lower part. We had, it wasn't steerage like they show over in Staten Island. We had the lowest cabins in the ship. We were in two cabins, Our mother and her three daughters, and the five boys were in the other. And I still can't fathom how we got along in such close quarters. (he laughs) We only were allowed on deck one or two days during that time.

LEVINE: Because of rough sea?

GREINER: Weather conditions. We landed at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Do you remember coming into the New York Harbor when you were on the ship?

GREINER: Yes. We were able to get aboard, come up on deck. Because we, the day before we were to land, the Health Department came aboard, and we were lucky that we were checked out that day. And we received a vaccination. The only one that didn't receive a vaccination was our youngest sister because we were vaccinated before we left Germany, and they had made such a bad job on her arm that when the doctor looked at it he said, "I'm not going to vaccinate this girl any more." Because it was all in German. We didn't know a word of English. And, so our father met us after we disembarked...

LEVINE: Well, now, you, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you first came in?

GREINER: I, all I know is we docked at, what they told me was Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Okay. And what was your impression of that? Do you remember?

GREINER: Well, it was a big building. Something that we weren't aware of, either in Germany or in Italy, at the time we lived in Italy. And so we, as we got off the ship our father met us. When he had the eight of us and our mother together, we took a small ferry. It was a small ferry, from Ellis Island to the Battery.

LEVINE: Do you remember the reunion with your father at Ellis Island?

GREINER: Well, it was just overwhelming. It, we hadn't seen our father for a year or

so, and here we really got to know him that first day, because it was exciting and wonderful. We walked up Broadway and, if you can imagine, our father and mother in lead, and the eight little ducklings following behind. And what amazed me in New York, I saw a vehicle. I was later told that was a trolley car, but it was drawn by two horses. They had trolley tracks from the Battery up to Park Row where we took the Metropolitan El to Brooklyn. And there again I, that was something to see. We got on a train, and all of a sudden we pulled out and here we're in the sky. Here we've been twenty-one days on the water and here, all of a sudden, we're sailing through the sky, with water underneath us, which was the East River, I was told later on. And I know I never stopped crying until we came to ground level in Brooklyn. And our father had an apartment in Brooklyn where we lived for a number of years.

LEVINE: Can you describe that apartment?

GREINER: Well, it was a cold water flat, as they called it in those days. And we lived on the third floor. This was a novelty for all us children, to go down on the street level and get acquainted with what was around us. The older ones that were of school age all started school in May. Our father didn't let much time pass before he had the older ones that were still able to go to school here in the States, get them registered in the school that was near us.

LEVINE: Do you remember what day you arrived?

GREINER: It was May the 10th.

LEVINE: 19...

GREINER: 1910. And it was a good day, and I was so happy to be on ground level.
(he laughs)

LEVINE: Well, so you didn't start school right away?

GREINER: No. I started school the following year. And we, I went in the elementary classes to, through seventh grade.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences in learning English?

GREINER: Well, I think it was easy for us because we were of the Lutheran faith, and our father, we had a church, it was St. Paul's on Palmetto Street, and I don't know what the other avenue is. And this church had a Saturday German school which our father registered us in so that we wouldn't forget the language of our parents' country. So we not only went to school five days a week, we went six days. And on the seventh day we attended Sunday school and church.

LEVINE: In German.

GREINER: Everything was in German in those days. And it's just a matter of getting acquainted with other children. And we had another fortunate thing. Close by to us we had a library which was in a store, housed in a storefront, and they had a lot of German and English books. So I'll say it this way, I was a nosy guy, and I got acquainted with what was, later I found out was the librarian. And she helped me. I was able to read at age three. And coming across The Big Pond I had received a book from an older sister as a go-away gift. It was Don Quixote in German. And I finished that book, it was a big book, in the twenty-one days that we crossed The Big Pond. I always loved to read. And this was another natural thing that we were able to go to the, and get books. And our two older sisters, one became a housemaid in a Hungarian Jewish family. And the other, the next to the youngest

sister, she became a servant in an American home. So I think that all helped us to learn our language because, although these two families spoke German, because German was the prominent language in that area. Because Brooklyn's Ridgewood section was just, I guess half of Germany lived there at one time. (he laughs) But a lot of people, we came here. We knew that there were families who had come from Stützerbach. And that's how we were keeping in touch.

LEVINE: Was it your family's attitude to become Americanized, but to hold on to your German heritage? What were their attitudes regarding that?

GREINER: Well, that I'm a little ashamed of because our father and mother never really understood this country. But that, it isn't entirely their fault.

LEVINE: How do you mean that, that they didn't understand this country?

GREINER: Well, when we, after we were here a very short time, the landlord of the home we rented came one night and they were two big Tammany cats of the New York Democratic Party. And they offered our father a proposition that if he would sign up to become a Democrat and that he would guarantee that all his children would be Democrats, they would be able to get him his citizenship paper within six months. And I had learned enough by that time that I knew that was wrong. Our father couldn't get it. At that time you had to wait five years before you got your citizenship papers. He had taken out his first papers before we arrived. And I just got up amongst all the family sitting at the dinner table. I said, "Father, don't you do that, because if anything ever happens we'll be sent back to where we wanted to get away from and stay away from it." So I sat down, and that was the end. These two gents left, and I always felt that was an ugly thing to happen, and that's why I never became a Democrat and I joined the

Republican party when I was old enough.

LEVINE: And how do you think your father didn't understand the country?

GREINER: Well, I think, at his age, I can appreciate that more today than I did then. I don't think you will ever lose your heritage, and there were many memories. Because as I grew up I started a business and I made it a business to spend my holidays looking around the States. And I was employed by a steamship company, which was the largest American flag carrier in the States. And we used to get passes from the railroads. The steamship company and the railroads interchanged, and that's how I got to travel up through New England, and I came to Pennsylvania on a couple of vacations. Because what I saved in carfare, or train fare, I should say, I could spend on visiting these better places. And we didn't have any cars in those days.

LEVINE: Tell me about your father and his attitudes. Were there certain attitudes that he held that he tried to impart to you as his son?

GREINER: Well, the only thing is that our father and our mother, they taught us to live what the Good Book taught us, and that was about the only attitude. They wanted us to be as well-educated as we could afford. You can imagine, there were eight children. And we all, prior, when we first came here, the next three oldest sons were of school age. So they got part of their school. But we had a custom in Germany that on Confirmation you had to go into the work force, and you were supposed to follow your father's footsteps to apprentice in his trade while the older ones followed their father's footsteps. When they came down to my, I was only in my twelfth year when I was confirmed, and I only had one more year in high school. But according, we call it the Family Council, when I was confirmed the father convened the

Council, and they all said, "We all had to go into the work force. He's no different. Why should he be kept out?" So I made up my mind I wasn't going to be involved in the chemical laboratory glassware. I was going to select my own. Because originally I was working to be able to go to college, and I knew from my teachers in high school that I was eligible for a four-year scholarship in Rutgers University, because we were living in Jersey in those days. And I was very disappointed that only the next to the youngest sister voted in favor of letting me continue the one extra year that I had in high school.

LEVINE: Well, now you were confirmed at twelve, twelve years old?

GREINER: At twelve years old.

LEVINE: Well, now, you would have been in seventh grade then?

GREINER: I finished seventh grade then, yes. Oh, no. I finished, I was in third year high school.

LEVINE: At twelve?

GREINER: At twelve years.

END OF SIDE ONE
BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Let's see. You must have skipped some grades, then.

GREINER: Oh, I skipped every other grade.

LEVINE: Oh. It came easily to you.

GREINER: Studies, studies, because I read a lot of things. And I would not only do what we had in the classroom. I would go out and look for other things to read.

LEVINE: I see. So you were disappointed. And why was it you decided you didn't want to go into the glass business as, following in your father's footsteps?

GREINER: It was a job where you had to sit all day long and just twirl glass around and make instruments out of it, and I didn't care about sitting there and engraving, see. That's an art. I could watch them, the older brothers doing their thing, because in those days we had a glass blowing table. It was a, and around Christmas time we made our own ornaments for all the different families that were, after they got married. So we had this at home, and then we youngsters were just bystanders, watching them make it. And I wasn't too keen to do something like that all day long.

LEVINE: Tell me what the significance of Confirmation was for you when you were twelve.

GREINER: Well, being confirmed I was taught that now you are a grownup. And you should do as the Lord has taught us in our schooling. See, by going to German school on Saturday, that was another thing, I think, that helped me learn the English language faster.

LEVINE: Going to the German school?

GREINER: Going to the German school. Because the teachers explained it in English and also in German, because we had some that were not German, of German parentage. But it's, and I say I enjoyed every bit of my life up till today.

LEVINE: That's wonderful. Tell me about the Family Council. How did that operate, and what was...

GREINER: Well, when there was a problem in the family, Father would get the children together and explain, our mother was very ill at times. And in later years I think I stumbled on what caused her illness. She had asthma, and she was also rheumatic and other, and for a spell there she was bedridden. And our family doctor at that time was called in and he, he had opened a hospital in Brooklyn and he called his staff into the house to help him diagnose our mother's case. And there were twelve doctors sitting around our dining room table, and they were all of the opinion that our mother wouldn't live more than forty-eight hours. Well, I didn't appreciate it then, but when I think of it today, I think our father must have been frantic. I took the prescription and chased up to the pharmacy to get the prescription. I was crying and praying all the way to the shop, to the pharmacy. It was about a block-and-a-half away from our home.

LEVINE: How old were you at this point, about?

GREINER: Uh, well, let's see. I guess I must have been, I guess I was about eight or nine. Well, to make a long story short, our father went to New York to visit a chiropractor up in Yorkville. He couldn't help our father because he said, "I have to see the patient." So he referred him, he also operated what they called a sanitarium in those days in Butler, New Jersey. He recommended that our father go to the sanitarium. Maybe they could help him. So our

father, from Yorkville, went to Butler, New Jersey, and he got the same answer that he had gotten in New York. One thing they did, they recommended a chiropractor in Hollis, which was just a little bit out of Ridgewood in Jamaica. I don't know just the relationship of the towns that were in, and he had left early in the morning and he came back late in the evening with this gentleman who was a chiropractor from Hollis. And in six months' time, he came three days a week from Hollis to give mother, as they call it, a manipulation. And plus that, we were on a strict diet. She was not allowed to have any seasoning or condiment of any kind. And, like I say, within a short time she was up and around. And about less than a year after our family doctor had pronounced her to be amongst the immortal, he was called in, and our father had a bad cough. And when our mother opened the door for him, he thought he saw a ghost. And he sat down. He says, "Before I see," in German, *der Alte*, that's the old one, "you have to tell me what happened." So our mother started telling him, and our father came down, and he says, "I thought you were sick." He says, so they explained to the doctor. And that M. D. started to dig into the chiropractic treatments, and he really went for it. But it saved our mother. At age, she was age fifty, and she lived to be eighty-four. So it had, presently, for the past three years, I've been going for chiropractic treatments every month, and it has helped me greatly in my health problems.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Now, the Family Council, when that would be convened, there'd be some issue...

GREINER: All those who were confirmed were members of the Council, and they were in the work force. You didn't have a say until you got into the work force.

LEVINE: Oh. But you would go to the meetings?

GREINER: Oh, all of us could be there, but we had no voice.

LEVINE: I see. So a vote was taken?

GREINER: A vote was taken.

LEVINE: What was it like around the family table when you were a little boy? Can you sort of recapture the, what happened and the conversations?

GREINER: Well, if you can visualize anywhere's from eight to twelve people around a table, and I think we were all good eaters. And our mother and our sisters, at times when our mother wasn't able to do it, to prepare a meal. It must have been a chore, but it was a joy. We enjoyed it. And we had a lot of good conversation, humor. And it was mainly describing what our days had been, and our gripes. (he laughs) And when we got out of line we were pulled back with just a sound from our father. And, of course in those days curfew was at nine o'clock. And we had this, everyone was assigned a chore to help around the house, and we had to have our chores completed and also our homework, because there was no deviation from that nine o'clock curfew. But it was wonderful. In one of the schools, it was Public School 77 in Brooklyn, they had a class for the blind. So my brother that was four years older and I was selected to become a guide for a blind person. (microphone is rustled) Our job was to bring this youngster to school and he'd go to his class, the blind class, and then during the day he would travel for certain subjects to the homeroom, the other part of the classroom. And I think that taught me an awful lot about how to treat people. And this youngster was the brightest chap I ever met, I think. He could read in Braille, and he could do arithmetic. They had a board. It was

about, I'd say, eight to ten inches wide and about fourteen inches long, and it had little holes. And at the foot of this contraption was a tray with numbers. And as the teacher would read out a number, either in addition, multiplication or division, he would have to find these little, and put them in. And the amazing thing was he could, by the time the teacher had given us the time to write it down, this lad had, and he had his hand up because he had the answer. He could read a column of five numbers across and ten down. And he, as he put these little pegs in with the number, he kept adding them up. And the other things, there were many things. Our older brother, he had a lad who, in, he was old enough to be in seventh or eighth grade at that time. He was in the carpentry class, and he built a roll top table. It's amazing. I can't describe how he could have done it.

LEVINE: Who selected you and your brother to do this?

GREINER: Well, the principal of the school. We had quite a large class of blind youngsters. And our job was to pick him up in the morning and then take him after school and bring him back home. And it was amazing. We were not to talk to him when we came. He was to recognize us. They had a habit, when we came to the home, he would take his hands and he'd go over my face. And he said, "Good morning, Walter." I never said a word. Because if, that's one thing. They learn by sound. And many years after we moved away our oldest brother was engaged. They went to New York one Saturday. And as he was up in Times Square he saw a lad playing the fiddle. And he had a woman sitting alongside of him, and he had a tin cup. So my brother said to his intended, "I know that guy." So he went over to him, and he said, "Aren't you so-and-so?" So this lad played the fiddle, we found out that was his wife. And my brother said, "What the hell are you doing here?" "Oh," he says, "I make more money than you do." He had a lot of good traits, but he got into that rut, and my brother said,

"Oh, that's a shame that you didn't follow through." And his wife said, "We're getting along." Because over a weekend they could, in that day he made over a hundred dollars a day in change. And she made sure that, she would empty the cup every now and then so that somebody wouldn't, because it wasn't New York like it is today.

LEVINE: So when did you meet your wife?

GREINER: Well, I met my wife-to-be through a youth group that's known as the Walther League, that's W-A-L-T-H-E-R. Dr. Walther was one of the original founders of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Missouri Center, which was organized in St. Louis. And my brother's wife-to-be is a direct descent of Dr. Walther. And going with our youth group from our local church. We used to go in a circuit, like. We belonged, we were living in Jersey, in Essex County, at that time and we were in the New Jersey district. And we have group gatherings, and it was a good way to keep the boys and girls in their own religion when they got married. It was like a marriage bureau. (they laugh) That's the way I put it. But I really got interested when my brother was married, his wife and my wife-to-be, they grew up together in my wife's church. It was St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Newark. And so I guess it just happened.

LEVINE: What was your wife's name?

GREINER: Huh?

LEVINE: What was your wife's name?

GREINER: Ellen.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

GREINER: Her maiden name was Kehde, K-E-H-D-E. There's another German family from Northern Germany. We come from Thüringen [Thuringia]. That's the southern part.

LEVINE: Well, now, did you have children? How many children did you have?

GREINER: I have two sons.

LEVINE: And their names?

GREINER: The older son is Allen, and the youngest one is Walter Kehde Greiner. That's a history in itself, how he got the name there.

LEVINE: Well, we have about ten minutes left. Do you want to talk about that, or should we go on to other things?

GREINER: Well, as I say, we were twelve children. Do you want to see the twelve children?

LEVINE: When we finish with the tape I do.

GREINER: All right. Well, by the time I married, I was the last one of the twelve to be married. And we used to have family gatherings and as we grew older they all married and had children, anywhere's from two to five. And we have a couple of hundred in this family tree of children and their children's children. And when we married we diversified in nationalities. We not only married into the German families but today we have a United Nation in our family. I don't think there's hardly a nation that is not represented in our

family and their families. And we were fortunate that our children all were able to get a college education, and we all made good marks in different fields. Like my two youngsters, the oldest, Allen, he's in the space age. He started in the work force after graduating from Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, and it was an offshoot of the Singer Manufacturing Company, which was in the aerospace business. So he grew up in that, and when he graduated from college he was offered a job in this company. It's a permanent job, not just a summer job, as he did when he was in high school. And I'm very proud of him because he has a patent on the guidance system that took our boys to the moon. And he also developed a gyro system which was patented for the space station, which we lost because at that time, when it was ready to be launched, my son had recommended a higher altitude so that it would be out of the reach of the gravity. I can't explain, because that's too technical for this, so. And, well, he's still working for the same company. And this son is also working for the same company but in a different field. He became a computer specialist, working for the same company. The two of them are employed but in different divisions. So they both are up to date with all these things going on. My younger son is a teacher up in New Hampshire. He teaches in the regional high school around Keene, New Hampshire. And he loves his work because his two majors were history and English. And he's just, it's just part of him. He's another reader. (he coughs) And then my grandchildren, like I said the son is working in the same field as his father is. And his sister, she is an editor of a legal publication in Jersey. She wanted eventually, I don't know if it's still with her, her aim was, before she was married, she wanted to become a reporter for The Washington Post, and be assigned to the office of the president. And here she's now editor of a legal publication in Jersey. Her husband, he had ambitions of becoming a professor of history of Georgetown University. But he's now working for Metropolitan Life Insurance.

LEVINE: Now, we're beginning to run out of time. Do you want to quickly tell about your other son? Does your other son have children? You have a son Walter?

GREINER: Walter, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

GREINER: Well, he's the teacher.

LEVINE: Oh, he's the teacher. I'm sorry.

GREINER: He's the teacher.

LEVINE: Let me ask you this. What are you proudest of in your life?

GREINER: Well, I have to say I think the point that our family reached in their lifetime, and what they contributed to this country in the medical and scientific world. One of my nephews is an MD and we have fifteen doctorates in our family of the different sciences. I'm very proud that we were able from such a meager background that as the, when we married and we had families that we were able to give them a start that we didn't have.

LEVINE: And how about, what would you say about your own qualities of, as a person, do you think stemmed from being a member of your family?

GREINER: Well, I think I learned the stick-to-it-ness, and that we weren't quitters. If we ran across a problem, we licked it. And I made my field in the steamship company. I worked my way up from a lowly billing clerk, as I say, to become a traffic manager of three divisions of that company. We

serviced the world, with the exception of Africa and South America. When this company went belly-up I went with another company, and I was in the management area there too. I was manager of the conference division. The steamship companies, in those days, were all organized into conferences, and we were under strict surveillance of the Justice Department. That allowed us to sit together and make rates and not be in violation of the anti-trust laws. And I was able to travel mentally to all the ports that the steamship company covered. And I enjoyed history and also geography in my youth, and I could never get enough to read.

LEVINE: Well, it seems as though you're enjoying your old age as well.

GREINER: Well, here, when I came up here I was a widower. My wife died twenty years ago. So being very active in our church in Bloomfield, New Jersey, I felt I could be of service here and I became a volunteer. I started with the Agency on Aging in Milford, and from there I graduated into becoming a founding member of the Friends of the Pike County Public Library, and then I also joined the Friends of Gray Towers, that we have in Milford. And the Friends of Peak here in Dingman's Ferry and the Historical Society. And the last, and I think is the most rewarding that I've been involved, was the Dolphins of Pike County, which was a group formed about ten years ago, and I'm one of the founding members. We visit people on a one-to-one basis who are institutionalized. And so far the first friend I had I had for ten years before he was taken to his eternal rest. I've got my second friend now, he's ninety-one, and I've been almost a year with the new friend, and I think I'm rewarded by giving him a few minutes of my time, so-to-speak. I visit him one day a week, and that's what's going to happen this afternoon.

LEVINE: Well, we're just about out of time. Is there anything you'd like to say about

your life, starting out in Germany, coming here, establishing a life for yourself, anything else that you'd like to say before we close?

GREINER: I just, I'm so thankful that God has given us these opportunities and kept us and quite a number of us have reached the eighty mark. My oldest sister reached ninety-six, and I think we owe it all to our maker, and that we have good partners, and good children.

LEVINE: That sounds like a perfect note to end on. I want to thank you very much, Mr. Greiner...

GREINER: Well, I just thank you that you showed up, because I really didn't expect to hear, but I'm so happy that it happened.

LEVINE: Well, I am too. And this will be a very valuable, welcome addition to our library. So this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's November 24th, 1992. I'm at the home of Mr. Walter Greiner here in Dingman's Ferry, Pennsylvania, and I'm signing off.

END OF THE INTERVIEW