

EI-512

PAULINE PARNES RIEMER
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD
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AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (GALICIA), 1913
AGE 17
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

LEVINE: Today is August 1, 1994, and I'm here today with Pauline Riemer, who came from Austria, Galicia, in 1913 when she was seventeen years old. Today Mrs. Riemer is ninety-eight years old, and I'm here, uh, at her home, 5 Prince Lane, in Westbury, New York. And I want to say that I'm very happy to be here. I'm looking forward to hearing everything you have to say.

REIMER: I have a lot to say.

LEVINE: Good, good, that's wonderful. But you have to speak RIEMEREnglish, right?

RIEMER: That's right.

LEVINE: Okay.

RIEMER: I try my best. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Good. Thank you, thank you. Okay. Let's start by you telling me your birth date.

RIEMER: My birth date is October the 28th. I'll be ninety-eight.

LEVINE: And what year were you born?

RIEMER: In 1996?

LEVINE: 18.

RIEMER: 1896. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah, right. And, um, where were you born?

RIEMER: Glinelma[ph], Glinev[ph].

LEVINE: Do you know how to spell it? Could you . . . No. Could you try to spell it?

RIEMER: It's near Lemburg[ph]. It's three miles from Lemburg[ph], if you heard Lemburg[ph].

LEVINE: Okay.

RIEMER: This is the Hopshtatz[ph] in Galicia.

LEVINE: Galicia. And was it a little town?

RIEMER: (?), I came from a small town, and this is near the big city, three, too close, to go there, three hours. The train which you have to go, you've got to go to Lemburg[ph]. Now, see, there's no train.

LEVINE: How did you get there?

RIEMER: My father took me to Lemburg[ph].

LEVINE: How did he . . .

RIEMER: And put me up another train, and go.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. When you were a little girl, what, what do you remember about the little town, the village, where you were born?

RIEMER: I know every corner when you take me there.

LEVINE: Really.

RIEMER: Every corner. In one day you walk out, the whole city.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was your house like? What did it look

like?

RIEMER: We had five, we had five children, five of us, maybe six? I don't remember, really. I was the eighth. I think the ninth on the way, my younger babe. My mother was very young. She, I left her maybe I think two years, I know. I was the oldest.

LEVINE: Oh. Now, tell me your mother's name.

RIEMER: Selma.

LEVINE: And do you remember her maiden name?

RIEMER: (disturbance to the microphone) Uh, Malman. What do you mean, the second name?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RIEMER: Malman.

LEVINE: M-A . . .

RIEMER: L.

LEVINE: Oh, L.

RIEMER: Melman.

LEVINE: Man, okay, M-A-N. Okay. and your father's name?

RIEMER: My father's name was Irving.

LEVINE: Irving. And your maiden, your maiden name?

RIEMER: Parnes.

LEVINE: P-A-R . . .

RIEMER: P, N-E-S.

LEVINE: Yes, right. And your sisters and brothers, you were the oldest.

RIEMER: I was the oldest.

LEVINE: And who were the other ones?

RIEMER: The youngest, I brought out four children here from Europe, after the Second World War. Yeah. They got married here, two sisters. Two sisters got married. And one brother died, a young boy, got diabetic, he died. And one got sick, and they didn't let her stay here. They sent her back, before the war. I never heard from her any more, you know.

LEVINE: This was someone who came over with you?

RIEMER: Nobody came with me.

LEVINE: Oh, you came alone.

RIEMER: I came all alone.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay. Well, first let's talk about your family life when you were in your little . . .

RIEMER: My family life is not much to tell. My mother used to sew, and my father was a working man. We were in a poor, two-room house, and very poor people, very poor.

I used, ten years, I was sewing on the machine, help my mother sewing. And, but to this country I came because my mother's sister came, uh, two, three years before me. She's not here any more, and she got married here, and when a girl had to go to this country. She used to come to our house, learn how to sew on the machine and, uh, and she come to America, and she send her mother five, ten dollars. It was a million dollars in Europe. I used to say to my mother, "Look, I get all the, you haven't got to give me." At home they give you money when you get married. If you got more money, you get a better husband. You got less money, you know what it is. "So send me to America. I don't want to be here. You can't marry me off, and I don't want to get married

either. I want to go to this country." (?) I used to be such a good dressmaker and sew, and make money in Europe, and the girls, they don't know even to turn the wheel, and they come and they send another one.

"I'll send you money," I used to tell her.

"Send . . ." But my father was in this country with four years before me.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

RIEMER: And he, he was very, I mean, you know Europe eighty years back. So he, he didn't want to be sending me to America. He didn't. They didn't want it.

LEVINE: Because you were a girl? Because religion, or what?

RIEMER: No, it's not religion. He said, that way in Europe is father and mother watch your children. That's the way it is. I don't know why, but they didn't want to send me. How many children they got, they had a piece of bread to eat, they want me home, but I didn't want to be home. I saw there's a nicer country than home, and I didn't want to be home. So I used to write to my aunt and ask her, please. I used to call her Tanta Seni[ph], Tanta Seni[ph], take me out of this country. She used to say, "I just got married." You know,

(?), I can't afford, I haven't got no more. I said, it cost forty-five dollars to come to this country at that time. I didn't even have a passport. But then, then I wrote. I used to write, "Send me a ship's card. Send me a ship's card. I want to go to this country." She didn't. I used to, my mother used to sew beautiful shirts for men and for women, you know, in Europe. And (?) got married my mother used to be the sewer. And I used to take it over. If my mother used to say, "Sure, twenty-five cent, fifty cents for a shirt," I used to tell her I want seventy-five cents, and I used to make all the time a couple of dollars for myself. I was a kid, but for me I used to like nice things. And my mother couldn't buy me nice things. (she laughs)

LEVINE: What would you like to have? Like when you were there, what . . .

RIEMER: I liked to wear a hat, I liked to have an umbrella, I liked to have a nice dress. I liked to have nice things. But, really, they can't afford. But I always managed to have a couple of dollars.

LEVINE: So you were keeping the books for your mother?

RIEMER: What books?

LEVINE: No books.

RIEMER: What books?

LEVINE: No.

RIEMER: She made a ten shirts, I carried over to the woman. If she told me is coming five dollars, six dollars, I used to say, "Eight dollars," and we have a rich, a rich, who makes eight, ten shirts, rich people. They didn't, they didn't think it's too much money. They gave me. so I always had money. I used to write to my aunt, "I'll send you the money for you should give a deposit. And do you know how good I could sew? I'll come, I'll pay you every penny. I'll work, I'll do everything in the world. Take me out of this country." So long can write, she sent me a ship's card. You know what I mean, the ship's card?

LEVINE: Like a passport?

RIEMER: No, a (?) passport.

LEVINE: A visa?

RIEMER: This is a card to go on the boat.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Like a ticket?

RIEMER: Yeah, yeah, like a ticket.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RIEMER: She sent that from Lemburg[ph] to, uh, to, she lived in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, not here. All right. I was, what do I know, it was Wilkes Barre, let be, Wilkes Barre. So that's the way I came to this country, and I was only seventeen years old. I was, uh, I came December. Yeah. And in October I was seventeen years old, and I came December here, on New Year's, like.

LEVINE: Well, tell me first what, what, did you go to school at all?

RIEMER: I used to go, I went two years in Europe. They took me out at the time. It didn't, I knew how to write Polish at that time, you know? I came here, I went to night school, you know? Like all the, all the European people. I went (?). And after I got married, and two years later I got married.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, now, um, tell me, uh, about, you were a

religious family in Europe?

RIEMER: Very religious.

LEVINE: Now, um, do you remember observances in Europe that your family had, religious occasions?

RIEMER: Oh, very well, schul[ph], Yom Kippur. Oh, my mother was, she didn't have no hair on her head. She cut her hair. And my father went to, I remember the (?) with the, velvet, full, like, like the robbers here. Saturday, Friday night, how full we was. My mother used to cook fish Friday night, and when my father went away to schul[ph], I used to, she sent me around to a couple of poor people to give fish. And she, she didn't have to give her own children to eat, she used to give them. She was very religious. And that's why I came to this country. So.

LEVINE: Well, were you, was there a difference in the way your family observed the religion there than it is here?

RIEMER: No, no, no.

LEVINE: It was pretty much the same.

RIEMER: No. I went Saturday to schul[ph]. My mother used to

(?) in this, she did, (?). She used to read. Saturday they didn't do anything, they didn't work Saturday. But I never was religious. Not me.

LEVINE: No.

RIEMER: That's the way I was. I couldn't help it. But my parents was very religious. I know I used to hide myself to clean up my shoes. (she laughs) You know how it is. Oh, my God, my father and mother was very. And he used to watch me I shouldn't talk to a boy, I shouldn't talk to anybody. It was fanatish, like, you'd say. They believed in other things, not what I believed.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, um, let's see. What did you do for fun, when you were a little girl?

RIEMER: Oh, I had fun. I had a lot of girlfriends. There was a florist, beautiful flowers in our city. Saturday we used to go there, we was dancing, boys and girls. Oh, I was, I, uh, wasn't sitting in the house. And if they watched me, I went anyway.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RIEMER: They couldn't watch me that much.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RIEMER: But Saturday, you know, they keep, they keep Saturday, and Saturday I had a chance to go with my girlfriends. I had, I was born there, I had girlfriends, boyfriends. I had plenty.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah.

RIEMER: I enjoyed very much of myself.

LEVINE: Do you remember, uh, any particular dishes that you liked to eat?

RIEMER: Dishes? Why should . . .

LEVINE: Things that you liked to eat, particular things.

RIEMER: (she laughs) I was happy if I had to eat. In Europe it doesn't look that way. What they made, they eat.

LEVINE: How about . . .

RIEMER: (?)

LEVINE: How about, like, was it a farming, a farming town? Did they have farms where you were?

RIEMER: No. It was a Jewish city.

LEVINE: Oh, it was a city.

RIEMER: And all around, Christian people. There were like little tundras. Our office was in the city already. All around was not Jewish, you know.

LEVINE: That was the farmers?

RIEMER: But the, the city alone, was all Jews. I remember ever going when we take, God knows if it stays there yet so many years. But, uh . . .

LEVINE: Well, do you remember, did your mother have, uh, a stove? What did she cook on?

RIEMER: Oh. My father used to build stoves. My father was a builder. He used to build, he made a house for us, and my grandfather and my father, they build themselves a house. Yeah. Big buildings.

LEVINE: Now, you remember your grandmother and grandfather?

RIEMER: Oh, course. I was the only grandchild.

LEVINE: Oh. So what were their names. Do you remember?

RIEMER: Uh, my (?) is, they call him, no, the Jewish name is

always Malman.

LEVINE: And did you ever spend time with them? Do you remember any things you did?

RIEMER: Oh, I used to run there to sleep there. You know, I was the only grandchild that they had.

LEVINE: Did they ever tell you stories or anything like that? What did they . . .

RIEMER: Ah, I didn't . . .

LEVINE: Would you help them? How would you, what would you do?

RIEMER: Why do I got to help them?

LEVINE: No?

RIEMER: No.

LEVINE: No.

RIEMER: No. They used to live in a nice house. They had a little house. You sleep there. I used to go. My father used to hit me, I used to run to my grandmother. You know how it is. That's all.

LEVINE: And, uh, do you remember anything, any experiences you had with your grandmother or grandfathers that you remember. Anything they ever told you, or anything like that.

RIEMER: No, no. They, you know, they was older people. They had four daughters. I remember every wedding that they had. That town to the (?), my mother's sister, she was the youngest. And she, she came to America. She wanted to go to America, before me, about three years before me.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. So is there anything like, uh . . .

RIEMER: In Europe I didn't do too much. I only had Saturday the day, I got to be ten o'clock home. Not later, not, if I should come later, they'll lock the door for me.

LEVINE: Did that ever . . .

RIEMER: I used to go to my grandmother's to sleep. (she laughs)

LEVINE: I see. Yeah. Um, is there anything that your mother and father tried to, uh, tried to teach you, tried to instill in you, ideas?

RIEMER: She didn't teach me, sewing by the machine was her work, and I did work. I was ten years sitting at the machine and sewing already. I used to sew shirts that, nicer shirts for a woman, in Europe they go with lace and, you know, nice things. I used to make the nicest pleats without a, without a, I didn't have to make no tie that is basted. So good, I used to sew on the machine at ten years old.

LEVINE: Wow. Did you have to, have chores around the house besides the sewing? Did it, did you have certain things that you had to do?

RIEMER: We had, nobody, my mother used to be this, she used to be the best sewer.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you, um, okay. So is there anything else about life there? Did you, did you have any . . .

RIEMER: I never had a life there. I wanted to forget Europe. I didn't like Europe never, since I was a child. I hated. I hate Europe, and I came here, at night I used to dream I'm home Europe, and I wake up and I see I'm in this country, I didn't have nothing to eat here, and I didn't care. I hate it.

LEVINE: Do you know why you hated it so much?

RIEMER: Because my father, they used to work me too much. He used to go after me, and I didn't like it. There's a lot of things, I didn't like it. I wanted to get out. I saw the family get bigger, I saw my family gets bigger, and they haven't got a piece of bread in the house. She buy, like through the week, she babysit, they bake bread in that stove, and bake bread. You have to, like, Thursday they got to buy bread. As soon as they buy bread, they eat it, one, two, three, it's gone. I hate poor life, that's all. What can I tell you? Even when I was a kid, I hate poor life. I couldn't stand it.

LEVINE: So did you say your father came to this country before you?

RIEMER: I was a kid at that time. I helped my mother sewing. My mother made a living for five children. A winter he came here, he couldn't get a job on a Saturday to work. He didn't want to work Saturday, he couldn't get a job. He was a winter he spent all the money he had, and came home.

LEVINE: And, so how many years before you went?

RIEMER: Uh, three years before. I was, at that time, I could say, ten or fourteen years when my, uh, father was in this country. And he hated it. He said it's trifle. You know what trifle means?

LEVINE: What?

RIEMER: It's not kosher. Very bad. I hated. He hated, I loved it.

LEVINE: What did he tell you about it? Do you remember any of the things?

RIEMER: What I tell who?

LEVINE: What you knew about America before you came?

RIEMER: I didn't know nothing.

LEVINE: You didn't know, uh-huh.

RIEMER: What do I know, a kid?

LEVINE: Maybe your father told you some things?

RIEMER: Ah!

LEVINE: No?

RIEMER: He help.

LEVINE: No. Okay. So your aunt, then, your Tanta in, uh,
Wilkes Barre.

RIEMER: Wilkes Barre. She came. She got married.

LEVINE: Here?

RIEMER: Here, in this country. She left nine children. Seven
sons, she got the (?). They're in California now.
They moved out to California.

LEVINE: So . . .

RIEMER: She had nine children with him, seven sons and two
daughters. She was tough. She was, she was okay.

LEVINE: Now, so she sent you . . .

RIEMER: I wasn't in California back then. I was in Wilkes
Barre when (?).

LEVINE: Yeah. So she sent you a ticket?

RIEMER: She sent me the ticket. Now you want the way how I
came here.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RIEMER: And the ticket came, like, I would say, you know what was (?) Yom Kippur? That (?) give me the ship's card. I was dancing and dancing. And I have a, my mother was crying. She said, "Why? Nobody goes with you." You know, (?) pesce, (?), some people goes. Those days, got me somebody, all alone (?). "I don't want to know. I want to go. I go now! I don't care." The ship's card, the ticket was to Lemburg. They had to put me on the train to Lemburg and go to, to Germany. I took the plane, the boat, in German.

LEVINE: And what was the name of the boat?

RIEMER: This I forgot.

LEVINE: Yeah. Um . . .

RIEMER: I came, I came, 1913. Then, that's December time, December, then I came into Wilkes Barre, I remember that. It was after New Year's. 1914. 1913, '14, I came here. Hamburg, Hamburg.

LEVINE: That's where you left from?

RIEMER: In Hamburg.

LEVINE: Okay. And, um, did you have any examinations before

you came?

RIEMER: No. I was a healthy-looking girl. I was a kid. I weighed a hundred and five pounds, but, uh, full of perfume, and nice, good-looking. I was a very good-looking girl.

LEVINE: So did you make yourself an outfit of clothes?

RIEMER: I used to sew for me, I used to sew for the children, I used to sew for everyone.

LEVINE: Did you make a special outfit for leaving for America?

RIEMER: Nah, I didn't have anything. I, I (?) dark gloves. I thought I'd freeze up when I came here. So, anyway, I came to Hamburg. No, first they took me to Lemburg, my father. He said he can't help it. I want to go, I didn't let him go, I want to go, that's all. He took me to Lemburg. He was a young soldier. He didn't allow me, those Lemburg, he was working there, you know, he was an official soldier, my father.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RIEMER: He was three years in the army in Europe.

LEVINE: Was this the Austrian army? What army?

RIEMER: Austria.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Franz Joseph. So I, he took me to the train, and a boy took my father with a neighbor, our neighbors. A boy worked in Lemburg. Vilvoda[ph], they called it, in Polish. And they took me to the train, they put me. I make, my grandmother made pillows and quilts for my, in Europe a girl gets married, you've got to give her something. She made beautiful, with feathers. Oh, nice. And I, and I used to embroider. I used to, very beautiful, embroider pictures and things. I put in, and they make a big bundle, she gave me. She gave it, it doesn't cost her money. If I go, I could take it along. I sewed myself together that, that bag that I put it, the bedding, in, I sew it in, and I don't know where they put it. They took it to Lemburg, I suppose. I don't know. I don't remember. And then I came on the train. They let me in the train, and they went away. I look, I haven't got the receipt for that, for that bedding. (she gasps) Oy, I kill myself! I look in all my papers and look over, haven't got the receipt. Without the receipt, I can't do nothing. I was feeling terribly. But, you know, a

young girl, I came to Hamburg, Hamburg was, and I had to wait about three days for the boat to go off. They put you in a, in a place. There was Hungarian and Roumanian. The whole world. Young girls, boys, I forgot back home. I was dancing and live-a-day.

LEVINE: This was like a dormitory where you stayed?

RIEMER: Then, I suppose it was a dormitory. I . . .

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

RIEMER: It must be, where they keep (?) for the boat. I said, "Who shall I ask?" Everybody speaks German. They ask the German people, "Who shall I ask for that, uh, receipt?" And I was, oh, too much, because so much money, and I should lose it. I do, I went up, I used to go near the boat. I used to go out and see how they go on the boat, how the nice, big, you know, German men, at that time, good-looking, big men. I was like a little shrimp. I stop of two men by the boat and tell them the story, tell them I lost the ticket, and I know I got things here. And I, what will I do? It just happened I was stopped, you know, to go, big men, German men. "I could do something for you if you want to." He got a magazine, he got a pass

for the day, I don't know how, and if you go in the magazine, I'll, we'll page you, and you find it, (?), you've got to find it, because you know. If you find it, you get it. So I said, "Sure, I go." (she laughs) "I go." So stupid, that time, I didn't think. They took me on a little boat over the water, I don't know, it's in a magazine, they open it, it just happened I got the right people. They opened the magazine. "Go in," they said to her, "look." It was a magazine all what I got to take to the boat. If you find your package. I go in, and look all over, I find it. I sewed it, I know it. "Here it is!" I said. There was a (?). They hold it down, everything. They give a receipt, they gave me a receipt, they took me back to the boat, and that's all. That's going to bring you to Wilkes Barre. And I went, all by myself, with two big men, (?), beautiful men, young men. But I just got the right one. I was lucky.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

RIEMER: I got the receipt, I was in seventh heaven. In the boat I had nice fun, you know, all kinds, they had Polish, one had England. All kinds, Galicia,

Hungarian, all kinds. All young people, all the tongues, I was in seventh heaven. That's (?) New York, Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Did you see the . . .

RIEMER: Oh, everybody was upstairs to look, Statue of Liberty.

I was ten days on the boat at that time, we see the Statue of Liberty. And I'd gone through seven (?) to get here. So, come in Ellis Island, they don't let me down. Why? I haven't got anybody waiting in New York. They watch everybody, they watch everybody at that time. They even look in the hair. They had to clean everything. But they didn't let me down to New York. I'm in Ellis Island, but you have an address to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. There you have to, they've got to send you there. You can't go here. They put me on a boat by the true water, I should wait for the train for the next day. I didn't go down in New York. And I come off their boat, I come off the boat, nobody speak Jewish, and nobody, I'll (?), they go to Wilkes Barre at that time, call men. Men are at work. Not one woman, I was one girl between all of them. I look on the, anybody has a ticket where they go. I look, I see an Italian boy, a young boy my age,

something, goes to Wilkes Barre. (disturbance to the microphone) So I (?). I couldn't talk to him. I showed him, you see. He was in seventh heaven. But he didn't, where I went, he went. He went with me. He was poor, a poor boy. He didn't have to talk anyway. I got a, somebody with me. We waited, we were sitting the whole night, there, when the train comes in. It was very cold, Christmas time, it was so cold. I didn't have the gloves on my hand with that big (?) in the hand. And that boy, where I go, he goes. (she laughs) He sits down and (?). Early in the morning, maybe five o'clock in the morning, the train came. A man came over and said, "(?), I've got to go on the train." Before the train, there in Ellis Island, they gave me an orange, and they gave me a little sandwich, and you opened, they said, from New York to Wilkes Barre is a hundred and fifty miles. I thought a hundred and fifty miles, (?). What do I know? And I look around and I see a little sandwich with an orange. Hey, I wouldn't have nothing to eat. I thought maybe I'll go two days. I didn't know. I didn't eat nothing, and I had on that train, with that boy. That boys goes after me. He didn't talk, but he go after me. (?) I could say six or seven o'clock

the train stopped. I thought I'm in Wilkes Barre. What do I know? I go off the train, the boy with me, and go onto Main Street. In the train, I don't know the city any more. (?), I'm freezing to my hands, oh, what shall I do? (?) I look, I can't speak English, don't bother me. You know how to, everybody speaks English? At that time I said, "What shall I do? Where do I go?" I (?), I thought my uncle will wait for me, my tanta wait for me, somebody. I thought to myself, "I'll do something." Two nice men, not young men, older men, went to business. Bus, seven, eight o'clock. I stop them off. I stop them off and (?). I didn't talk. Suppose one man said to the other, "Those kids go to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, and this isn't Wilkes Barre." They said, "Come on." They took us back to the train. Took us where you take tickets, where you buy. He went over to that ticket man and said, "Those kids supposed . . ." You see, they changed trains. A train is supposed to come. "Those kids goes to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, so watch them. The train will come." They had to go away to their business, "Watch them and put them on the train, they should go to Wilkes Barre." I saw a stove with fire. (she laughs) I hold out my hand,

Hungarians, we are fair people. I sat down there on a chair, warm up, and I was sitting there, I heard a train came, a train came. At that time they changed trains. Not with one train, you had. A ticket man came out. Come on. Put us on the train. The train (she speaks in her native tongue), to the train to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. Two hours later I was in Wilkes Barre. I heard calling out, "Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania." I run to the door. My uncle, my tanta's husband, he's standing. He was waiting for us.

LEVINE: Who was . . .

RIEMER: (?)

LEVINE: Who was "us?" Were you, you were traveling with . . .

RIEMER: I traveled with an Italian fellow.

LEVINE: The Italian boy, uh-huh.

RIEMER: But this Italian boy, nobody came. Mine uncle came, that time with the horse and wagon. And we were hungry, please, take us. He has another, "Take that boy." With him I could speak Jewish. "Take that boy over where he belongs." I know what I lived through.

He said, "I'll take him." He took that boy to (?), and, uh, (she speaks in her native tongue) making coffee. I still had the orange with me. The sandwich, I didn't eat it. I was afraid. I thought I got to go who knows how long. And a drink of coffee. Now, my uncle lived not in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, out of the city. He had a grocer there. You know, years ago. And that's the way I came to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. I had a good trip.

LEVINE: Yes. And what was it like meeting your aunt? How was it staying with your aunt, your tanta?

RIEMER: Well, when I stayed with my tanta, she had two kids already. When I came, one child she had, one boy, first baby. She had a grocery. My uncle gave a little bit the cows, but, uh, she went to, he was a (?). He made a living, he made a good living. And, uh, and (she speaks in her native tongue). Tanta, (she speaks in her native tongue). I didn't come here to, you know, the girls (she speaks in her native tongue) . . .

LEVINE: Remember to speak English. You, so. . .

RIEMER: (she speaks in her native tongue) I can't, I'm not a

house girl. I never clean a stove home, and I wouldn't clean a stove here. I want to go to New York. Take me to New York. I could work in a shop, you know, I could sew. I could do, I couldn't get there a job from Wilkes Barre, nothing. That is silk wheels and miner coals, (she speaks in her native tongue) a girl, what do I got to do there? They took me to Wilkes Barre. I live on Norfolk Street, by his sister.

LEVINE: In New York City?

RIEMER: In New York City. There he took me, to his sister. Poor people, she lived in three rooms, on Norfolk Street. She had four boarders. Two boarders in the living room, and me and a girl in kitchen, the kitchen like this big, by the stove. There I was living with another girl. How shall I go look for a job, I don't know even how to walk a street. I look in Jewish papers. And I see in, uh, ah, Delancy Street, downtown, that used to be, to work upstairs, little, they used to make little dresses, and the, some, little shops. They look for working people, in Norfolk Street. This Delancy Street, the rows, I didn't know how to walk, even, in New York. I go out.

Every corner used to be a candy stand. I asked where Delancy Street is, till I came there. I come there, I come up, look it up, and I came up, and I said, "Did you need a girl to work? I could work at the (?)." "Ha! All the European girls comes, they know." "Try me. If I don't know, you won't take me. I don't know electric machines. Show me how to show on electric machines, but I could sew." He tried, he saw I know already. He saw my (?). He said, "I'll give you four dollars a week." I said, "Four dollars a week? I pay three dollars for suppers, just for suppers and sleep. What I'm going to have? I wouldn't have what to eat." "All right, I'll give you five dollars a week." What shall I do? I get the five dollars. (?) my, my mother's cousin somewhere, she said, "In this country, if you come, you got to pay an end. You have to get a job first." I haven't got a job. Five dollars, I had to live for a dollar. I ate for three cents at lunch. A roll, a tomato herring and a (?) was three cents. Every day, a tomato herring. It was twenty, even for candy stores, (?) in the cans. A tomato herring with a roll and (?) was three cents. In the (she speaks in her native tongue) . . .

LEVINE: English, speak English. Say it in English, what you just said.

ROSEN: Till Easter, because in winter I saved up enough to buy myself a little dress for ten dollars at that time. I was a healthy little girl, good looking. My uncle come Easter, my uncle come to New York, and take a look at me, he said, "What happened to you? You look so bad." (she speaks in her native tongue) I tell him the story, what I do. He says, "You know, come back to Wilkes Barre. (?) Don't stay here." If I told the boss there I'm going away, he want to give me ten dollars. Here at that years it was too late. I'm going already. I went to Wilkes Barre, and I stayed with my uncle six months before I didn't know my husband yet, nothing. There I used to go around. A man, he didn't have all the, here he had no hand, you understand? It was cut off. The city gave him a job. He used to watch the water in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. This was out of Wilkes Barre, (?) Mills. You know, the little towns. He used to like me very much, but he speaked English, American. He used to come and (?), "I learn you how to speak English." He told me how to talk. He said, "She

don't belong here." He said, "Don't stay here. I'll find you a job. I know everybody here." That, that, a (?), not Jewish. He went over on a big department store, you know, not a little town. You could walk. And (?), "Go there, and tell them I sent you, they give you a job." It was five floors of store, a department store, they had. I went over there, I didn't tell my tanta, my uncle, nothing. I went over there, and he was, he had (?) grocery stores that stayed, with rich people with (?). "And, (?), you know, (?), stay with me. Stay here." The woman was a Hungarian. He was Russian. She was a very fine person, very nice people. You know, regular already, American. "I'll give you ten dollars a month, board, a home." Horse that was working there, got a girlfriend here. Work in a store in a beautiful, every department store, everything was there to get. Ah, my tanta should kill herself. She said, (?). "I want to work here." There I had to serve in the house. He used to go in to drink beer, "Pauline, come in. I can't drink out a bottle beer. Bring a glass with me." They used to love me. They used to love me there. I used to sit down, they had (?). I'd take a piece of silk. They had materials, beautiful, make a

little blouse with three (?). Ay! She used to go shopping to New York. She was the shopper. She bought me once a silver pocketbook. What was the (??) (she speaks in her native tongue) They used to love me there. I was about eighteen, nineteen years. I started, "Please, I didn't do nothing in a kitchen." (she speaks in her native tongue) So beautiful. To eat and serve in the house, I didn't wash my own things. I wasn't used to such a life. I did everything there. I used to, even for the horse to eat, I used to go give him. I knew everything. They used to love me for that. At that time, my husband was in New York, a New Yorker. He's a Hungarian. He was a Hungarian. So when the, it was broke out the strike, he had a sister there. He had a sister that he, the sister is, he didn't have nothing to do in New York. He went to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. At my town at that time, I had a second child, a boy, another boy. So when he came to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, what he got to do, he took a, borrowed the horse with the wagon. (?) He was a furrier. My husband was in the fur line. He maked a beautiful living. My tanta come out, (?). She, (she speaks in her native tongue). She didn't want a job.

"Don't be mad at me," and this and that, "I only have you here. Come to my house." I went when she had the baby, the second baby. That, my husband was friends with my uncle. I don't know, somebody in the family.

He came over there. He came over, saw me there. It was that time, maybe nineteen years old. So, uh, everybody asked, "Who's that girl? Who's that girl?"

(?) Halmutz[ph], Halmutz[ph], their name was Halmutz[ph]. Halmutz[ph]'s niece, she's (?), she just came, this, that, you know. So they're, I didn't see him any more, and I went back to that people where I was working. There, in the summer, you used to go to, uh, Sansurry[ph] Park, there is a Sansurry[ph] Park, they make parks there, they make parties. At that time, (?), they had nothing to do. The moving pictures are closed, at that time, was closed the moving pictures. (?) park, we used to dress up, boys, boys, girls, we used to dance, you know, enjoy. I have, I wasn't used to, not to work Sunday, I could go where I want. Once I came to that park with my girlfriend, I (?) from where I was working, her sister was my girlfriend, some of the people who came to that park. And we used to enjoy, you know? This way I meet my husband. He saw me, "Hello, Paulie! How do

you come here?" I said, "How do you come here? I come like you came." He came with a girl, with another boy, with a bunch of boys and girls, and I came with her. He didn't let me, he left (?), he went with me. He took me on the river for the rides, you know? And the loop-the-loop, all kind of jumps. He said, "I'm going to take you home." I said, "No, you came with another girl, you've got to take her home."

She did. She used to take off in Sandy Hook on the other side there's one she comes from there, they take the girl home, and I'll take you. I came, I came, he took me home. If (?), and I used to, so I tell to me (?) that I was working there, she watch me, she was very nice, she said she meet my boyfriend. So then he went away, he said, "Don't say boyfriend. He's not your boyfriend yet. Say it is your friend." (she laughs) She learn me how to talk.

LEVINE: This was your aunt?

RIEMER: The woman I was working there.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah, uh-huh, the woman.

RIEMER: She, I could, I went to meet my boyfriend. My boyfriend, I didn't know anything. She said, "Don't

say boyfriend. Say your friend. He's not your boyfriend yet." That's the day you got married to a wonderful boy. I was married sixty-five years with my husband, had five children. I had in Bensonhurst a house. I had in Flatbush, I saw a two-family house, I got a one-family house in 24th Street, Flatbush. You know, this is (?) in the war (she speaks in her native tongue) in the war. I had one son (?). I had two houses, and after I married off my children very nicely, they all married very nice, sent my kids to school, everything. That was my life.

LEVINE: Wow. What do you feel very proud of that you've done in your life? What makes you feel proud?

RIEMER: Not now.

LEVINE: Before?

RIEMER: I was very proud. I had a wonderful home. I had a one-family house on 24th Street, furnished, beautiful. I used to have beautiful carpets and beautiful living room. I had a house with everything. My husband gave me everything. He was a very, very good husband. I ever grew up my children very nicely, where I loved my children. He died, it's fourteen years already.

That was my life. I had a very bad two years before I got married. When I got married, my husband worked very hard to make a living, but he was so good to me.

There's, I think there isn't such a good husband.

LEVINE: What was he working at, your husband? What kind of work?

RIEMER: Fur coats.

LEVINE: Oh, fur coats. What did he . . .

RIEMER: Oh, he was in business, on Seventh Avenue.

LEVINE: What did he do in the fur coats?

RIEMER: Made coat.

LEVINE: Oh, he sewed them? Uh-huh.

RIEMER: Sure.

LEVINE: He sewed them. Uh-huh.

RIEMER: Mink coats, fur coats, mink coats, all kinds. They used to wear the shawls, they used to wear the jackets. Made a very good living. He had a nice living, and I, and I (she speaks in her native tongue). (?) look the boy. The soldier, that's my

son. (?) has a son, a doctor, in California, got married, got two children. With the Second World War, the malaria, he got malaria, (?) with malaria (she speaks in her native tongue) affected kidneys, and I lost him.

LEVINE: Oh, that's a shame. Well, um . . .

RIEMER: He's such a wonder, he was good looking. He was a good looking boy.

LEVINE: Yeah. Tell me about, um, medical practices. Before you came to this country, if you were sick when you were in Austria, what did you do?

RIEMER: When I was sick?

LEVINE: If you were . . .

RIEMER: I never was sick.

LEVINE: You never were. When anybody was sick, in your family, let's say, what would you . . .

RIEMER: There's doctors.

LEVINE: A doctor.

RIEMER: Oh, there's two doctors. In our city was two doctors.

Oh, was a coat, it was a nice little town, a very nice little town, all Jewish. The non-Jewish lived out of the city.

LEVINE: On the outskirts. Uh-huh.

RIEMER: And you have to, where you got born, that you like. I didn't know any better.

LEVINE: Yeah. Um, can you think of any real high points in your life, what you considered were wonderful times for you?

RIEMER: When I was a girl I couldn't consider anything nice.

LEVINE: But then when you came here after that?

RIEMER: Oh, here I had nice, because I had a good life, and a nice husband. A good life, and a nice husband. He done everything in the world for me. He done everything for his children. He used to work very hard. When I came to Wilkes Barre, I married him in Wilkes Barre. My oldest daughter was born in Wilkes Barre. My oldest daughter was born in Wilkes Barre. When she was a year old, he used to be in New York. He said, "I can't stay here. I've got to go back to New York. I'm not a peddler. I've got to go back to

my trade, and I'll make a living. That's the way it became. I came with a child from six weeks I had the first baby, and I came to New York. And that's the way went away my life.

LEVINE: Well, oh, okay. Now, this is the end of the first, of the tape, so I just want to say that I'm speaking with Pauline Riemer, and I'm Janet Levine, and it's August 1, 1994, and we're here in Westbury, Long Island.

RIEMER: That's right.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. Thank you.