

**EI-657**

**JOHN FLUBACHER**

**BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 12, 1904**

**INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 23, 1995**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW:**

**RUNNING TIME: 58:46**

**INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST**

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**SHIP:**

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**RESIDENCES:**

**[NOTE: Gentleman's age and accent make it very difficult to understand what he is saying.]**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1995. I'm in upstate New York in Latham, with John Flubacher. Mr. Flubacher came from Germany in 1927, when he was twenty-three years old and was brought to Ellis Island to meet the man who was to pick him up when he got to America.  
Mr. Flubacher, can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please.

FLUBACHER: October, 12<sup>th</sup> of October '04.

SIGRIST: That's October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1904, and where in Germany were you born?

FLUBACHER: Ihrengen.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

FLUBACHER: I-H-R-E-N-G-E-N.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Where in the country is that?

FLUBACHER: That's in the south. It's about eighty miles from [unclear] Switzerland.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. Can you describe for me what the town looked like a little bit?

FLUBACHER: And the town lies on a mountain. The mountain is fork in the middle and square, four up and four [unclear] square and it's named Kaiser Stone. It were, you know, in the olden times, what the Kaiser—when Kaiser was killed.

SIGRIST: When he was killed.

FLUBACHER: And up here, and it shows the stone up there.

SIGRIST: You mean like he was beheaded?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, so.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what the town looked like when you were a kid?

FLUBACHER: Nice house. It was clean.

SIGRIST: What kind of buildings did it have?

FLUBACHER: Well, the [unclear] outbuildings and [unclear] thousand years ago, a wall around it.

SIGRIST: So it's an old town.

FLUBACHER: Oh, yes, and I think in '27 was thousand years.

SIGRIST: Wow, can you describe for me the house that you lived in when you were a child?

FLUBACHER: Well, in the front of the parlor, parlor and dining room and kitchen. Then we had two bedrooms for sleeping room and one bedroom upstairs underneath the roof. The roof got shaver roofs.

SIGRIST: Shingle?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, they made out of brick stuff.

SIGRIST: Oh, like a tile roof?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, tile. Yeah. And then there's the farm. We were living on the grapes. We make wine and in the fall we sell it to the restaurant, to the restaurant and they use it.

SIGRIST: How did you heat your house?

FLUBACHER: The heating was with wood. With an open fire and the stove, the big stove, wood [unclear] three feet long and two and a half feet wide, and we bake even in the oven, the bread, our own bread. We baked once a week, my mother baked the bread.

SIGRIST: Excuse me, we're going to pause. [tape off/on] Okay, we're going to resume now. You were talking about the bread that you baked it in the oven. Who made the bread in your family?

FLUBACHER: The mother.

SIGRIST: Your mother made the bread.

FLUBACHER: Start in the evening before, they put the—in the flour, [unclear] with the yeast and the small [unclear] right in the [unclear]. [unclear] where she worked on it.

SIGRIST: And then what would she do with the dough?

FLUBACHER: She [unclear] and then she [unclear]. It come up in the whole body. Then she break it apart, I think it about three pounds. Well, it used to be generally twelve loaves. You get six, make it double. Double oven, you know. Could put the six on top and six on the bottom. They had to be all cleaned out good. The wood and the ashes, everything had to be cleaned out and when the oven was hot enough, and they stayed about two, three hours in it.

SIGRIST: And what kind of bread was this?

FLUBACHER: It was made from wheat bread. I mean it's rye bread, but the milling was I think eighty percent—eighty or ninety percent they used. Only ten percent is waste what they call on the shell, you know, the seeds.

SIGRIST: On the wheat?

FLUBACHER: On the wheat.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What other chores did your mother do around the house when you were a child?

FLUBACHER: Oh, she had to go out in the field with us.

SIGRIST: What was growing in the field?

FLUBACHER: The grapes!

SIGRIST: Oh, the grapes. Oh, I see, and so the grape—

FLUBACHER: We had to put on the grapes.

SIGRIST: They were your family's grapes. What kind of work did you—

FLUBACHER: Yeah, the grapes were on the mountain. You couldn't plant anything else.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of grapes they were?

FLUBACHER: Well, Riesling and Alpine. Alpiney, Muscatel, [unclear]. We had some red ones like they use here, too, but what they call them here?

?: What? [unclear].

FLUBACHER: No, red grapes.

SIGRIST: And what time of the year did you pick the grapes?

FLUBACHER: October.

SIGRIST: And then what would you do with them after you picked them?

FLUBACHER: Just they going to be squeezed out. Crushed through a mill. Had to turn the mill and just squash and then stand, two, three days, just to start the ferment. They got to ferment little bit. Then we press them out in put in a big barrel of [unclear]. When we had to clean it, we had to go inside with a big brush with a big handle on it. We had to brush it. That was a job! [Chuckles]

SIGRIST: How long did they stay in the big vats?

FLUBACHER: Until about in January, December sometimes come in all ready. By that time it settled. The big stuff settles on the bottom of the barrel, and we throw it out. The clear stuff comes out the wine. Then they

put it in small bottles and have them on a [unclear] with a couple of horses on it. Some of them had four horses on it.

SIGRIST: And did these pails have tops on them, that you transported the wine in? Did—

FLUBACHER: No, the big bottles were like a fifty-five gallon bottle.

SIGRIST: Oh, big, big.

FLUBACHER: That big.

SIGRIST: Did your family keep any of the wine?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah. Sure we living on—we drank from nine o'clock in the morning we drink a glass of wine. Twelve o'clock we drink another glass of wine. We take the wine with us in the field.

SIGRIST: And how much of the wine did your family sell?

FLUBACHER: Well, we sell it in the [unclear]. [unclear] a hundred and fifty German liter. So the [unclear], one is about twenty-five [unclear]. The other has thirty six [unclear] and the other one was six [unclear]. So that's two, four, six barrel in December.

SIGRIST: So you sold a lot of—

FLUBACHER: That's how our living on.

SIGRIST: What other kinds of food did you eat when you were growing up in Germany?

FLUBACHER: Well, the living we raised two and four pigs. Two we killed and two we sell.

SIGRIST: Did you kill the pigs?

FLUBACHER: We make a—I kill them, yeah.

SIGRIST: How do you kill a pig?

FLUBACHER: You hit him on the head. First you bring him out of the stall, hold him on the leg, and then you hit him on the head. Then you cut the throat and save the blood. With the blood you make bologna. There's a special man works in the town. I had my oldest brother, he was one

of them, makes bologna, all kinds of bologna. Bratwurst, like that knockwurst [unclear].

SIGRIST: How is that made from the blood? What do they do to make the bologna?

FLUBACHER: The fat from the rib, under the rib here, we cut that up in small pieces like that and mix it up with the blood. Then we cook it. That's it, until the liquid gets solid. You can hold them for six, eight months they're good.

SIGRIST: After the pig, after you had sliced its throat, then what did you do with it?

FLUBACHER: Well, then you cut it in pieces, all small pieces, a leg, all four legs, the sides, the ribs. They laid in a container, wooden container with salt brine and I don't know, what the word is for the other stuff. You know, it's got to be brined and then it lays two weeks in the brine and then it was four weeks in the chimney where the smoke goes through, gets smoked and that's cured. That holds, don't go bad.

SIGRIST: And so your family would kill two of the pigs.

FLUBACHER: Two, yeah.

SIGRIST: And how long would the meat last?

FLUBACHER: Well, that had to last a whole year.

SIGRIST: A whole year or so. I see.

FLUBACHER: One pig in the fall and one in the spring, killed separate. Then when we have got no more, not much meat, on a Sunday, we get beef. My mother went to butcher, we get beef.

SIGRIST: Only on Sunday?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, Sunday.

SIGRIST: And how would she prepare it?

FLUBACHER: Make the soup. Soup out of it. She make her own noodles. We cut in very small [unclear].

SIGRIST: And that would feed the whole family for Sunday?

FLUBACHER: For Sunday. Well, we get the vegetables. We got the berries that ourself grow.

SIGRIST: So this was a big farm that you lived on?

FLUBACHER: Oh, like neighbor is another house. Had to go out of town.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see, you lived in town where everything was close.

FLUBACHER: Yeah, everything is close up.

SIGRIST: But your land was out of town.

FLUBACHER: The house—that [unclear] about mostly between houses.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. I get it. What was your father's name?

FLUBACHER: Wilhelm Jakob.

SIGRIST: And how do you spell Jakob?

FLUBACHER: J-A-K-O-B.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for—well, obviously he worked his farm.

FLUBACHER: He was on the farm all day.

SIGRIST: What do you know about his family background?

FLUBACHER: Well—

SIGRIST: Did you know his parents?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, they were living yet. They had four girls and three boys and they all the women, the girls lived all over ninety years old.

SIGRIST: These would be your aunts?

FLUBACHER: My aunts, yeah. One was over here in Troy.

SIGRIST: What was your father's personality like? What was he like as a person?

FLUBACHER: Well, he was a good guy. He's telling jokes, [unclear] you know, and then [unclear] the grapes. That's all [unclear]. He telling jokes and going through.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

FLUBACHER: Christine.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

FLUBACHER: Metcger.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

FLUBACHER: M-E-T-C-G-E-R.

SIGRIST: And what was your mother like as a person?

FLUBACHER: Oh, nice.

SIGRIST: What did she look like?

FLUBACHER: You didn't know her any more. You know, didn't see nobody else. They working together the whole week long.

SIGRIST: And the whole family worked together?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, together.

SIGRIST: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

FLUBACHER: Had two, three, three brothers and only one sister, yeah, and I was the young--

SIGRIST: Can you name everybody?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, the oldest one was Fritz and he was over here, too. He was over here when he was eighty years old, he visit me. The next one was killed in the first killed in the First World War. The war stopped in November, until the 18<sup>th</sup> of November and he got killed 31<sup>st</sup> of October, the last chapter. And the other brother was over here and was a baker.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

FLUBACHER: Otto.

SIGRIST: Otto, and your sister's name?

FLUBACHER: Christine.

SIGRIST: Christine, named after your mother. Is there a story that you like to tell about when you were children with your brothers and sister?

FLUBACHER: We eat supper, [unclear]. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: What time would you go to bed at night?

FLUBACHER: Well, we probably eat about nine o'clock and then ten o'clock we got to bed and four o'clock you got to get up again to go to work.

SIGRIST: Tell me about how your—you've already told me about your brother who was killed at the very end of World War I.

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How else was your family affected by the First World War?

FLUBACHER: Oh, we had enough to eat. The only thing we had to buy was salt and sugar. And now they come out here and don't eat any more salt, and my mother used to say, "If you only get salt, we can make it without sugar." Well, we had all the vegetable all there.

SIGRIST: Where would she go to buy the salt and the sugar?

FLUBACHER: [unclear] stores, grocery store.

SIGRIST: Was your family affected in any other ways by the war? Was there fighting near where you lived or anything like that?

FLUBACHER: No, I come only four miles from the Rhine, not miles, kilometers. That's less, and all the army—you had to walk through the—when they came from the city, had to walk twenty miles in the war, the First World War.

SIGRIST: So you saw soldiers?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Anything else that you remember about the soldiers?

FLUBACHER: Oh, they be the soldier with the horses, and they had to go from our town over the Rhine River and control the line.

SIGRIST: What about—you said you had a brother who fought, obviously, was he the only brother who—

FLUBACHER: The oldest one, he was in the Russian. He was a prisoner from— where is it now? Valonig, and for three years he was prisoner and then the fall was in Russia, the trouble started in Russia, 1914. Not '14, '17. '17.

SIGRIST: Right, 1917, Russian Revolution.

FLUBACHER: Yeah, and he the prisoner, they left. He was working on the farm in Russia.

SIGRIST: As a prisoner?

FLUBACHER: As a prisoner, yeah, and they gave him some food and he had to work a whole week until they took him home. Then he had bad teeth. All the others when they came back, they had to go in the west front and he didn't have. He had to have the teeth fixed. That's what saved him, otherwise probably he would have been killed, too.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What about, did your father have to serve during the First World War?

FLUBACHER: No, he just made it a year. You know, the year. I made the same thing with the draft here.

SIGRIST: The Second World War.

FLUBACHER: Second World War. I think they started October 1<sup>st</sup> and I was born [unclear]. So I didn't have to go. Well, I had three boys, anyway, man, oh, we need you here. I was working in a bake shop.

SIGRIST: Tell me about religious life in Germany. What religion were you?

FLUBACHER: Oh, that's Protestant.

SIGRIST: Protestant Lutherans?

FLUBACHER: Lutheran.

SIGRIST: And tell me how you practiced your religion at home?

FLUBACHER: Well, my—

?: Went to the church walking.

SIGRIST: That was Mrs. Flubacher, for anyone listening to the tape. How did you practice your religion at home?

FLUBACHER: Before we eat in the evening, not in the morning. In the morning not everybody eat together, but in the evening when the real meal, the mother said the prayer.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what prayer that was?

FLUBACHER: Well, the take the prayer that eats, that we can eat.

SIGRIST: Can you say it in German for us on tape?

FLUBACHER: [Laughs] That's a long time ago.

SIGRIST: Yeah, okay. So maybe it will come back to you if you don't remember it right now. What about—

FLUBACHER: Then church, we had to go. Every Sunday we had to go in church.

?: [unclear]

FLUBACHER: [Whispers] Keep quiet!

SIGRIST: Tell me about celebrating Christmas, for instance?

FLUBACHER: Oh, that's four days.

SIGRIST: Yes, how did you celebrate Christmas at that time?

FLUBACHER: We get Christmas trees with [unclear] that evening on Christmas night and then we decorate it. When we were small, we had to go in bed. Then in the morning the Christmas trees was all decorated, but when we were older, then we helped the mother set it up. And then all different kinds of things from what she made. Apples and fruit, we hang it on and then the candles with the lights, you know. Not the electricity.

SIGRIST: Is there—was there a special meal that was associated with Christmas?

FLUBACHER: No, no.

?: Lot of cookies.

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SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a—[tape off/on] All right, we were talking about Christmas when we paused, and is there a Christmas present that you got that sticks out in your mind?

FLUBACHER: I want harmonica and I was eight, eight years old and I got it from my uncle from Manheim. That's a big city. He was a baker and he brought that and I learned that thing for myself. Nobody taught me. I played it, and the girls and boys there dancing on the street, while I play with that thing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what tunes that you played on the harmonica? What songs?

FLUBACHER: Mostly a waltz. Waltz and [unclear], the name of the dance. That's the waltz and [unclear] and Schifper.

SIGRIST: Schifper.

FLUBACHER: Yeah, Schifper.

SIGRIST: How do you spell that?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, it's mostly walking.

SIGRIST: And how do you spell Schifper?

FLUBACHER: S-C-H-I-F-P-E-R.

SIGRIST: And that was a type of dance.

FLUBACHER: Dance.

SIGRIST: Can you hum any of the tunes that you used to play?

FLUBACHER: Maybe—the waltz maybe.

SIGRIST: Go ahead. Go ahead and try.

FLUBACHER: No, it's hard to start the whole thing.

SIGRIST: Okay. Well, maybe it will come back to you later. You want—tell me about school, going to school when you were a kid?

??: We had to play every day.

FLUBACHER: [unclear] [tape off/on]

SIGRIST: Tell me about school. What was—where did go to school?

FLUBACHER: Oh, we had two schools. One in the north from the town and one in the south. The one in the south, it's just built in 1911 and we were a hundred and twenty-one in my class when they start first class. Was two classes. The others, the next year they had more yet and they had to make three classes.

SIGRIST: And what kinds of subjects did you learn in school?

FLUBACHER: Well, mostly arithmetic and writing. All [unclear] exactly the form of the—exactly not different mold. They had a stay in between the line. They were strict on that.

SIGRIST: Is there a teacher that sticks out in your mind from back then? Do you remember any of your teacher?

FLUBACHER: Well, you only get it one or two years. Then you get always another teacher. One of them, he had—I remember that he was a Jewish religion and he was teaching geography, you know, the map from Germany. He was—we had to go on the wall and he pointed. He said and we had to point it out where it is, and we didn't get it, the boys, he hit them on the legs. The girls, he punched them light. [Laughs] That's the only one did that, teacher.

SIGRIST: Could your parents read and write?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what languages could they speak?

FLUBACHER: They spoke German.

SIGRIST: Did they speak any other languages, other than German?

FLUBACHER: No. Well, in school you had to learn German and in your home you got to [unclear]. That stays thousands of years that—

SIGRIST: So there are two different kinds. I mean there's the German that you speak and the German that you learn how to write and how to speak properly, formally.

FLUBACHER: Yeah. The school was set up in 1911 to learn everybody the same sound.

SIGRIST: So there wouldn't be these differences?

FLUBACHER: They wouldn't be any different any more. 1911 they started that.

[End of Tape One, Side A/Start of Tape One, Side B]

SIGRIST: Well, let's talk a little bit about what you know about America as you were growing up. How did you perceive America when you were a kid?

FLUBACHER: Well, we weren't talking about—my uncle was over here.

SIGRIST: He was here in Troy?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, and my brother—well, he was working in the butcher shop in Fryeburg in the city and so he got a little bit city talk, you know, that I can't talk. So he heard that here and my uncle is in America and he make good. He had a bake shop here. Well, he learned the bake shop over in Germany. When he came over here in 1876, or 1876.

SIGRIST: 1876. So he had been here a long time then.

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Why did you want to go to America?

FLUBACHER: Well, we had bad years. Three, four, 1910-11, '14 then the war started. Was bad years. We didn't get nothing and one year, 1915, 1915 we had bad weather, hail and cut all the leaves off from the grapes. They couldn't grow anymore, you know, the grape [unclear] the leaves is the lung from the end, like the animals with the lung. If they haven't got the leaves, they couldn't live anymore. So the whole thing, the whole year we didn't get no grapes. That was bad. That's why my brother. Then he wrote that he very good. He worked right away in a bake shop and he wried.

SIGRIST: What year did your brother come?

FLUBACHER: '24.

SIGRIST: He came in '24.

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And did he come here to Troy?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, that's where my uncle and my aunt lived. They live here. The sister from my uncle lived in Troy, too. Well, first the uncle let her coming over in 1907. She was—well, too many people in the house. He only had so many he can feed. That's how.

SIGRIST: When your brother came in 1924, what kinds of things was he writing back and telling you about America?

FLUBACHER: Well, he made there was good. He made right away a lot of money. I heard one time he wrote that that he fifty-four dollars a week. That was a lot of money.

SIGRIST: Can you talk about—

FLUBACHER: When I come over, they only get ten dollars and twelve dollars a week, as a baker.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about the inflation that hit Germany just after World War I?

FLUBACHER: Oh, that was a bad thing, too. Every day the mother, of course, went down and trouble starts with politics, you know. The border people against the middle people. It's a revolution. It was a revolution there.

SIGRIST: And how much would things cost then? I mean, how did that change?

FLUBACHER: [unclear] Within two years that's from—which I had a loaf of bread. A loaf of bread was maybe twenty cents and when they end it was over a million dollar. Million marks.

SIGRIST: Did you have to carry all the—

FLUBACHER: The money?

SIGRIST: Yeah. How did you—

FLUBACHER: All the paper money. Well, we didn't get any. I [unclear].

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little bit about your decision to come to America and what it was like to get ready to go.

FLUBACHER: Well, on account my brother wrote so much, I went.

SIGRIST: What did you have to do to get ready to leave? How did you get your papers?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah, had to go first to the mayor of the town to get the papers, forms, [unclear], and then I had to go to Stuttgart to be examined and all the questions there. What they want to know if I'm sick or anything like that. Then I could go.

SIGRIST: Did you have to have a physical examination from a doctor before you left?

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That was in Stuttgart?

FLUBACHER: That's in Stuttgart, American doctor.

SIGRIST: How did your parents feel about you leaving?

FLUBACHER: Well, they were glad to go. I had another brother here and a sister.

SIGRIST: Did your sister come over, too?

FLUBACHER: No, no. I mean, they took over the land, you know.

SIGRIST: Your brother and your sister took over the farm lands. I see. What did you pack to take with you to bring to America?

FLUBACHER: You know, the shoes I wore them for about ten years. My aunt says, "Did you buy any shoes yet?" I said, "No." Then I went and I bought a pair of shoes, size was 7 and she says, "That's too tight. It's too tight," and I said, "It's all right. It's all right. I like them tight." [Clock chimes] And come home. That's all I had, clothes, a suit of clothes for Sunday. That's what you get home, you got a Sunday suit as soon as you come out of school with fourteen years. Then the working, couple of pairs.

SIGRIST: Was there an object that you brought with you? A thing that you brought as something to remember Germany by?

FLUBACHER: No, no. No, no, nothing. Nothing. I had twenty marks when I come over.

SIGRIST: Did your parents give you a dinner or anything?

FLUBACHER: They didn't have nothing. They had nothing, no.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your mother and father?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, and my father was in bed with a sprained ankle and then he said, "You should stay here," but the four hundred dollars that I paid for to get the ship.

SIGRIST: Is that how much it cost, four hundred dollars.

FLUBACHER: Yeah, four hundred dollars.

SIGRIST: Where did you travel to get the ship?

FLUBACHER: To Bremen.

SIGRIST: You went to Bremen. How did you get to Bremen?

FLUBACHER: With a train. It's a train goes all the way through from the south to [unclear]. What you call a fast train.

SIGRIST: An express train?

FLUBACHER: Express train, like that.

SIGRIST: Were you traveling alone? Were you by yourself?

FLUBACHER: When I went, yeah.

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about that train ride to Bremen?

FLUBACHER: No. No. The only thing then when we came to Bremen, he says the ship goes a day later, and if you want to go, you can take a ride across with a show boat. You know, go through the channel in Bremen, you know, that channel and to Germany. That Bremen, Hamburg, which is the other city, all the six land.

SIGRIST: Bremerhoffen?

FLUBACHER: Well, Bremerhoffen, that's it. That's one in the east. Forgot the name of that one.

SIGRIST: Did you have to stay over night in Bremen before you got on the ship?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah, then had three, four days.

SIGRIST: What happened during those four days?

FLUBACHER: Well, I don't know. I went with another guy walking around for two days.

SIGRIST: Just sightseeing?

FLUBACHER: Sightseeing a little bit. Well, a boat ride. I remember that one, that was nice.

SIGRIST: That was just like a little tour on the boat?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, it was a big boat. It must have been two, three hundred on that.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship that you got on to come to the United States?

FLUBACHER: Stuttgart.

SIGRIST: The Stuttgart, and describe for me where you slept on the ship.

FLUBACHER: It had two beds in it and one on top of each other, but it's another in there.

SIGRIST: And who was in there with you?

FLUBACHER: Another guy from—I don't know where he came from. [Chuckles] But I don't even know where he went. [Chuckles]

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about the trip across the Atlantic?

FLUBACHER: Oh, was tough. The first when we came out of Bremen, then go through the channel between France and Germany, it was awful. The boat rocking. Everybody was throwing up.

SIGRIST: All throwing up.

FLUBACHER: And that was the first day, was awful.

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick?

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Had you been on a large ship before?

FLUBACHER: No. No, not even seen one. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, how did you feel about having to get on a ship like this?

FLUBACHER: Well, must have been natural, I don't know.

SIGRIST: How long did the ship take to get to New York?

FLUBACHER: Eleven days.

SIGRIST: Eleven days.

FLUBACHER: Eleven days.

SIGRIST: Did anything happen during those eleven days that sticks out in your mind?

FLUBACHER: No, no, no, no. Wasn't bad. The rocking wasn't bad, but [unclear]. [unclear] the propeller in the back, that comes out of the water.

SIGRIST: Oh, because the boat was lifted right out. Uh-huh.

FLUBACHER: Right [unclear].

SIGRIST: Did they have safety drills on the ship, in case there were an emergency?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah. Yes, yeah. They got, you know, they got a safety boat on the side, hanging on the side.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how many smokestacks the Stuttgart had? That's a tough question, I know.

FLUBACHER: It had two. I know it was two.

SIGRIST: Two?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, that's about all, I think.

SIGRIST: Well, now, you said you arrived in New York in the very early morning.

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And explain to us on tape what happened. Why you ended up at Ellis Island?

FLUBACHER: I don't know why that they brought us to that landing spot.

SIGRIST: And what happened when you got there?

FLUBACHER: They called me by name, that man who had orders from the company to bring us over to New York City to the railroad station. What you call it? Where the train stopped?

SIGRIST: The depot.

FLUBACHER: Depot.

SIGRIST: So they brought you out there and then this man came to meet you.

FLUBACHER: Meet me.

SIGRIST: Was it just you alone or are there other people?

FLUBACHER: Another fellow from Syracuse. When he had a job before, brought some before on a trolley car. What you call? Trolley car, what you had over there. Had arrangement made, but all, you know, you only could talk German. You had to talk to somebody.

SIGRIST: And it was very early in the morning you said, right?

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Four o'clock in the morning. Did you have your luggage with you?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did anything else happen there that you can remember? Were you examined or asked questions? Anything like that?

FLUBACHER: Well, everything was—we had a pear tree in our garden, and my mother gave me about ten pears. So on the boat I ate two or three, four. I don't know. Anyhow, they found the pears in the examination and they threwed all the pears out. [Laughs] That's the only thing I remember.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what the man looked like that you met who was going to take you to Troy?

FLUBACHER: Oh, he was really stout man. He was a little, about a foot taller than me. Well, I'm only little. But he could talk German. He could talk German into English. I think that was in the transport, in the four hundred dollar that he had worked together.

SIGRIST: It was all part of the—

FLUBACHER: Of course, my brother, he couldn't take work off in Troy here as a baker. He don't know when the boat came in, so he let it come through them, the [unclear] man who helped to organize which where we should sit on the train, anyhow.

SIGRIST: So you meet the man at Ellis Island and then he takes you off the island.

FLUBACHER: Off the island.

SIGRIST: Yeah, and then what happens?

FLUBACHER: Put me on the boat—put me on the train and I think it was late in the afternoon we landed in Albany and my brother was there with his car already. '24 Ford Touring Car.

SIGRIST: A 1924 Ford Touring Car, uh-huh.

FLUBACHER: And then I going to turn the [unclear]. I want to turn it around. I did, too. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: When you first got to this country, did you see anything that you had never seen before? Anything that was very new?

FLUBACHER: Oh, yes, everything was new here.

SIGRIST: But something that sticks out in your mind as being very, very different than what you were used to seeing.

FLUBACHER: Only the dirt laying around. I think that was different. Garbage laying around.

SIGRIST: You didn't see that in Europe?

FLUBACHER: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: Describe for me where your brother took you? When he picked you up in the Ford Touring Car, where did he take you?

FLUBACHER: Well, he couldn't take me nowheres else than to bring me home. I was staying there for—

SIGRIST: Can you describe what—where he was living for me?

FLUBACHER: Yeah, he had a two bedroom apartment and he didn't need a car. He lived on top of the hill in Troy, and he worked on King Street for the big pie shop. So he didn't have his car in the garage, never—mainly it's used on a Sunday.

SIGRIST: Did your brother learn how to be a baker in Germany?

FLUBACHER: No, he was a butcher.

SIGRIST: Oh, that's right. This is the brother that made the bologna?

FLUBACHER: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. Well, tell me about the first job you got when you got here. You're twenty-three years old, right?

FLUBACHER: Right, I was supposed to be coming over on a farmer education—to work on a farm. So there's a friend of my brother's, he had a secondhand store on King Street there, and he took me to a farmer in Brunswick.

SIGRIST: In Brunswick, uh-huh.

FLUBACHER: They had fifty cows, and I was supposed to milk out the fifty cows and he said he'd give me fifty cents a day, and I could board, you know, sleep there. Then the man says to him, "He ain't going to work for fifty cents. I'd pay him a dollar day," and he took me back and I worked for him between now maybe two weeks cleaning furniture. The stove, clean stoves and repair them. Then there was a place, the bake shop that died, and they asked me if I would help in the bake shop. Then I was in the bake shop.

SIGRIST: And this is the same bakery that your brother was working in?

FLUBACHER: No.

SIGRIST: This is a different—

FLUBACHER: Different one.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you learned English?

FLUBACHER: Well, I went in school, night school first. First two years and then she wanted to know arithmetic. She want to find out how much we

learned over in Germany. I got mad at her said, "You don't have to know that," and I didn't go anymore.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what the first English word—

FLUBACHER: But I work—I worked all alone in the bakeshop then. See, I didn't have no conversation in English.

SIGRIST: No one to talk to.

FLUBACHER: So that took me a long time to get the English.

SIGRIST: What were you doing in the bakeshop? What were your duties?

FLUBACHER: Well, to make all kinds of baked things from pies, cakes, cupcakes, muffins. There were bread, the rye bread. That was a big thing.  
[music playing in background]

SIGRIST: So you said you didn't have a lot of people to talk with, you know, to speak English with.

FLUBACHER: No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your first English word?

FLUBACHER: No. That was—no. I learned that over home already. My father used to say I—what did he say? I like you. Yeah, that's it. He had that over home already, from a friend of his came, was working here in America and he came a visitor and they talk to each other. That's the word he used that there many times.

SIGRIST: Now, did you become a citizen of the United States?

FLUBACHER: Well, five years.

SIGRIST: Five years it took.

FLUBACHER: You had to wait five years.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what it felt like to become a citizen?

FLUBACHER: Well, I was a little bit confused. I got—my fellow think he couldn't go, so he says, "I know a fellow who knows different politics," and I didn't like it either, but he [unclear]. He was a Democrat and I was supposed to be a Republican. But I didn't vote it, you know. It was a

Republican that took me, when you vote, when you had to vote, people voted for that.

SIGRIST: Did you—did you miss Germany while you were here?

FLUBACHER: No.

SIGRIST: Those first couple of years?

FLUBACHER: No, no. Uh-hmm. Wife here, she miss it. She many times she's crying.

SIGRIST: When did you get married?

FLUBACHER: '29.

SIGRIST: 1929, and—

FLUBACHER: December.

SIGRIST: And tell me how you met Mrs. Flubacher?

FLUBACHER: She went in the same school, only a different class. She was a year younger than I am. Knew her.

SIGRIST: So she was from the same town?

FLUBACHER: You know everybody. My brother had the same, a girl from the same town had to come over.

SIGRIST: What is Mrs. Flubacher's name? What is her first name?

FLUBACHER: Louise.

SIGRIST: And what's her maiden name?

FLUBACHER: Mitska—Kiss. This one is Kiss, just like kiss.

SIGRIST: K-I-S-S.

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And did you bring her over to the United States?

FLUBACHER: Well, she paid for or her father paid for.

SIGRIST: Did you meet her when she arrived?

FLUBACHER: No. I sent my aunt down to New York, down there. On account of] at that time, when you meet them for right away, they make you get married on the ship before you get on the land. [unclear] like to go.

SIGRIST: Did she have any relatives here in America, other than—

FLUBACHER: No, nobody.

SIGRIST: Nobody.

FLUBACHER: Still have nobody. Once have brother want to come over and he was supposed to go on the farm, but he's checking One that goes through the paper, says, "Your sister was come over on the farmer visa, and she didn't go on the farm. You don't go on the farm either." They wouldn't let him come, so she is the only one.

SIGRIST: And you said she didn't like America when she got here?

FLUBACHER: Well, she went down to work for a family. Well, the wife is up stemming from a German family, so she could go a little bit German to her, give her instruction what to do. Then we got married right away and then she stayed home.

SIGRIST: Did you have any children?

FLUBACHER: Had three boys.

SIGRIST: And what are their names?

FLUBACHER: There's John, Fred and Ronald.

SIGRIST: So John, Fred and Ronald.

FLUBACHER: And they're all three retired already.

SIGRIST: Have you ever been back to Germany to visit?

FLUBACHER: Only since—well, in '58 the middle one was in the army here and they send him over to Germany. He was stationed in Germany. So then I went and see him. Then when I retired, I went three times.

SIGRIST: Did you go back to the town where you had grown up?

FLUBACHER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did it feel to be able to see your town?

FLUBACHER: Oh, it's awful. Well, it was better, you know. The streets were blacktops all like here. Before was [unclear]. But clean.

SIGRIST: Did you have any relatives left over there?

FLUBACHER: Oh, I still got I would say about ten cousins living over there yet, all from the women, the aunts.

SIGRIST: What do you think is German about you? What aspect of your personality do you think is the most German?

FLUBACHER: Well, I think that when my father sell the wine, they probably put in the bank, I don't know. I didn't know nothing. I get maybe fifty pennies on a Sunday to have a pretzel and a glass of beer.

SIGRIST: But what about you now is German? What's the most German thing about you now?

FLUBACHER: Oh, since the last time I was out there in '84, oh, different.

SIGRIST: But you. You! You're a German man. What things do you enjoy in life that make you German? Do you understand?

FLUBACHER: Oh, I took over right away to American.

SIGRIST: Do you think of yourself as American or as German?

FLUBACHER: American, right away. Sure.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

FLUBACHER: No German. Don't want to go there. You know, that can't figure out all the houses all build [unclear]. We had to go with the water outside of town. It's half an hour out to walk to the field.

SIGRIST: It was a harder life.

FLUBACHER: Oh, it was hard. Hard working.

SIGRIST: Well, Mr. Flubacher I want to thank you very much. We've been talking for an hour.

FLUBACHER: Okay.

SIGRIST: And I want to thank you for letting me interview you for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with John Flubacher on Thursday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1995 in Latham, New York. Thank you.

[End of Interview]